

A tragic regret attaches to the death of Dr. Wolfe. His name was among those idly and wickedly brought before the public in the recent University trial for disloyalty; and while he was, of course, freely exonerated, the sting of the accusation was heartbreaking to him. Of Revolutionary American stock, Dr. Wolfe was a man of purest patriotism as well as a nobly generous humanitarian. He was, moreover, gifted with such a wisdom of life that, even under trial, he could be gentle with false accusers. He was a true philosopher in his fidelity to the laws of life, and their brothers, the Laws of Death, will not reject him—laurels after the hemlock.

HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER

Lincoln, Neb., August 6

## Imagination and Its Exercise

TO THE EDITOR OF THE NATION:

SIR: Dr. Irving Babbitt's article in the *Nation* for February 7 on "Genius and Taste" awoke in my mind recollections of something said by Dean Church which seems to me to be a useful corollary to Dr. Babbitt's article. He is speaking about what he calls "a particular Providence" which he thinks a difficulty

not of the reason but of the imagination, the same difficulty which gives to so many mathematical certainties the air of paradox.

Imagination stands for very different things. It is common to think of it as only something wild, lawless, extravagant. Of course, it may be this; but it is also really a most prosaic and business-like faculty. "That forward, delusive faculty," says Bishop Butler, "ever obtruding beyond its sphere"; yet nowhere has it been more called upon to widen men's thoughts than in the reasonings of his great argument. Imagination is at once the most misleading and the most truth-bringing of mental powers. It amuses us with dreams; and it brings before us the realities for which words are imperfect or feeble equivalents. It is that which gives the power of holding together in thought a vast and intricate system, or the composition of forces and their reciprocal play, or the balancings and counterpoises and compensations of a subtle argument. It deludes, no doubt, the enthusiast and the theorizer; it plays tricks with the average careless thinkers among men; but it serves, as nothing else can, the mathematician, the discoverer, the man of science, the statesman, as much as it serves the poet and the artist. It translates formulas into that which the mind sees and holds fast. It raises a name or a symbol or an abstraction to a new and higher power, to a real and substantial thing, to a living whole. Give it a *substantial basis*, and the idea of it almost coincides with the Apostolic definition of faith, as the faculty by which we behold the future and the invisible, "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

Now is not this "basis" of imagination almost exactly the same thing as *taste* as spoken of by Dr. Babbitt? Is it not precisely the supplying of a standard for creative action which makes the gift of genius human? Dean Church goes on:

It is a failure of imagination which makes the difficulty. We do not bring to the mastery of the great question the completed equipment of our complex mental organization; we leave out that strange and powerful inward faculty, which sees when the eye sees not, and hears when the ear hears not, and feels and touches when nothing material sends its signals to the brain; which fills our abstractions with reality and life.

As I gather from the whole of Dean Church's teaching the nearer the creative faculty comes to the likeness, or better, to the actuality of the universal—as he says—the *eternal*, the more perfect and inevitable, necessary the form produced becomes.

C. F. SWEET

Tokio, March 23

## Imperturbable

By CALE YOUNG RICE

THREE times the fog rolled in to-day, a silent shroud,  
From which the breakers ran like ghosts, moaning and  
tumbling.

Three times a startled sea bird cried aloud,  
On the wind stumbling.

But I cast my net with never a fear, tho' wraiths in me  
And birds of wild unrest were stirring and starting and  
crying.

For I knew that under the sway of every sea  
There is calm lying.

## BOOKS

### Spirit Communication

*The New Revelation.* By Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. New York: The Doran Company. \$1 net.

*The Dead Have Never Died.* By Edward C. Randall. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. \$1.50 net.

*The Reality of Psychic Phenomena.* By W. J. Crawford. New York: Dutton & Company. \$2 net.

*Letters from Harry and Helen.* Written down by Mary Blount White. New York: Mitchell Kennerley. \$1.50.

*Psychical Phenomena and the War.* By Hereward Carrington: New York: Dodd, Mead & Company. \$2 net.

IF one may judge by superficial indications, the community's faith in a future life has been more stimulated by recent popular "spirit communications" such as Sir Oliver Lodge's "Raymond" and Elsa Baker's "Letters from a Living Dead Man" than by all that the Society for Psychical Research has been able to accomplish in the past ten years. The reason is not far to seek: what faith in another life demands is not "scientific" identification of departed spirits, but some plausible description of what the next life is like. The greatest stumbling-block in the way of faith is not lack of demonstration, but lack of credible material on which the imagination may work. The Book of Revelation furnished this for most of our ancestors, as "The Gates Ajar" did for many of our fathers. It is interesting to note that a fairly large number of our contemporaries are finding a substitute for these older books in the sort of "spirit communication" to which reference has been made. The list of such communications, of which the five books under review are typical, is constantly receiving reinforcements.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's "New Revelation" may add to the persuasion of the already persuaded, but it will hardly persuade any one else. In fairness to Sir Arthur, it should at once be stated that he makes no attempt at persuasion by the introduction of new evidence. He does, however, attempt to present himself as a severe critic of all psychical research, converted only after years of the coldest skepticism; but the reader will draw from this account the conclusion that it was the writer of romances rather than the scientifically trained physician that finally gave in his adhesion to the claims of spiritism. The book leaves one with a rather poor opinion of the doctor's critical abilities. As a result of certain experiences and of

