

Sleep itself is a mystery. I, at least, have never been able to find in any scientific work, or to learn from any scientific man, a description of what sleep really is. It is not much to be wondered at, therefore, if the action of the eye and the brain and the mental powers during sleep be also a mystery. But some light seems to be thrown upon the question if we apply to the case of dreams the notion of reversed action, which is the foundation of this essay. Suppose the mind or the brain to be first acted upon, either by a message through some other sense, as that of feeling or hearing, or by some process originating in the mind itself, the remembrance of some thought which has been dwelt upon in the waking hours, the whisper of an angel—if you please to recognize angelic agency—or what not, and then it certainly seems to come within the bounds of practical speculation that we should conceive of vision in sleep as a possible thing. Waking visions and dreams have often, and very naturally, been connected with each other. If we get near to a scientific connection of them, the conception becomes all the more real.

There is a very interesting discussion by Sir William Hamilton (Edinburgh) on the condition of the mind during sleep, to which reference may be advantageously made in connection with the remarks which have been now offered. The concluding sentence is as follows: "In case of sleep, therefore, so far is it from being proved that the mind is at any moment unconscious, that the result of observation would incline us to the opposite conclusion." The result of Sir W. Hamilton's own observations, and that of Mr. Jouffroy, whom he quotes at length, is to suggest that during sleep the mind is awake and active: so much so, that when communications are made to the senses, the mind decides whether notice shall be taken of the communications or not. Thus a man comes from the quiet of the country to a noisy city; for the first few nights he cannot sleep, soon he sleeps as soundly as in the country; he is accustomed to the noise; the action on the physical organs is the same as before, but the mind knows