

SPECIAL
ARTICLES

Our Contributors

BOOK
REVIEWS

VISIONS OF THE UNSEEN.

Extract from *The Spirit World* by Rev. Joseph Hamilton.

Take some analogies from this lower world, as illustrating the probability that the visions of the unseen that have been vouchsafed to men, were produced by some higher spirit causing a series of images or pictures to pass before the mind while the body was in a deep sleep. The idea is by no means far-fetched or visionary, though at the first glance it may seem so.

Take the simple fact that we can convey ideas through the medium of speech. That is so common an experience that it is no longer surprising. But if we had never known such a thing as language, would we not be astounded at seeing its effects for the first time. To think that by a variety of articulate sounds we can convey, not merely the most common, but some of the most obtuse ideas, is really marvellous.

Now, since mind can thus come into contact with mind, notwithstanding these gross bodies that tend so much to keep us apart, it is surely not unreasonable to believe that in a higher state, where the body is so etherealized as to respond with the utmost alertness to every emotion of the mind, mutual communication may be carried on with a rapidity and accuracy of which we have but a dim suggestion here. One mind may have the power to flash its thoughts on another mind in a moment, and with a vividness and force which to our cumbersome human language is quite impossible. It is easy for me, then, to believe that the objects which saints and seers have seen in vision, were pictures or images of things which superior minds called up and produced at will. And the body being in a trance for the time, the spirit was so far released from the dominion of the flesh that it was plastic enough to receive the impression so conveyed.

Even more wonderful than spoken language is written language in this regard. We can put our thoughts on a sheet of paper; we can present that sheet to another eye; and the thoughts printed on that cold page are flashed in a moment into another brain. Usage has taken off the keen edge of wonder that such a thing can be done. But we may realize how wonderful the thing is by its effect on a savage when he sees it for the first time. To him it is utterly astounding.

Now if such a thing as that is possible to us in this lower life, with all our cumbersome mechanical methods, is it far-fetched to suppose that an angel might produce a similar effect, but in a far easier and swifter and completer way? And that is just what I suppose he really does when he flashes such scenes on the human mind. While the vision, then, is no less real, it is only subjective; the objects discerned have no bodily existence; they are ideas only, embodied in those particular forms. Thus, it seems to me, the Scripture records of visions become credible even to a sceptic, because they are seen to be in harmony with analogy.

As farther illustrating this view of the case, take the fact that we can produce images of things by painting. We can paint pictures with so much realism that nature sometimes cannot be distinguished from art. We have read of two of the old masters who were both so eminent in their art that there was a bitter rivalry between them as to which was

to be acknowledged supreme. This contention grew, till at length it was agreed that each should paint a picture on the merits of which the final verdict would depend. So one of them painted a picture of cherries, and painted it with so much realism that even the birds were deceived, and came to feast upon the fruit. That was surely a master stroke, but it was outdone by his rival. He also painted a picture, but he gave it no name. When the time came for the picture to be exposed, he asked his rival to draw aside the screen that hid the picture from view. He stepped forward to do so, when lo! the screen itself was the picture, but painted with so much realism that even the veteran artist was deceived. Such is the perfection to which this art has been developed.

I myself saw in a gallery in Brussels, Belgium, a dog in a corner of the room. My companion and I, wondering what business a dog had to be in a picture gallery, went forward to examine, when lo! the dog was no dog at all, but only the picture of a dog. And I found that our experience was not peculiar, for I met with others who had been taken in by that dog in just the same way. It is wonderful what realistic effects of this kind can be produced.

Now to what do all these remarks tend, and what is their bearing on the question before us? Why, simply this: that if we can put objects on canvas with so much realism, why may not a similar thing be done in a higher state of being, but done by some higher process, and with infinitely more ease and completeness? Painting is a very tedious thing, and a very coarse thing when examined in detail. But if, with all our coarse and cumbersome appliances, we can produce such effects, who can say what an angel might not produce and with what ease and swiftness and accuracy?

Photography gives us a hint of glorious possibilities of this kind in a higher state. By some process more subtle and spiritual than photography, might not some higher spirit cast pictures on the sensitive brain, as we cast them on the sensitive plate? If we knew all, I think we might find that it was a very easy matter to photograph those cattle on Pharaoh's brain, and those seraphim on Isaiah's, and the white-robed throng on John's. And the practical value of this thought is, that it renders the Scripture account of visions distinctly credible on grounds of reason, and thus brings the glory of the unseen more vividly within the realm of faith. This is surely what is needed above all things in this age of worldliness, and materialism. Happy are they whose keen vision can penetrate the dull fog of earth, and like Saint John, see a "door opened in heaven."

At the Chapel of St. Peter in Florence there is a choir of birds, the only one of its kind in existence. The birds—300 in number—are all in separate cages, which are arranged in rows on both sides of the altar. The leader is a girl, who has had the birds under her personal training for over two years. The whole of the musical part of the service is most exquisitely rendered by them. The leader starts each hymn by whistling the first few notes, and then the birds take it up, in obedience to the movement of their instructor's hand.

France has one university student to every 865 of her population; Great Britain has only one in 2,150.

THE POWER OF A QUIET MIND.

In the crowded aisles of the huge department store men and women were pressing eagerly about the counters. Christmas was almost at hand, and many gifts were to be bought for loved ones at home and far away. Many a face was brighter and cheerier than on other days in the year; yet many a face looked out through the crowd with frowns and anxious, troubled glances from eyes that snapped with impatience.

It was a restless, moving crowd, now eddying turbulently where broad aisles crossed, now drifting in long lanes reaching as far as the eye could see, breaking into waves and rapids, flowing hither and thither without a moment's rest.

In sharp contrast to the scenes along the busy aisles was the scene within a small room high up in a corner of the building. There, with a single helper near him, sat a man, who, to all appearances, might be quietly reflecting on a philosophical problem that had just occurred to him. He was talking with a visitor,—talking as though in his home library on a winter's night; talking in a low voice whose cadences betrayed not the least commotion within. He was not wasting words. Every word counted. And there was no hurry, no jostling of unruly thoughts, but a steadiness that told of a curbed and disciplined mind. No man in all the city was more quiet in demeanor, more easily urbane, more orderly and patient in word and look, than this man, whose toiling, driving, overcoming mind had invented the processes, planned the workings, and designed the attractiveness of a colossal, happy, anxious crowd is drawn thither without quite knowledge of a colossal mart where human needs are so met that the restless, happy, anxious crowd is drawn thither without quite knowing why it is so.

That steady, low-voiced, watchful man in the small room is a contradiction to the popular notion of high efficiency. The world looks for bustle and stir beneath the accomplished big result, and measures a man's efficiency by the number of motions he makes, rather than by the number of useful motions he can lead others to make. But the mind that achieves is the quiet mind, the mind that is not flurried by events or its own achieves is the quiet mind, the mind itself an achievement which must precede such work as we may do at our best.

Clear thought is not possible to the mind that is clouded by flurry. The business man who faces a great opportunity cannot lay hold of it with a masterful grip if he allows himself to become too excitedly interested in the gains which he thinks he sees just beyond the stroke. He must steady his thoughts by hard work on the problem before him. The man who faces a crisis in his affairs can easily become helpless by dwelling nervously on the crisis, and fail to win through it, not from lack of average ability, but from sheer lack of steadiness and quiet thinking. The minister may take a sermon-germ, nourish into life, and then kill it by mental uneasiness over what he vaguely fears may be its effect on his people.

Nowhere is the power of a quiet mind more definitely felt than in the home circle. The father who rises in the morning, anxious and not rested, look-