

THE CROMWELL ARGUS
CROMWELL, NEW ZEALAND
10 JUNE 1918
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MEN POSSESSED OF THE DEVIL.

ASTOUNDING MODERN ASSERTIONS.

A highly educated wholesale poisoner asserted the other day when taken to task, that he was irresistibly impelled to do his murder by an evil force—a wicked and unseen “Man from Egypt.”

“I have never seen him,” the prisoner said. “I have heard him. He has lived in other ages long ago. In his reincarnation he came to me from Egypt. Constantly this evil spirit whispered to me “Kill them! Kill them! They have no right to live. Kill them! Then I had to do as he told me. He would give me no rest.” Is there any truth in the claim of this cold-blooded scoundrel when he tried to hide behind the pretence that he was “possessed of devils”? Is there any serious-minded person of intelligence who will claim now in the twentieth century that evil spirits exist and have the power to control living human beings against their will to commit crimes?

If it can be seriously maintained that the man was ruled by an evil spirit as frequently instanced in the Bible—does that relieve the prisoner from responsibility for his crimes?

These questions were put to Mr. Aleister Crowley, a student of Ancient magic, who is a member of several Oriental orders of mystic art. As evil spirits were repeatedly referred to and recognised in the Old Testament, and as the Saviour Himself cast out the devils from two men, and caused them to enter the bodies of swine, so Mr. Crowley sees no reason why the frequent episode narrated in the Bible in ancient times should not be occurring in modern times.

LUTHER AND THE EVIL ONE.

“Belief in spirits both evil and good are essential to belief in Christianity,” says Mr. Crowley. “If you believe in the existence of demons and are a Christian you must believe in the power of demons to influence your acts when they have once

gained a hold upon you. You are specifically warned in the Bible against the power of evil. Demons are ever watching to get a chance at you. You must keep them at a distance—have no communicating with that which is evil. For when you are in the power of the Evil One you are lost.

“Frequently I have been consulted by men and women clear headed, and otherwise normal human beings who were just as plainly under the influence of a spirit of evil as a person would be plainly a victim of pneumonia if both lungs were congested. It was only by the best exertion of the will power that they had not yet surrendered to the enemy

“There are classical instances—Martin Luther serves admirably.

Here was a tremendous intellectual and moral force, one of the greatest the world has ever known. Martin Luther related how he was beset by the devil not by any vague spirit of evil, but by the Evil One himself and how he fought and vanquished him. There is no question about the devil getting after Luther; there was every reason why he should. Luther was the devil’s most powerful enemy in the age when the powers of darkness had been having pretty much their own way.

“It was inevitable that Luther should overcome the evil spirit that had beset him. No human being of Luther’s strength of mind and purpose need fear the power of the devil and his angels; but when ordinary persons are beset in that fashion they truly are in danger. They have not sufficient weapons of defence—have not had to fight that kind of enemy before, are unprepared to meet his unfamiliar advances and attacks.

“The evil influence grows stronger, the opposition weakens. The victim feels himself physically urged to do certain things. Those things are evil. As his power of resistance declines the evil force seems actually to take possession of his body, which at length—unless help arrives—does the demon’s bidding.

“Who performed the evil act, the man or the demon?

“Until modern times and their fashion of denying the existence of the unseen, the man often would have been held irresponsible—he was ‘possessed’ the demon was the culprit. Our Saviour recognised that fact when He gave His attention not to the man, but to the devils, and cast them out.

“That was the power and the act of divinity, which, on its spiritual plane, is not handicapped by lack of knowledge of other spirits, good and bad. Man, to oppose and overcome evil

spirits, either must be more than ordinarily powerful in mind and in purpose, or must summon to his aid the ages old and invulnerable defence afforded in training in knowledge of the occult.

"The art of magic is a long established system which familiarises the adept to a greater or less degree with the inhabitants of the unknown world, teaches him how to communicate with the spirits, enables, him to win and enjoy the protection, the guardianship of good spirits and supplies forms and rituals which disarm spirits of evil.

"One may deliberately seek and obtain the powerful influence either of good or evil spirits. But it is demons, not angels, who are most active in seeking means to exert their power unasked. Just as good is the pre dominating quality in the generality of mankind, it is the evil spirits which exhibit the strong initiative, realising, evidently, that they have to combat powers which, in the long run are superior to their own.

"The weak, or potentially evil human character is the natural prey of demons. So we should not be too credulous when a hitherto respectable man, suddenly charged with a grave crime, pleads that he, himself, really is innocent, that the criminal act was committed by 'the man from Egypt' or by 'the little black man' actuating with irresistible power the brain and hands of his unwilling victim.

"When such pleas are put forth with sincerity the case is one of demoniac possession. If the mass of humanity were more open minded concerning occult matters, if people generally accepted as facts the existence of demons, persons finding themselves beset in this way, would, before fatal consequences developed, plan a course just as obvious as that of a sick man going to a medical doctor or a surgeon; they would go to an adept in the art of magic and have the demon exorcised.

"The rituals used for this purpose are very old, based on generations of study of demon characteristics, and their potency is infallible. There is the Pentagram, for instance, and the Magic Oath. By these means devils are 'cast out, never to return while the subject continues to live up to the instructions of the adept. The exorcism, of course, is applied to the demon, but at the same time the one who was 'possessed' is fortified against a return of the evil power.

"You have asked why it is, if we are actually surrounded by good and evil spirits, that so many persons live their whole life without ever receiving evidence of their existence—never rea-

lising the protection afforded by a good spirit, never feeling the menace of a bad spirit. The answer is, first, that the majority of persons are not spiritual sensitives; second, that the good qualities dominate in them, and hence they are not propitious material for demons to give their attention to."

Nevertheless, Mr. Crowley contends that all of us possess the power to resist such influences, if we will only exert it for ourselves.—"Popular Science Siftings."