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SPIRIT RAPPING: A LEAF OUT OF MY LIFE

FACTS AND NO FICTION.

[BY DR. L. M. BONS.]

A few years ago, in company with a friend, I paid a visit to Dr. S., a celebrated spirit-rapper.

After brief salutations we were admitted into the Doctor's sanctum sanctorum, and being invited to sit down, the Doctor seated himself before a large round table, which occupied the middle of the room, and at the opposite side of which a boy, about ten or twelve years old, the Doctor's visible medium, as he was called, was seated, and who watched the Doctor's eyes carefully.

"Now, gentlemen, you come no doubt prepared to ask me some questions which will be in my power to answer by consulting the departed spirits interested in your welfare," began the Doctor.

My friend, Mr B—r—y, a Hungarian, who had only been a very short time in this country, unfolded to the Doctor his well-concocted story in rather broken English—

"If you vill assist me in relieving my mint of de fellow-ink anxiety, my kratitude vill be unpoundet. vilest I shall pe convinced of de cabapility of men, and de frauen also, to commune mit de immortal shpirits. It is now shust too years since I deblore de loss of meins selige frau, and my doo leetle, very leetle children intect, cry for deir beloved mutter. Having arrived in dis land of freedom, dey have been freed from all de cares deir relations had bestowed on dem, and nacht and tay I am dormented mit de idea dat dese leetle bloomen must bine away if I cannot bestow on dem dat love which deir hullfless condition requires, and vich only eine gute mutter can give dem. I dink, derefore, to take eine andere frau, put should not dink of undertaking such a serious step should I know dat meins selige frau should disapprove of it."

"You therefore want to inquire of your deceased wife if she consents to your plan?"

"Shust so."

"Where did your wife die?"

"At Buda-Pest."

"I suppose that is a good distance from London?"

"Somedink like 1,100 to 1,200 miles."

"I will consult with my medium," the Doctor said abruptly, glancing at the boy at his opposite side, and invoked a spirit, who at once indicated his obedient servility by three distinct gentle knocks, which apparently emanated from under the table.

"What was your wife's Christian name, Mr. B—r—y?"

"Leonora fuhr um's Morgenroth," answered my friend. (1)

"That is a very hard name to pronounce; I suppose it's Hungarian. Can you not abbreviate it, somewhat?"

"Say Leonora Morgenroth."

The Doctor had a hard task to pronounce the last name correctly, which he twisted in all different ways before he succeeded, "for it is of no use to invoke departed spirits if you don't pronounce their names correctly," the Doctor very wisely remarked; "if you call Sophia—Mary Jane, Sophia won't come."

"Leonora Magenroth," said the Doctor, in a tone of voice adapted to this solemn occasion, and, as if conversing with his medium, "Bring me here Leonora Maggynroth."

A few minutes we heard two very slow knocks.

"What means this?" the Doctor inquired.

And now followed a repeated knocking, reminding one of the working a message at a telegraph office. When this noise stopped, the Doctor rose slowly and spoke in a low voice, "Gentlemen, Leonora Magenbroth has been summoned to appear and answer your question, but being at so great a distance it will require some time, say half-an-hour, before we can expect her appearance; will you withdraw into the ante-room until I call for you?"

We withdrew, and my reader may well imagine with what feelings, since the story told by my friend was our conjoint lofty invention; and whilst another heavy-laden mortal sought his intercession, we had time enough to invent another story concerning my own interests. Could spirits travel by "Flying Dutchmen" they could not pass a distance of 1,200 miles in less than a day, but scarcely had the half-hour passed away in our merry reflections, and some two or three women been relieved, strengthened and comforted by the Doctor, when we were called back.

"Laura Mo—Mo—g," stammered the Doctor, who struggled with immense difficulties in getting her name out of his mouth.

"Laura Morgenroth, or Morningred, as she would heissen in Sherman," supplied Mr B.

"Why did you not say so long ago, and save me the difficulties?" said Dr. S., rather warmly.

"Laura Morningred, the spirit of your deceased wife, I am happy to tell you, has attended to my summons," said he, with a beaming countenance, "has arrived, and is anxiously waiting to answer your questions, which you will repeat distinctly."

