

HOBBY HORSES AND THEIR RIDERS.

Concerning psychological questions, which, next to "single tax," form a theme commanding, perhaps, a greater share of public attention just now, outside of the ordinarily accepted channels of popular thought and action, than any other of the moot matters pertaining to humanity's transitory period of existence, I now propose to say something, not that I hope to be original, for there is nothing new under the sun, but because, like my traditional and much-misrepresented Mother Eve, I like to investigate that which is to be desired to make one wise.

The day has gone by for the popular acceptance of the negative side of all occult questions, as well as the contemptuous silence of press and pulpit, to which everything not too ancient to be capable of proof was systematically relegated for centuries. Leading minds among the clergy can no longer be kept silent by the bitting bridles of conservatism, with the authority of the dead past clutching the check reins of thought with the bigoted dogmas of gone eras. The individual of either sex who complacently disclaims any interest in problems that encroach upon the environs of what has long been designated as the unknowable, is either the victim of a mistaken fancy or the subject of intelligent commiseration. Surely every person is by this time aware that there is in existence a society for psychical research, unpopularly known for a number of years as the Seybert commission—so named after its founder, a spiritualistic plutocrat who determined to apply the accretions of his posthumous financial plethora to the scientific elucidation of psychic phenomena. It was for a time quite the fashion to berate the Seybert commission. Its members were scientific men, most of whom were naturally prejudiced at the outset of their investigations against the existence of occult phenomena of any mental sort, and many of them so remain to this day, notwithstanding the ingenuous admission of all that many of the manifestations they have witnessed under strictest conditions are inexplicable upon any known or generally accepted hypothesis. On the other hand, there were spiritualists by thousands, or, perhaps it would be nearer the truth to say tens of thousands, who opposed the commission from its inception, and who, from the potent fact of their own credulity, were unable to endure the crucial methods of coldly-intellectual investigation with the least degree of patience. Poor Henry Seybert, if, after his transportation from terrestrial existence to the real or imaginary land of shades, he is indeed conscious of anything that is going on upon the earth he has left behind, must for a long time have suffered intense agony of spirit over the two-fold system of fault finding which kept his munificent bequest in the condition of the traditional Issacher who is described in holy writ as "crouching between two burdens." Lately, however, it has become fashionable to extol the Seybert commission, and the Society for Psychical Research is rapidly becoming a recognized factor in the elucidation of phenomena pertaining to that ever-living question propounded by a thinker who was not more interested than ourselves: "If a man die, shall he live again?" This society, totally unmindful, as far as human judgment could discern, of all the adverse criticism of all shades of accepted belief, has gone faithfully forward, conscientiously earning its money and fearlessly presenting the public such evidence as comes before it. And this evidence is generally of such a character as no coterie of devout believers in the modern bejeweled and bedizened "medium" could afford to offer the incredulous public at their seances, where the price of admission to a darkened room, redolent often of onions, always of tobacco, and not infrequently of whisky, is placed at one dollar per head. The calm deliberations with which the psychical society has received the testimony placed before it, and the candid, impartial way in which it has presented that evidence to the people, have wrought a change in public opinion which is little short of marvelous. "Telepathy" is the new synonym applied to "spirit rappings," and the phenomena of these, thus newly christened, seem already to have furnished a basis for scientific interpretation of much that formerly passed current among the superstitious and ignorant as witchcraft, and among the learned and bigoted as diabolism. "Up to the present time," says the well-known savant, Professor Wallace, in a recent valuable contribution to the press, "the only explanation of the various classes of apparitions suggested by the more prominent working members of the society is that they are hallucinations due to the telepathic action of one mind upon another." And yet the frank admission of the fact that one mind may act upon another in a "telepathic" or any way in which to induce "spirit rappings" and "table rappings," or project "apparitions," points to further investigations in the near future, by which a more satisfactory solution of the "ghost" question can be reached than ever would have been possible had only the known adherents to the faith, or creed, of spiritualism been permitted to handle the Seybert fund. One of the latest indications that the psychical society has come to stay as a popularly recog-

