

OUR SUPERNORMAL FACULTIES

By Mary Austin

IN "Supernormal Faculties in Man", Eugene Osty has given us quite the most helpful book on the subject that has yet appeared. For he has done that very necessary thing, the setting in order and cataloguing of our knowledge of the subject to date, under headings that will readily be recognized by the layman, whose interest in the subject waits tirelessly on the somewhat tardy efforts of the scientist to elucidate it for him. In this volume Dr. Osty has undertaken to deal with that hidden sense, "cryptæsthesia", of which everybody has had some experience.

Dr. Osty deals with but one phase of it, the capacity of man to cognize conditions and sequences in himself and his fellow men, by processes other than objective. At once he finds himself confronted by a difficulty long recognized by other students of the supernormal, the need for discriminating terminology. This he has met with an unusual degree of success, both by choice of the best existing terms, and by terms of his own coin-

ing. For instance, he uses "percipient" and "percipience" in place of the bedraggled "medium" and "mediumship", and clearly distinguishes between "cognition" as a process, and "knowledge" which is the result of that process. "Psychism" is used to cover the psychic activity of a human being, and "dynamo-psychism" for the psychic energy pervading nature. Probably the unscientific reader will less quickly accept "metanormal", "paranormal", and "supernormal" for describing extranormal states, but they are at least a great advance on the generally used and wholly unexplicit "subconscious". "Metagnomy", to describe the general process of *knowing beyond* the immediate-self, is another unfamiliar term, but at least one that permits us to discuss the subject without committing ourselves to any hypothesis.

Dr. Osty classifies all the familiar modes of metagnomy, such as diagnosis of oneself or another, foretelling a death, foretelling the future, cognizing events removed from the percipient in time, in space, or both time and space, in life or in death, and all the familiar aspects in which experience of this nature presents itself. He gives carefully selected examples under each classification, from the abundant material supplied by the psychological laboratories of France.

There is also a chapter on the phenomena attending the exercise of the metagnomic faculty, such as hypnosis, trance, contact with the subject or with some object handled by the subject of the percipient's attention, and fluctuations of the faculty in the process of experiment. Another chapter is devoted to considerations of the source of metagnomic information, and another, almost the most important chapter in the book, to recogniz-

ing and tracing errors which may arise either within the percipient or within the subject, or even within a third person present and interested in the experiment.

In summing up, Dr. Osty insists upon the right of the psychic experimenter to a working hypothesis; at the same time so modestly stating his own that it is likely to elude the general reader. Quite definitely, but without any special animus, he discards the theosophical hypothesis of an astral duplication of the personality of the seeker on the spiritual plane of the universe, and the spiritualist variant of that theory in which the seeker abandons his cerebral mechanism to dematerialized entities. What is indicated by his studies thus far, Dr. Osty believes, is that there is psychic collaboration between percipient and subject, on non-conscious planes. It is undoubtedly this non-conscious collaboration, probably going on all the time, which is responsible for the psychic states of the group, the flock, and the mob. Dr. Osty does not attempt to indicate the nature of this interchange, but from his avoidance of such terms as "telepathy", "thought transference", and the like, one gathers that he does not think of it as mechanistic in its nature. "It is", he says in another place, "no longer possible to consider the human being as an aggregate of thought-producing mechanisms. The evidence compels admission that we are in the presence of a dynamo-psychic focus whence emanate manifestations of a power whose limits we cannot define.

. . . Beyond the Conscious is found ability to perceive the (normally) imperceptible, and to know the (normally) unknowable. Deep in the human being are found in miniature the attributes with which philosophies have

adorned the God-concept — creative power and knowledge outside Space and Time."

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