

Bohemian Evening, No. 3.

By C. Elton Blanchard.

THE IDEA OF IMMORTAL SPIRIT.

The young men had discussed the two previous talks given them by the old Doctor among their fellows so much that numerous applications from other truthseekers for an invitation to attend had been received. Mr. Palivec was sent as a committee of one to confer with the Doctor about allowing more to hear the talk on Spirit. Gladly did Dr. Brown arrange the commodious dining room as a lecture hall for the occasion, and told the boys to bring all they wished. He was surprised to find himself facing about twenty-five young men when he arose to speak. He again announced his perfect willingness to be interrupted with questions, should any desire to ask. Among the number were some who still clung to their church membership, encouraged to come by the original visitors, as those who needed the information.

Dr. Brown: (Stroking his beard and looking about the room.) My friends, you are welcome to our home tonight, and welcome to what ever help I may be able to give you in this great search for truth. Let us be honest, open-minded seekers, without conceit or narrowness. I am asked to talk to you about the idea of the Spirit. Many centuries ago the slowly developing mind of man began to conceive of a double in himself, and the origin of this conception is generally accepted by men of science about as follows: The shadow, the dream, the trance, the semi-conscious states brought about by sickness or injury, all these may have been aides in fixing in the mind this idea of the double. What could be more suggestive than the savage's dream of meeting friends who afterwards he found to be far away, of meeting dead friends, or dreams of various conditions easily shown to be impossible in the usual state of things? The subjective impression was real. The conclusion is natural, there must be a something in us that is more than matter. It is spirit.

The philologist traces the origin of words to the concept in the mind. We have been often told that spirit meant originally, in the several languages where the soul idea is found, the wind. Can we not easily picture some forest slope where the rude huts or tents of the primitive man stood against the winter's wind? It moans through the forest, it sighs through the branches. The hours of darkness come on. The instinctive fear of things not understood hastens the belated hunter to the friendly fire of the family hut. The spirits are abroad. They may be enemies or ancestors, but the sighs and moans of the night wind, even to this day, sends shivers over the spine of the

timid. Here is a proof of the origin of the spirit idea from the fields of philology, and I refer you to Prof. Max Muller for more light on this subject.

The worship of ancestry is closely connected with this double idea, and both thoughts doubtless had much to do with the early religions. Nothing better can be found than Herbert Spencer's works on sociology for this subject. Once fixed in the mind, a concept of this kind will stand unchallenged generation after generation, especially when it represents a pleasing idea. We all love life. The very worm wiggles away from harm. We delight in thinking that a few short years is not all. Then when we find so much that is not joy, but sorrow, in this evident existence, we court with pleasure a knowledge of the existence in spirit that is not evident, painted with all its colorings of heavenly bliss and comfort. Thus has the spirit idea been fostered. The nations have imparted it from the older to the younger from all time, and so long ago did this concept hold sway in human thought, that it is now a current argument with supernaturalists, spiritists, etc., that all nations and tribes hold some form of immortal life belief, hence there must be some grounds for the notion. No more so than because all organized bodies have the element carbon; this proves that carbon was designed for the special use of animal life.

Out of this early notion grew the idea of Great Spirit, Holy Spirit, Holy Ghost, God, the Devil, and the whole list of mental creations. Thus the nations advanced through all these ages, in the main carrying the dual notion, and into nearly all religions it became a leading tenet of the faith. It was pleasing. It promised much, and since men are apt to believe that which they desire to be true, it was cherished. No one came back after death to dispute the claims of spirit theory, since no means were at hand to prove anything to the contrary, and the theory of immortality stands today the cornerstone upon which the whole structure of the Christian church rests. Remove it, and Christianity, as a supernatural religion, falls to pieces. A new development in the theory is now worthy of our notice. Up to the year 1848 no single instance had been recorded in which a spirit was claimed to have taken enough interest in the world or flesh to visit the scenes of our mortal struggle. But in that year, on the evening of March 31st, in a little town in western New York, a family named Fox, or Voss, the German of their name, discovered that they could secure intelligent answers to questions, and that such answers were given by raps from spirit hands. These raps had been troubling this family for a long time, and it can

be imagined how great must have been the joy of the spirits when they at last made the stupid Fox family understand that certain raps mean yes, while others mean no. Thus was Spiritualism born. Today it stands as a pure system of deception under hypnotic influences, or it is an unexplored realm of force in matter. Those of the world of science who do not ignore the matter entirely, as unworthy of further attention, rest in the expectation that so-called spirit manifestations of the several sorts will be explained by an unknown power of mind, to set up unknown forms of motion in ether. Many men of great intelligence who seem entirely correct upon other things, assert that they have had personal experiences which are entirely convincing to them as individuals. These men look with pity upon their scientific brethren who have not been so favored by the spirit realm, and calmly say, "because you have no spiritual eyes or spiritual sense, do not conclude that you see all." Thus the original spirit idea has developed. Today the holders of the belief in spirit are divided, into Christian and Spiritualist sects.

Mr. Czek: As a scientist, Dr. Brown, do you find any place for spirit in any form of life?

Dr. Brown: We search the world over. We find a uniformity of law. Under the lens we study the cell structure of the embryos of various animals. They all look alike; they act alike under our chemicals; there is no place for anything of the kind in the animal organization. We find no holes in the brain, as asserted by the early Greeks. We find no place in the cell. The mother of all animal life, the protoplasm, has yet many truths to give up. In the cell there is no mystery. Our biologists know that life is co-eternal with matter. The Monists hold that all matter is alive. That form and vitality are inherent in matter as part and parcel of it. This makes a great trinity, matter, form and motion. Feeling is but a higher form of motion. Thought is but a higher form of feeling. This will require too much time to discuss intelligently, but it shows how easily a true student of human nature can see what life is. It shows how hard it is to find a place in this wonderful continuity for any such unnatural notion as spirit, or ghost entity. It is yet possible to listen when men propose that mind is so wonderful in its workings that even after the brain has been lost, the activity goes on in the waves of endless ether, just as the ripples murmur along the shore long after the stone has dropped to the bottom of the lake. This may be, but let us hasten to have it scientifically demonstrated, is our answer.

Mr. Votipka: But, Doctor, what is our life good for?

Dr. Brown: My dear friends,

there is so much that is good, and life means so much to me, that I ask you to come again, that I may spend one whole evening in telling you of the good things in this life. I shall now bid you goodnight, and trust you may meet no hobgoblins or ghosts on your way home. (With many expressions of kindly interest the young men departed.)

EDITOR'S NOTE: Any student of this subject wishing to ask the Doctor a question is at liberty to address him, in care of Charles Elton Blanchard, editor of Current Thought, 802 Ansel Ave., Cleveland Ohio.

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