

ALFRED RUSSEL WALLACE ON THE "UNCONSCIOUS SECONDARY SELF."*

We see that, even confining ourselves to undoubted phantasms of the living, or to impressions not connected with death, the feats are totally inexplicable on any theory of telepathy between living persons, but clearly point to the agency of preter-human intelligence—in other words, of spirits. The prejudice against such a conception is enormous, but the work of the Psychological Research Society has, it is to be hoped, somewhat undermined it. They have established, beyond further dispute for all who study the evidence, that veridical phantasms of the dead do exist; and the evidence itself—not ignorant or even scientific prejudice—must decide whether these phantasms which, as we have seen in my last article, are often objective are the work of men or of spirits.

Before adducing further evidence on this point, it will be well to consider briefly the extraordinary theory of the "second self" or "unconscious ego," which is appealed to by many modern writers as a substitute for spirit agency, when that of the normal human being is plainly inadequate. This theory is founded on the phenomena of dreams, of clairvoyance, and of duplex personality, and has been elaborately expounded by Du Prel in two volumes, 8vo., translated by Mr. C. C. Massey. As an example of the kind of facts this theory is held to explain, we may refer to the experiments of the Rev. P. H. Newnham and Mrs. Newnham with planchette. The experiments were conducted by Mrs. Newnham, sitting at a low table with her hand on the planchette, while Mr. Newnham sat with his back towards her at another table eight feet distant. Mr. Newnham wrote questions on paper, and instantly, sometimes simultaneously, the planchette under Mrs. Newnham's hand wrote the answers. Experiments were carried on for eight months, during which time 309 questions and answers were recorded. All kinds of questions were asked and the answers were always pertinent to the questions, though often evasions rather than direct answers. Great numbers of the answers did not correspond with the opinions or expectations of either Mr. or Mrs. Newnham, and were sometimes beyond their knowledge. To convince an incredulous visitor, Mr. Newnham went with him into the hall, where he, the visitor, wrote down the question, "What is the Christian name of my eldest sister?" Mr. Newnham saw the question, but did not know the name, yet on returning to the study they found that planchette had already written "Mina," the family abbreviation of Wilhelmina, which was the correct name. Mr. Newnham is a Free Mason, and asked many questions as to the Masonic ritual of which Mrs. Newnham knew nothing. The answers were partly correct and partly incorrect, sometimes quite original, as when a prayer used at the advancement of a Mark Master Mason was asked for, and a very admirable prayer instantly written out, using Masonic terms, but, Mr. Newnham says, quite unlike the actual prayer he was thinking of, and also unlike any prayer used by Masons or known to Mr. Newnham. It was, in fact, as Mr. Newnham says, "a formula composed by some intelligence totally distinct from the conscious intelligence of either of the persons engaged in the experiment."

Now, all this, and a great deal more equally remarkable, is imputed to the agency of Mrs. Newnham's "unconscious

self," a second independent, intelligent personality, of which Mrs. Newnham herself knows nothing except when it "emerges" under special conditions, such as those here described. In the same way Du Prel explains all the phenomena of clairvoyance, of premonitions, of apparent possession, and of the innumerable cases in which sensitives exhibit knowledge of facts, which in their normal state they do not possess, and have had no possible means of acquiring.

But is this so-called explanation any real explanation, or anything more than a juggle of words which creates more difficulties than it solves? The conception of such a double personality in each of us, a second self which in most cases remains unknown to us all our lives, which is said to live an independent mental life, to have means of acquiring knowledge our normal self does not possess, to exhibit all the characteristics of a distant individuality with a different character from our own is surely a conception more ponderously difficult, more truly supernatural than that of a spirit-world, composed of beings who have lived and learned and suffered on earth, and whose mental nature still subsists after its separation from the earthly body. We shall find, too, that this latter theory explains *all* the facts simply and directly, that it is in accordance with *all* the evidence, and that, in an overwhelming majority of cases, it is the explanation given by the communicating intelligences themselves. On the "second self" theory we have to suppose that this recondite but worse half of ourselves, while possessing some knowledge we have not, does not know that it is part of us, or if it knows, is a persistent liar, for in most cases it adopts a distinct name, and persists in speaking of us, its better half, in the third person. But there is yet another, and I think a more fundamental objection to this view, in the impossibility of conceiving how or why this second self was developed in us under the law of survival of the fittest. The theory is upheld to avoid recourse to any "spiritual" explanation of phenomena, "spirit" being the last thing our modern men of science "will give in to."* But if so—if there is no spiritual nature in man that survives the earthly body, if man is but a highly intellectual animal developed from a lower animal form under the law of the survival of the fittest, how did this "second self," this "unconscious ego," come into existence? Have the mollusk and the reptile, the dog and the ape "unconscious egos"? And if so, why? And what use are they to these creatures, so that they might have been developed by means of the struggle for existence? Darwin detected no sign of such "second selves" either in animals or men; and if they do not pertain to animals but do pertain to men, then we are involved in the same difficulty that is so often urged against Spiritualists, that we require some break in the law of continuous development, and some exertion of a higher power to create and bring into the human organism this strange and useless "unconscious ego"—useless except to puzzle us with insoluble problems, and make our whole nature and existence seem more mysterious than ever. Of course, this unconscious ego is supposed to die with the conscious man, for if not, we are introduced to a new and gratuitous difficulty, of the relation of these two intelligences and characters, distinct, yet bound indissolubly together in the after life.

We find, therefore, that the theory of duplex personality creates more difficulties than it solves, while the facts it proposes to explain can be dealt with far more thoroughly on the spiritual hypothesis.

"V."

* From "What are Phantasms?" "Arena" February, 1891.