"Geliebte meiner Seele," my friend began, when he was interrupted by the Doctor, who said that he must speak English, when my friend remarked that his wife did not understand that language, upon which the Doctor remarked that spirits understood all languages. And these scruples overcome, Mr B. began his petition in a trembling voice, especially adapted for this present occasion:

"Dearest Leonora fuhr um's Morgenroth, my dear frau, beloved of my soul, will you bermit me and give me de liberty dat I marry another wife, dat you tear leetle offsprings may receive some of de care of which dey have been deprived by your debarment from dese derestial regions? My heart is balbiding in a flutter, and almost purting open in anxious suspense."

After this solemn petition Dr. S. gave a slight glance at his visible medium, whereupon three slow, distinct raps were heard, which he declared, with a radiant look, meant that Laura, &c., &c., alias Mrs B—r—y, fully sanctioned her dear husband's fervent prayer, and gave her consent to his marriage.

These glad tidings were received by us with cheerfulness which gave vent to a hearty laughter, which the Doctor explained as the very natural result of the happy solution of previous difficulties.

Our expressions of admiration for his skill and gratitude for his exertions, were not quite exhausted, when Dr. S. accosted me.

"And have you, my friend, anything troubling your mind? Let me hear it, and by the aid of my medium I will relieve you, as far as it lies in my power."

"Thanks, first, for your kind solacing remarks," I replied, "but as you have had great trouble with my friend I will not detain you long. Listen to my troubles. It was at the battle of Idst—, where I was commanding a small detachment, who were surrounded by a rather heavy

onward pressing troop of the enemy. My brother was fighting at my side, when a well-aimed shot pierced his heart—he fell in my arms, looked up to me. "One thing—before I die—you are—," he stammered, and breathed his last. Could I have heard but two words more, I should rest quiet, and that horrible picture would not haunt me night and day."

Idst— is H— not being half so far as Buda-Pest, in Hungary, the spirit of my fictitious brother was soon brought in conversation with the medium, and to my great relief I was told by the Doctor that my brother's spirit had confessed to his medium that I was the rightful heir to a large estate, of which some distant relative enjoyed by illegal means the benefit.

This happy disclosure, which may have resulted in raising me at once to a baronetcy, acted of course irresistibly on my risible nerves, which by sympathy and contagion so affected Mr B. that he burst out in a loud laughter, and in which first the medium and then the grave Doctor himself joined, but who was soon brought back to his gravity when I thought it advisable to ask the Doctor's charge for his great trouble in solving our questions by means of conjuring up and consulting departed spirits, and trying to teach and convince us his supernatural power and transcendental communications, and to repay by some reciprocal advice.

The Doctor declined to receive any remuneration from us, but hoped that his success in solving our questions, which could only have been effected by the great migrations of two departed souls, and our convictions in spirit-rapping caused by his exertions, would no doubt lead to our spreading his fame and wisdom, and would naturally result for him in a rich harvest.

But how much receded the mercury of his expectations when I asked him—

Is it possible, Doctor, for spirits to appear who have not had even as much as the shadow of a body? (vide note 2.)

"How am I to understand your question?"

"To speak plainly then with you—I did not believe in the appearance of departed spirits by any human invocation—from psychological reasons,—yet it may be possible that some over-heated, over-excited brains may deceive themselves in that direction; yet, how is it possible to invoke the spirits of departed fictitious persons. Since you want me to explain myself I do so. My friend Mr B. has never been married, still you bring the spirit of his deceased wife—a fictitious person. My brother, to the best of my knowledge, has enjoyed very good health up to this moment, and which I hope he will continue to do. How is it possible to summon the spirit of a living being, and consult with him, in your way of proceeding?"

"I see it clear—the devil has mocked you."

"Truly, the devil incarnate in Dr. S."

We did not fail to report our proceedings forthwith, and had the great satisfaction when we passed Great Russell-street some time afterwards to see that the celebrated spirit-rapper and phrenologist had taken his departure.

NOTES.

1.—The commencing lines of j" Burger's " well-known ballad, "Leonora."

2.—The Talmud says that the offspring of the man and wife, created according to the first tradition of man's creation in the Bible, had a shadowless, transparent body, and were called Shemen; vide also Robert Burton, "Anatomy of Melancholy."