

# The Book Of Dreams And Ghosts

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The Book of Dreams and Ghosts The Book of Dreams and Ghosts by Andrew Lang is A collection of evidence suggesting that ghosts exist. The writer does not seem to expound theories to support these beliefs but merely talks about experiences that corroborate them in so many diverse situations that they tend to be almost factual. The book starts with simple appearances to the startling. Finally the book explores various theories explaining the phenomenon of ghosts and how each theory relates to peoples' experiences. Book Excerpts: The chief purpose of this book is, if fortune helps, to entertain people interested in the kind of narratives here collected. For the sake of orderly arrangement, the stories are classed in different grades, as they advance from the normal and familiar to the undeniably startling. At the same time an account of the current theories of Apparitions is offered, in language as free from technicalities as possible. According to modern opinion every "ghost" is a "hallucination," a false perception, the perception of something which is not present. It has not been thought necessary to discuss the psychological and physiological processes involved in perception, real or false. Every "hallucination" is a perception, "as good and true a sensation as if there were a real object there. The object happens not to be there, that is all." {0a} We are not here concerned with the visions of insanity, delirium, drugs, drink, remorse, or anxiety, but with "sporadic cases of hallucination, visiting people only once in a lifetime, which seems to be by far the most frequent type". "These," says Mr. James, "are on any theory hard to understand in detail. They are often extraordinarily complete; and the fact that many of them are reported as veridical, that is, as coinciding with real events, such as accidents, deaths, etc., of the persons seen, is an additional complication of the phenomenon." {0b} A ghost, if seen, is undeniably so far a "hallucination" that it gives the impression of the presence of a real person, in flesh, blood, and usually clothes. No such person in flesh, blood, and clothes, is actually there. So far, at least, every ghost is a hallucination, "\_that\_" in the language of Captain Cuttle, "you may lay to," without offending science, religion, or common-sense. And that, in brief, is the modern doctrine of ghosts. The old doctrine of "ghosts" regarded them as actual "spirits" of the living or the dead, freed from the flesh or from the grave. This view, whatever else may be said for it, represents the simple philosophy of the savage, which may

be correct or erroneous. About the time of the Reformation, writers, especially Protestant writers, preferred to look on apparitions as the work of deceitful devils, who masqueraded in the aspect of the dead or living, or made up phantasms out of "compressed air". The common-sense of the eighteenth century dismissed all apparitions as "dreams" or hoaxes, or illusions caused by real objects misinterpreted, such as rats, cats, white posts, maniacs at large, sleep-walkers, thieves, and so forth. Modern science, when it admits the possibility of occasional hallucinations in the sane and healthy, also admits, of course, the existence of apparitions. These, for our purposes, are hallucinatory appearances occurring in the experience of people healthy and sane. The difficulty begins when we ask whether these appearances ever have any provoking mental cause outside the minds of the people who experience them--any cause arising in the minds of others, alive or dead. This is a question which orthodox psychology does not approach, standing aside from any evidence which may be produced.

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