very wide reading in spiritistic literature, all his critical objections were at last broken down, and he is now ready to accept everything spiritism claims, "from the lowest physical phenomenon of a table-rap up to the most inspired utterance of a prophet," including "the heaving table and the flying tambourine." The chief aim of his book is to show that spiritistic claims constitute a new and important religious revelation. Either many of the best minds of the present generation have gone stark mad or else "there has come to us from divine sources a new revelation." What this revelation is, in its main outlines, the author describes, pointing out the general agreement that is to be found between most of the spirit messages, and the ways in which the new revelation confirms and modifies certain Christian beliefs. Probably the most interesting part of his book is the description of the conditions and occupations of the next life, as portrayed in the psychic revelations. The book closes with an exhortation to the faithful to increase their faith, especially by the constant perusal of the edifying literature of the subject. "Soak yourself," he exclaims, "soak yourself with this grand truth."

Sir Arthur is himself so well soaked that it is to be feared that his book will be treated with little reverence by those who scoff at his grand truth. Still better material for ridicule is to be found in Mr. Randall's "The Dead Have Never Died." The writer has a pompous, dogmatic, conceited manner, and his asserted mode of communication with the spirit world will hardly appeal as trustworthy to any but the exceedingly credulous.

A very different type of book is Dr. Crawford's "The Reality of Psychic Phenomena." This is the only one of the books under review that deals with the physical side of spiritism, and it is characterized throughout by careful statement and a scientific attitude. The phenomena described recall Eusapia Paladino, and hence at once put the reader properly on his guard; raps of various intensity are recorded, some of them making a din like that produced by a sledge hammer, tables are tipped and raised without contact, etc. The unique element in Dr. Crawford's experiments consists in the series of careful measurements made and recorded. The medium sat upon a weighing machine, and her weight during the different parts of the tipping and levitation processes was carefully noted; and by the use of another weighing machine and a spring balance various interesting facts concerning the table during these same processes were obtained. The results of the experiments indicated (as might have been anticipated) that the medium was the source of the various activities of the table; thus when the table was raised, its weight was added to the weight of the medium with no additional pressure upon the floor immediately beneath it. In many respects the case which Dr. Crawford makes out for the need of a supernormal explanation is much stronger than that which the supporters of Paladino were ever able to present. Dr. Crawford's medium (Miss Kathleen Goligher) has never been caught in any attempt at fraud and has no pecuniary interest at stake, as she has never received a penny in payment for her work. She and her family (all of whom participate in the sittings) are ardent spiritualists and deeply religious people, to whose integrity Dr. Crawford testifies on the basis of many years' close acquaintance. The illumination of the room, though by red light, was apparently very much better than was used in Paladino's séances. The

results achieved, moreover (if we are to believe Dr. Crawford), are such that they could not possibly be produced by the "Eusapian" methods of manipulation by hands and feet. In several instances a table or stool was raised several feet in the air and held there for some time, the space all around it, above, below, and on all sides, being clearly visible. The magnitude of the force operating upon the table was also extraordinary, and the particular kind of fraud used by Paladino seems here to be ruled out; but it does not follow that no fraud of any kind was practiced, even though it is confessedly difficult to suggest what kind of legerdemain might have been used. It should, moreover, be pointed out that Dr. Crawford's experiments were not as rigorously controlled as one could wish. Though the lighting was better than in most "physical" sittings, white light was rigorously excluded. Dr. Crawford was the only investigator present, and while he was watching the table there was no one to watch the medium and her family. In one respect there was less "control" than in the Paladino experiments, where observers were seated on both sides of the medium. No attempt was made to have any outsider hold Miss Goligher's hands or feet; instead of that two members of her family, themselves mediums, sat next her. As usual, no one and no physical body of any sort were allowed to pass between the chief medium and the table. Even if one accept all the results of the various experiments as impeccable and agree with Dr. Crawford that they demand some supernormal explanation, there is not one bit of evidence in his entire book to indicate that "spirits" had anything whatever to do with the matter. Dr. Crawford's own hypothesis is that the spirits somehow draw out from the body of the medium some kind of subtle matter, make rods and fingers out of it, and transmit "psychic force" along it. But if we admit the subtle matter and the psychic force, none of the facts which he reports demands any other "operator" than just the medium herself. Nor need this necessarily impugn Miss Goligher's good faith; for have we not always the "Subliminal" to which to appeal? Dr. Crawford has done a great deal in reopening the case for "physical phenomena" after its collapse through the exposure of Paladino; it cannot be said that he has proved anything further than the need of more investigation of a rigorously critical sort.

Mr. Carrington's "Psychical Phenomena and the War" is similar to Conan Doyle's book in subject and purpose, though markedly superior to it in presentation and persuasiveness. Its author has long been a student of psychical research and has brought to his work a good deal of critical ability. The outcome of his researches has been a skeptical attitude towards the physical phenomena of spiritism, but an acceptance of the psychical phenomena as the work of the departed. In the book under review he has sought to deal with all the psychical phenomena of the war and has therefore divided his volume into two parts, the first dealing with normal phenomena, the second with the "supernormal." His life-interest in the second of these, however, has naturally led him to get through with the first in rapid fashion (an example which his readers will be wise to follow) and to spend most of his space in an exposition of prophecies and premonitions about the war, apparitions and dreams of soldiers, clairvoyant descriptions of death, and communications from soldiers who have died. The value of much of the material presented could not be appraised without further data than the book provides, and