

The word *trance*, as explained in the London Encyclopædia, signifies a temporary absence of the soul; a rapture; a state in which the soul is rapt into visions of future or distant things. And according to the learned Parkhurst, the word means a "sacred ecstasy, when, the use of the external senses being suspended, God reveals something in a peculiar manner to his servants, who are then taken or transported out of themselves." This is a phenomenon full of mystery, and the reality of which some persons have doubted; but, I think, without due consideration. Balaam is said to have been in a trance; and having had "his eyes opened" therein, we are told that he "saw the visions of the Almighty, and knew the knowledge of the Most High." Peter was also in a trance upon the house-top, which place he had retired for prayer, and received symbolical instructions relative to his future proceedings with the Gentiles. And Paul is supposed to have been in a trance, "whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell; God only knew;" but he "was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it was not lawful for a man to utter. Since that period there have been well-attested instances of individuals who have been in a similar state; some of which are on record in several highly-respectable publications;" and the following singular relation is intended to add to their number.

While residing in a British colony, as a Christian missionary, I was called one evening to visit Miss D—, who was said to be dying. Mrs. Young, by whom she was met weekly for religious instruction, feeling a deep interest in her spiritual welfare, accompanied me to her residence. We found her in the chamber of a neat little cottage, exceedingly ill, but confiding in the merits of Jesus: and after spending some time with her in conversation and prayer, we commended her to God, and took our departure without the least hope of seeing her again in this life. Soon after we left she seemed to die; but as the usual signs of death, which so rapidly develop themselves in that country, did not appear, her friends concluded that she was in a trance, and anxiously waited to see the end. She remained in this state for several days, during which period we repeatedly visited her; and the only indication we could perceive that life was not extinct, were a slight foaming at the mouth, and a little warmth about the region of the heart. She was watched with great interest, both night and day; and after being in this state for nearly a week, she opened her eyes and said, "Mr. C. is dead." Her attendants, thinking that she was under the influence of delirium, replied that she was mistaken, as he was not only alive, but well. "O no!" said she: he is dead; for, a short time ago, as I passed the gates of hell, I saw him descend into the pit, and the blue flame cover him. Mr. B— is also dead, for he arrived at heaven just as I was leaving that happy place, and I saw its beautiful gates thrown wide open to receive him; and heard the host of heaven shout, "Welcome, weary pilgrim!" Mr. C— was a neighbour, but a very wicked person; and Mr. B—, who lived at no great distance, was a good old man, and for many years had been a consistent and useful member of the church of God. The parties who heard Miss D—'s startling and confident statements, immediately sent to make inquiries about the two individuals alluded to; and found, to their utter astonishment, that the former had dropped down dead about half an hour before, while in the act of tying his shoe: and that about the same time, the latter had suddenly passed into the eternal world. For the truth of these facts I do solemnly vouch. She then went on to tell them where she had been, and what she had seen and heard.

After being sufficiently recovered to leave the house, she paid us a visit; and Mrs. Young, as well as myself, heard from her own lips the following account of what she had passed through. She informed us, that, at the time she was supposed to die, a celestial being conducted her into the invisible world, and mysteriously unveiled to her the realities of eternity. He took her first to heaven; but she was told that as she yet belonged to time, she could not be permitted to enter into that glorious place, but only to be-

* See the well-known account of the *trance* of the Rev. Wm. Tennent, a learned and eminently pious minister of the Presbyterian church.

hold it; which she represented as infinitely exceeding in beauty and splendour the most elevated conceptions of mortals, and whose glory no language could describe. She told us that she beheld the Saviour upon a throne of light and glory, surrounded by the four-and-twenty elders, and a great multitude which no man could number; among whom she recognised patriarchs, and prophets, and apostles, and martyrs, and all the missionaries who had died in that colony, besides many others whom she mentioned; and although these parties were not named by the angel that attended her, yet she said that seeing them was to know them. She described those celestial spirits as being variously employed; and although she felt herself inadequate to convey any definite view of the nature of that employment, yet it appeared to be adapted to their respective mental and spiritual attainments. She also informed us that she heard sweet and most enrapturing music, such as she had never heard before; and made several attempts to give us some idea of its melodious character, but found her notes too earthly for that purpose. While thus favoured, the missionaries already referred to, and other happy spirits, as they glided past her, sweetly smiled, and said they knew whence she came, and, if faithful to the grace of God, she would in a short time be admitted into their delightful society. All the orders of heaven were in perfect and blessed harmony, and appeared to be directed in all their movements by a mysterious influence proceeding from the throne of God.