nized factor in the solution of occult, or supersensuous, problems, of which it is dogged obstinacy to longer deny the existence, is the fact that a sub-society of national and international reputation has lately been formed for the independent pursuit of painstaking investigation along the lines of psychical research, in which the well-known names of such leading thinkers as Rev. M. J. Savage and Mary A. Livermore, of Boston, and Rev. Dr. Thomas and Frances E. Willard, of Chicago, are members. Robert Dale Owen, whose soul, if his belief be true, like John Brown's, of Harper's Ferry fame, "goes marching on," had to wait a good while after leaving the body to witness the scientific recognition of his work, "The Debatable Land," but posterity, at least, has been paid for his waiting by the publication of the proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research, which has given due prominence to his patient investigation of facts so rigidly tabooed at the time of their original publication that the literary world felt constrained to pat its vaunted conservatism on the back when the renowned "Katie King exposure" for a time turned the brain of the fearless thinker from its equilibrium, and furnished press and pulpit with themes for criticism during a quarter of a century.

"The world is going to financial ruin because of extravagance," said a pessimistic friend in my hearing a few days ago. I had been saying that never before in the history of this American nation were the common people so well off as now. Never were so many cosy homes built and owned by mechanics and artisans of all grades, and never before were opportunities so good for wage earners to become their own landlords.

"It is the extravagance of the farmers that lies at the bottom of all this, and leads everything to disaster," he continued, with a deprecatory shrug of the shoulder. "Half the farmers in my neighborhood have sold or mortgaged valuable lands to get money to build and furnish fine houses," he added, after an ominous silence.

"Glad to hear it," I answered, heartily. "The unproductive lands they held so long in idleness, keeping themselves poor and their neighbors poorer, being sold or mortgaged to pay for building comfortable homes for their families will be a blessing to humanity in many ways. The money thus put into circulation gives employment to the day laborer and the mechanic, enabling them to buy village lots or suburban acres upon which to erect homes of their own. The prospect of becoming a home owner encourages thrift and economy among the poorer classes and enables them to supply themselves with all the comforts and many of the luxuries of life, thus stimulating trade, which, in its turn, stimulates manufacturing and commerce, enabling avenues of business to multiply themselves in geometrical proportion. But, to go back to your neighbor farmers, the good houses they build, the furniture they buy and the comforts and luxuries they thus enjoy will make the farm attractive to the wives and children, who will learn to extol rural life; whereas, under the old scrimping, pinching style of self denial, the boys and girls, as you know, deserted the farm as soon as they were old enough to attempt it. Suppose some penurious old land grabber does have to part with some of his mortgaged acres to make the rest more attractive, what of it? Isn't he casting bread upon the waters? Suppose now and then some farmer even loses his home because he overreached his calculations to build it, must all the rest of the agricultural community, as well as the artisan, the manufacturer and the mechanic remain at a standstill to prevent such a possibility? No, friend. The greatest good to the greatest number is gained only through the improvement of the land, which means, first of all, the building and adornment of beautiful homes, followed by the cultivation of orchards, flowers and gardens, the display of grassy lawns, and above all, the health and contentment of husbands and wives, and the consequent well-being of happy children."

Beautify your homes, farmers, even if you must wrestle for a few years with a mortgage. The interest will come back to you and your neighbors in a thousand diversified ways, and you can pay the principal at maturity by selling off your surplus acres to somebody else who wants a home, for which he is willing to pay an increased price that he may enjoy the honor of being the neighbor of a man who thinks more of his family than of broad acres of unused land.

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The attention of certain gentlemen who spent a few weeks in Salem ostensibly as representatives of the citizens of Multnomah county, but in reality as henchmen of one or the other of Portland's feudal lords, is called to the words of Job:

He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place (senate) know him any more.