

*Lombroso and Spiritualism.*

Professor Lombroso has publicly acknowledged beliefs in the existence of psycho-physical powers beyond those hitherto recognised by science. Honour is due to him for this public profession, and for the opportunity it gives of examining some of the data on which his beliefs are founded.

The beliefs of a man of great mental activity, whose repute is world-wide from his views on criminology, certainly demand consideration in connection with a subject which is so largely attracting public attention at the present moment.

Professor Lombroso's beliefs were primarily founded on some *séances* with an Italian medium named Eusepia Paludino, but in the *New York Medico-Legal Journal* (September, 1906), the Professor gives an account of some investigations of "haunted" houses. Three cases are reported. In the first the phenomena, after existing two or three months, ceased on the removal by marriage of a young woman of twenty-one. She produced no new phenomena in her new domicile.

Professor Lombroso saw no phenomena himself in this case, but obtained written statements from several persons who did, but not from the young woman herself, thus making the investigation in regard to facts which occurred ten years before singularly unconvincing. The principal phenomena reported were the loud ringing of a bell, after being filled with "lime and tow," the repeated falling of a Bersagliere hat, even after being nailed up, and the falling of water, to the extent of a tumblerful in a room where no water was.

In the second case the phenomena ceased when a boy was sent away. Lombroso himself witnessed the chief phenomena here—*viz.*, the falling of bottles from shelves in the cellar of a wine and spirit store when the boy was not present. The owners of the spirit store asserted that they had seen things disappear before their eyes. No note is made of the boy's health, age, condition, or after-history.

In the third case, also investigated personally by Lombroso, a child of eight, on going to bed, is supposed to have caused knockings on the wall so forcible that the "vibration was very perceptible." These continued when the child was removed to the opposite side of the room. There does not appear to have been any examination of the other side of the wall. The

knockings were intelligent, answering verbal questions on a code, "in which the letters of the alphabet were denoted by blows. Some of the things thus communicated were correct, some incorrect, and others inconclusive."

After a quarter of an hour the boy fell asleep, the blows became more inconclusive, and finally ceased. The blows were less resounding when the boy was ill of "grippe." The boy presented no abnormal peculiarity, and it is not stated whether his intelligence was equal to the information displayed in the conversation carried on by knocks. Whether his mediumistic powers continue is not stated.

It is to be regretted that these two mediumistic boys were not more thoroughly studied. If isolated for a few days from the scenes of their activity the continuance of their powers would have been absolutely convincing, if observed under strictly scientific conditions.

The absence of this continued observation renders these cases distinctly unsatisfactory.

These "phenomena," if we accept them as facts, would indicate that in two cases of immature brain-development, and in that of a young woman who was a rickety, sickly neurasthenic, a power was evolved which could, at a distance from these brains, be converted into mechanical force—moving bodies, inflicting blows, etc. This force, however, would not be, in all respects, ordinary force, since it could overcome resistance of intervening matter, as in the ringing of the packed bell, and could either overcome gravity by removing water through space into an empty room or produce it in a room where no water was. Whether the water was carried or created by this miracle-working force is about equally unbelievable.

This power or force, developed in immature or unhealthy brain-matter, even in sleep in one case, was not enhanced, but weakened by ill-health in the case of the child, and this, Lombroso asserts, is also the case with the "medium" Eusepia Paludino.

The tendency of modern publishing is to induce men who have attained any widespread notoriety, as scientists, writers, talkers, etc.—men who perhaps are really able, on some small branch of human knowledge, to set up as authorities, and lecture humanity on every subject under the sun. The public, that reads and never thinks, is only too ready to accept their

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utterances as gospel, not appreciating that a man may have hypertrophy of some brain-areas and atrophy of others, just as an athlete with hypertrophic shoulder-muscles may be feeble on his legs.

Lombroso, however, certainly does not fall into this category, and we may be sure that if he discovers that he has been duped he will as frankly own to this as to his beliefs.

A course of training of some few months under a professor of legerdemain should be prescribed to all scientists before entering on an investigation of mediumistic *séances* and haunted houses, and probably the number of conversions after such a course would be considerably reduced.

Professor Lombroso's beliefs imply that the laws of the universe governing every known activity, from the falling of a drop of water to the guidance of the stars in their courses, are set aside and overruled by brain action of a defective type for the most ridiculously puerile and purposeless results. If the Creator could be imagined thus to stultify His omnipotence by giving man the power of overruling the laws governing the universe, such a power would surely manifest itself in the most highly-developed men, and for objects that would teach mankind some really great truths in regard to man's knowledge of the universe, which is the end and aim of all science.

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*The Treatment of Insanity in Asylums.*

Medical critics, who have often an unseen axe to grind or an ancient grudge to gratify, are constantly ventilating in the public press or a medical journal the time-worn allegations of the want of scientific spirit in asylums.

One of these critics, in a recent contribution, begs the question as usual, in his opening paragraph, asserting that "in real medical treatment, directed to the causes, nature, and cure of insanity, very little has been done, very little is being done, and the methods found fertile in other fields are not being pursued," and he then goes on to explain why this is, from his point of view.

A critic who is so little acquainted with the medical literature of the day as to make the above assertion a basis of his contention, it may be argued, is too wanting in knowledge of his subject to need consideration.