

DEATH. HERWARD CARRINGTON and JOHN R. MEADER. Wm. Rider & Son, 8s. 6d. net.

A most interesting and fairly able book. Mr Carrington's hysteria is thoroughly diluted by Mr Meader, or else he has taken a little nourishment and feels better. The Vitality book was the scream of a schoolgirl.

The "theories" of these writers are, however, too comic to discuss seriously. One believes in "Life," a mystical entity flowing through one like a grease-spot through a greenback; the other believes that Death is caused by a man's hypnotising himself into the belief that it must come!

Big as is the present volume, it is necessarily far from complete. Yet I am compelled to admit much against my will that he makes out a very strong case for the persistence of personality after death, and its manifestation through certain mediums. Yet I think that the "coincidence" argument is a little better than is supposed.

The point is that the failures are unrecorded. Take "pure chance" roulette for example. Scientifically, any given run (say 500 on the red) is no more and no less remarkable than any other given run, say R B B R R B B B R R R B B B B, etc., to 500 coups. But the one is acclaimed as a miracle, the other goes unremarked.

Now in the millions of séances of the last sixty years the "evidential" records can be counted in the fingers of one hand.

And it is not antecedently so very improbable that pure chance might dictate correct answers in so small a proportion of cases.

Further, the spiritists have thrown upon science the task of proving a universal negative.

If Sir Oliver Lodge, or Professor Munsterberg, or Lord Cholly Cauliflower, or Mr Upthe Pole comes to me with a tale of unicorns in Piccadilly, I merely humour him. Munsterberg, at least, might be dangerous.

But I should not investigate his statement, and I certainly should not claim to be able to disprove it on *à priori* grounds.

Even in the evidential cases, there is so much room for a mixture of fraud, telepathy, chance, and hysteria, and humanity is so clever at stopping chinks with putty and then leaving the door open, that we must continue to suspend judgment.

An amusing case occurred some years ago at Cambridge. I offered to reproduce roughly the performance of the Zancigs (which was then puzzling the foolish in London) without preparation. A stranger to me offered to act as my "medium."

The conditions were these. The ten small cards of a suit were laid on the floor; one was to be touched in the medium's absence and in my presence. The medium was to return and say which it was. The rest of the company were to prevent us from communicating if they could.

Well, they tried everything. In a minute's interview I arranged a button-touching code with my medium, and as each new restriction was put on me I managed to invent a new code. Shifting my pipe, coughing, arranging books, winking, altering the position of my fingers, etc., etc., all were provided against. Then I obtained a confederate. Ultimately the grand sceptic of all devised the following test just as I had passed the note to my medium, "If I can't manage any of the old ways, I'll try and write down the number and put it on the mantelpiece."

And this was the test.

The medium was to be taken from Whewell's Court (were we were) over to the Great Court of Trinity—well out of all hearing. I was to be left alone with the sceptic, who by this time suspected everybody of being a confederate. He was to touch the card in my presence and then take me away in the opposite direction. The medium was then (at a given time) to return, and tell

the card. Now it happened that in the course of general argument about fairness, which I encouraged to enable myself to plot unnoticed in the confusion of talk, that I had stipulated for my sceptic to write down the number that he had touched, to avoid dispute. This he agreed to; he was allowed to hide it as he chose.

I gave up all hope but in bringing off the 9 to 1 chance of my medium's being right. The sceptic kept both eyes on me all the time; if I stirred a finger, he was up in arms. I did keep my back to the mantelpiece, but there was no way of writing down the number.

But it was just at that point that my sceptic's magnificent brain broke down. He had correctly argued everything so far; but then his brain said, "It is important that Crowley shall not know where I hide the paper with the number on it: I must hide it somewhere where he cannot see."

So instead of slipping it into one of the hundreds of books on the shelves, he hid it behind my back, *i.e.* on the mantelpiece, where it was duly found!

I must tell just one other story to the point. It throws possibly some light on one or two of the "miracles" which Blavatsky performed in order to disgust the more foolish of her followers.

In June 1906 I was at Margate (God help me!), and asked my friend J—— to lend me his copy of Abramelin.

"Sorry!" said he. "I lent it to So-and-so, and it has not been returned."

He forgot this conversation: I remembered it.

Staying at his house six months later, I was alone one morning and found the book, which he "knew for a fact" to be in London sixty miles away. It was hidden by the panel of a glass-fronted bookcase.

I hid it in the stuffing of a music-stool, led the conversation at lunch-time to "apports," got my host to suggest my doing this very thing which he was sure I could not do, and, in the evening, did it.

If I had been a cheat, could I have produced better evidence? My host would have sworn that the book was in London in a house unknown to me, whose occupants were unknown to me. He is a man of science and of most accurate and balanced judgment. One little lapse of memory: he forgot that he had told me that the book was not in his shelves; another little lapse of memory: he forgot where the book was; and there is your miracle!

Now for my constructive policy. I suggest that a "spirit" be cultivated on the lines laid down by Eliphaz Levi, "Dogma and Ritual," Chap. XIII., so that he may manifest more wholly. Then let him dictate to two or three segregated mediums a long passage, or a long set of meaningless figures, and get so high a degree of agreement that hardly any doubt remains.

Or if anybody wants a really high evidential proof, let him get the proof of Fermat's Last Theorem, which Fermat died without revealing, and which the united efforts of mathematicians have hitherto failed to discover.

ALEISTER CROWLEY.