

THE MURDERER AND THE OCULAR PHOTOGRAPH.—The student of psychology, both morbid and sociologic, finds nowhere better material than in medical superstitions. The immortality of these superstitions is wonderful. They are not affected by civilization, and the growth of science and of common-sense leaves them untouched. Of late the newspapers of the land have been immensely interested in the astonishing exhibitions in the eye of a murdered woman of the photographic image of her murderer. The "local scientist" examines the dead woman's eye, and by "a magnification of four hundred diameters" he finds plainly the image of a "man's form." Coroner, clergymen and others saw the startling photograph. There is something not a little pathetic in the impulsive desire on the part of poor humanity to find that divine retribution has contrived some secret means whereby crime shall be found out. But when we read the account carefully we find that in the present case the "local scientist" examined the dead woman's eye as it rested naturally in the socket. That, of course, means that he examined the cornea, be-

cause without the aid of the ophthalmoscopic principle the retina of the undissected eye is still as invisible as it was before Helmholtz invented the ophthalmoscope. But, unless the woman wore biconvex lenses of some thirty or more diopters, how, in the name of optics, would an image be formed upon the cornea? This leaves out of the count the facts that nobody ever wore such lenses, and that if one did no image could be formed of the murderer a few feet away, and that the cornea is a light-transmitting structure, without any analogy to that of the retina or a photographic sensitive plate. We suppose that this kind of popular science had in mind a vague echo of the experiments with the visual purple of the retina, which seemed to give some warrant for the belief in retinal fixation of the last image seen before death. But the unconscious transferring of the seat of the changes to the cornea was as remarkable for blundering and for jumping to conclusions as such science could well be. It is this condition of mind that makes visible what does not exist and that renders human testimony as regards certain things utterly valueless.—*Med. News.*

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