

## THE GHOST OF A LIVING PERSON.

COMMUNICATED BY THE EDITOR.

THE Society for Psychological Research has investigated a great many cases, but as far as I can remember they have not as yet seriously considered instances of spirit-manifestations of living people. Dante in his *Divina Commedia* speaks of a man whose soul he met in the Inferno where it was tortured for the many crimes committed on earth. Yet the person to whom the soul belonged was still living, at least to all appearances. Dante informs us that this person was animated by a devil who had taken the place of his real soul which had already descended to the place where it belonged. Now if contemporaries of Dante had asked this unfortunate person whether Dante's report was correct or not he would have vigorously declared that he knew nothing of the predicaments of manifestations of his soul in other parts of the universe.

Here is a problem, and we have an opportunity to report a case which is similar in kind. A friend of ours, Rev. W. H. Withrow, wrote a book on Egypt some thirty-odd years ago, and an unusual number of copies were by some chance circulated in Melbourne, Australia. The result was he was looked up to in that part of the world as an authority in Egyptian lore.

Some people live longer than might be anticipated, and this happened to Mr. Withrow. His readers in Melbourne thought he had long been gathered to his fathers while he was still continuing his labors as an editor in a publishing house in Toronto. It happened that his ghost appeared in Melbourne at a seance while he was quietly attending to his work in Toronto, when by some accident he saw the report of what his ghost had done and vigorously objected, declaring the whole phenomenon a fraud. We republish here his statement, quoted from the illustrated weekly *Onward*, which goes far to prove that a person need not be aware of the caprioles which his ghost may perform during his lifetime.

Mr. Withrow denies all responsibility for what his ghost may have stated and calls the whole a "bare-faced fraud." He writes as follows:

"I have before me the number for July 1st, 1906, of *The Harbinger of Light, A Monthly Journal, devoted to Psychology, Occultism and Spiritual Philosophy*, published at Melbourne, Australia. It devotes four columns to 'Mr. T. W. Stanford's seances with the medium Charles Bailey, reported by Mrs. Charles Bright.' The substance of this seance is an address purporting to be given from the spirit world by the present writer on February 2, 1906. We all remember Mark Twain's reply upon a rumor of his own death that the report was 'very much exaggerated.' I share the feelings of the veteran humorist and would remind the medium at the Antipodes that he is 'a little too previous' in his alleged posthumous revelation, that I am at this writing very much alive and in good health, and that, moreover, I repudiate some of the sentiments attributed to my ghost. I will not say with the Southern senator that I deny the allegation and defy the alligator, but the said medium is quite astray on matters of fact and not less in some matters of opinion held by me.

"I am informed that I proved to be a great acquisition to the meetings, and that I told those present that in the flesh I was attached to the Established Church of England. Now I have a great respect for that Church, but I never was a member of its communion. I am described as having written largely on the Catacombs of Rome and their inscriptions, which is quite true, but my book on that subject was published thirty-three years ago, reached a sixth edition in England, and sold largely in Australia, so it did not need a spirit 'from the vasty deep' to reveal that fact.

"A citation of an inscription from my *Catacombs* is given in support of the theories of spiritualism. This I never wrote nor anything bearing the least degree such an interpretation. I hope that when I shall have shuffled off this mortal coil I shall not be capable of the incoherent utterances and crudities of thought and expressions which are attributed to me. My alleged address begins as follows:

"Rev. W. H. Withrow: 'My name is Withrow. I am exceedingly pleased to speak with you once again. I reckon these to be grand opportunities—happy privileges, when I am asked to speak to you,' and so on for three solid columns of gush and mush. I am made to say, 'You are living now in a blessed dispensation and are privileged to see signs and wonders which you call psychic phenomena. I do not care how great may be the nation. . . .if they cast aside

their spirituality, persecute mediums and those who seek to lead them into light, they will and must ultimately decline.'

"After the fashion of many 'spiritualists' I am made to berate the Church of to-day, which is described as 'nothing but a valley of dry bones.' On the contrary I revere that Church, with all its imperfections, as God's agency for the uplift of the world, and never so strenuous and successful in its efforts as to-day, as its renewed missionary, religious and social activities demonstrate.

"I am made to sneer at parents 'sending their children to orthodox Sunday schools where they will receive for the truth Church doctrines, fables and legends.' On the contrary the greater part of my life has been devoted especially to the promotion and aid of these institutions which, in a country where religious instruction is excluded from the public schools, I regard as a necessary complement of civilization.

"I am made to say with reference to the education of children, 'teach them to look for messages from the spiritual realm and tell them that perchance God has given them a most holy gift of clairvoyance and trance-speaking.' I am made to close my long harangue with what is called 'a grand peroration' from Robert Ingersoll, which I never before read and whose perfervid rhetoric I do not admire—'Strike with hand of fire O weird musician, thy harp strung with Apollo's golden hair,' and so on.

"So far as I am personally concerned this of course is very amusing; but is it not abominable that some charlatan, some fake or fraud should impose on the credulity of men and women seeking to catch some whisper of the spirit life by citing opinions supposed to have special weight or authority as coming from the other world, opinions which the alleged author never held, and the chances of his seeing or hearing of which are almost infinitesimal. It is only by the merest accident that this screed came under my notice, much of it of baldest platitude and some of which I utterly disavow."

This communication was sent us by Mr. Withrow under date of November 22, 1908, and we regret to add that our friend has died in the meantime. In spite of the righteous indignation shown in his communication he took the case rather humorously, for he was glad that he was still alive at the time to enter his protest. He has now become indifferent to frauds practiced in his name and mediums are at liberty to let his ghost appear at seances, without fear of having the living man turn on them in repudiation of his own double.