She was next conducted to a place whence she had a view of hell, which she described in the most terrific language; and declared that the horrid shrieks of lost spirits still seemed to sound in her ears. As she approached the burning pit, a tremendous effort was made to draw her into it; but she felt herself safe under the protection of her guardian angel. She recognised many in the place of torment whom she had known on earth, and even some who had been thought good Christians. There were princes and peasants, rich and poor, learned and unlearned, writhing together in one dreadful and unquenchable fire, where all earthly distinctions and titles were forever at an end. Among them she beheld a Miss W—, who had occupied a prominent station in society, but had died during the trance of this young woman. She said that when Miss W— saw her approach, her shrieks were appalling beyond the power of language to describe, and that she made a desperate but unsuccessful effort to escape. The punishment of lost souls she represented as symbolising the respective sins which had occasioned their condemnation. Miss W—, for instance, was condemned for her love of money, which I had every reason to believe was her besetting sin; and she seemed robed in a garment of gold, all on fire. Mr. O—, whom she saw, was lost through intemperance; and he appeared to be punished by devils, administering to him some boiling liquid. She said there was no sympathy among these unhappy spirits, but that unmix'd hatred, in all its frightful forms, prevailed in every part of the fiery regions. She beheld parents and children, husbands and wives, and those who had been companions in sin, exhibiting every mark of deep hatred to each other's society, and heard them, in fiendish accents, upbraiding and bitterly cursing one another. She saw nothing in hell but misery and despair; and heard nothing there but the most discordant sounds, accompanied with weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. While she gazed on this revolting scene, many souls arrived from earth, and were greedily seized by innumerable devils of monstrous shape, amidst horrid shouts of hellish triumph, and tortured according to their crimes.

This fearful view of the state of the lost agrees with the testimony of S. T., whose case is on record in Mr. Wesley's Journal. She tells us that while in her trance, the place of the condemned was unveiled, and she "saw a vast number who stood up cursing and blaspheming God, and spitting at each other. And many were making balls of fire, and throwing them at one another." She also "saw many other who had cups of fire, out of which they were drinking down flames; and others who held cards of fire in their hands, and seemed to be playing with them."

From the gates of hell Miss D— was conducted to another position, whence she had a

view of heaven and hell, and earth; and she described earth as appearing like a vast stage crowded with human beings, and full of confusion and blood. From this stage persons were continually stepping off; and others were rapidly approaching its edge and would very soon disappear, amongst whom was Mrs. L—, an intimate friend of ours, who died a fortnight afterwards. Other persons, whom she named, were represented as near the edge of the stage; and although quite well when she made this communication, did in every case shortly afterward leave this probationary state. One of the days in which Miss D— lay entranced was the holy Sabbath; and she told us that she knew where I and my colleague preached on that day; and from each chapel she perceived holy incense rise, which she described as mingling together and coming up before the throne; then taken by the Saviour and presented to the Father, while angels and all the company of heaven rejoiced together. She also stated, that during one of Mrs. Young's visits to the house where she lay entranced, she saw her sitting by her bedside, reading to the family a chapter out of St. John's Gospel, and then saw her kneel down and pray with them. She likewise gave us to understand, that matter, under none of its forms and modifications, is any interruption to the vision or movements of spiritual beings.

She was next taken to a place where she saw the moral state of the world symbolised. A female, holding a prominent situation in the church, was represented as sitting under a tree of most luxuriant and beautiful foliage, with a long tube in her mouth, by which she was drawing people to her; and the conducting angel informed Miss D— that the tube indicated the power of this female's persuasive language, the foliage of the tree her religious profession, and its trunk the state of her heart. On looking at the trunk, she beheld that its core was rotten, and full of venomous reptiles. Miss D— told this to the female in question; and from the unchristian temper she manifested on the occasion, and her subsequent conduct, she fully proved the correctness of the representation. Another female, a professor of religion, highly respected for her apparent piety, was represented to her as having yielded to temptation, and withdrawn her heart from God; and when her backsliding was announced in the world of spirits, Miss D— looked toward the Saviour, and thought she perceived the appearance of blood trickling from his wounds, as if "crucified afresh." (Heb. vi. 6.) When Miss D— was at our house, she sent for this female, and, in the presence of Mrs. Young and myself, told her the above; and, according to her penitential acknowledgement, but to our utter astonishment, it was a correct view of her spiritual state. Miss D— had likewise the moral condition and perilous circumstances of a young man brought before her. He was in possession of religion, was represented as assailed by a very plausible temptation, and would make shipwreck of faith if he did not resist it. She made this disclosure to him also in our presence; and after some evasion on the subject, he appeared greatly agitated, and declared that such was his temptation, although he had not mentioned it to any one. For some time he resisted, but finally fell into the snare; and his sad experience proved the correctness of Miss D—'s communication. A lady whom she named was represented to her as attired in the purest white, and surrounded by a number of little children, whom she was striving to wash in pure water, that they too might be white and clean; and the angel told her that the lady's robe was indicative of her purity of heart, and her holiness of life, and that her employment symbolised the nature and effects of her exertions in the church of God. I was well acquainted with this lady, and could bear witness to the correctness of this picture; for she was, in my opinion, one of the holiest of women, and was exceedingly useful to children and young people; indeed, the honoured instrument of bringing many of them to God. Another lady she described as standing at the entrance of the path leading to eternal life, with a book in her hand, and crying to the giddy multitude—

"Come back, this is the way,
Come back and walk therein."

* She was now in the place of symbols.