

Original Contributions.

THE INVISIBLE.

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"Seeing is believing" is an old and well worn saying, and is in most cases doubtless true. A man under ordinary circumstances is safe in believing that what he sees has an existence; but a man who believes that all that has an existence he sees, is very far from right and exceedingly unsafe in his conclusions. We have abundant proof that up to the present time a part of our material world, both extensive and important, has been entirely invisible as far as man is concerned; and if we are to judge the future by the past, there are yet things many and wonderful to behold in this physical world of ours that the research of the scholar and the art of the inventor shall reveal unto us.

Within years almost recent the original investigators in the medical profession have made visible to the eye a busy and important part of our world in the discovery of bacteria, beneficent and harmful. These little workers are found to-day in uncounted millions in almost every place. They are looked at, at rest and as they move about; they are studied and classed; their habits are known, their likes and dislikes are ascertained; they are watched at birth and at death, and volumes are written concerning them, yet it has been but comparatively a short time since they, numerous as now, perhaps went about their work, making possible great and necessary changes upon the earth and yet never seen.

The blood of a man or an animal was once supposed to be a red fluid endowed with some power of life giving. This was about all that was seen. To-day we know that the blood that courses through the arteries of a man or an animal is peopled we may say with little bodies many and varied that have a work to do and which they accomplish with an exactness and devotion to duty wonderful to contemplate. These little bodies are seen every day counted by the million, named, measured and their habits known; and yet, common and important as they are, they are of those things that not so long ago belonged to the invisible world.

Sight is the result impulses or sensations received from the waves or undulations of the ether through which the light passes. If these waves or undulations be either too slow or too rapid we shall get no light, and consequently no sight. Of course there is a wide range, some two hundred and twenty two millions impulses per second from where the waves become rapid enough to make vision possible to where the undulations become so fast that all vision is lost. Without a doubt, the ether about us is carrying many million of impulses some too slow and others too fast for us to perceive, leaving us utterly blind it may be to scenes all about us more wonderfully beautiful than any we have ever witnessed.

The range of the ear is much greater than that of the eye and yet this very acute sense at its best is greatly limited. If impulses come too slow or too fast, the sound is too loud or too low, and no matter how sweet the melody we are deaf to it all.

These things have only to do with this material world, yet even here we see that much has remained invisible for centuries and probably not a little of it is yet so. However, in speaking of the invisible world, the mind of the Christian naturally turns to the spiritual, as over against the material universe, which, though not ours by sight, yet belongs to us by faith; whose sights we see, whose vibrant melodies we hear and whose joys we comprehend by faith through the revelation of the Spirit that dwelleth in us. It was *this* world, with its beauties appealing to every sense, invisible, yet by faith seen, which won and held Abraham, Moses, Paul and others to the great lives they led. To-day, among Christian people, there is much talk of this other world—its beauties, its peace that passeth understanding, and its joy so full of glory, yet not one has seen it. Though we may believe this other world is all about us, yet we are not conscious of it. Paul says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man . . . but these things hath he revealed unto us by his Spirit." And we believe *these* eyes shall never see, nor *these* ears hear, nor *these* hearts comprehend the things which are to-day more or less real to us, not by sight but by faith.

But what is it must take place before we shall see and hear and comprehend. At present we are prevented by these bodies; they limit our senses by their presence. And if there are scenes that we cannot see and sounds that we cannot hear, it is not because the Spirit cannot comprehend these things, but because the eye and the ear cannot transmit them.

In these bodies the Spirit is an exile from home surrounded and pent in for the time being by temporary and unusual conditions. If a man is compelled to see all that is permitted him through a window, no matter how acute his vision, the power of the glass to transmit will measure the range and correctness of the sight. The soul that sees must look out through the physical eyes, and no matter what its powers of comprehension may be it can see no more than the eye will transmit. But some day there will be a change; the man will go outside the window, or else the glass will be broken and then the measure of his vision will be his own power of sight. And so with us; some day the soul will go outside of the eyes, the ears and the brain, and see and hear and comprehend for itself, and then unconfused by even these delicate instruments of the flesh, it shall, surrounded by environments of a kind like unto itself, through the more delicate instrumentalities of the Spirit, come into a real relation with both the world and its creator from which the body here kept it apart.

We are in a sense as though sleeping. The mother places her child in the cradle and then as she rocks sings:

"Hush, my child, lie still and slumber,
Holy angels guard thy bed."

After the child sleeps she rocks and sings, but the child is not conscious of either. By and by she stops both rocking and singing, yet the little sleeper realizes the absence of neither. Then she places her hand upon its forehead and her lips upon its cheek and, though the distance is not far from waking to sleeping, yet there is no response.

Are we not much like the sleeping child, and will not our awakening reveal unto us in a perfectly natural way, sights, sounds and thoughts which, up to that time, our physical existence has prevented us from comprehending?

At the beginning of the book of Revelation John says, "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and I heard behind me a great voice 'as of the voice of a trumpet.'" The Isle of Patmos was a dreary place and little of interest to be seen, and tradition tells, though John was in his old age, he was compelled to work in the mines, yet he saw things on that island that were never permitted to flesh and blood. It seems to me John explains his part in that wonderful book when he tells us "I was in the Spirit." It was then he heard the voice, saw the golden candlesticks, and in their midst one like unto the Son of Man. He was in the Spirit and, as was perfectly natural, he saw and heard spiritual things. It was the spirit that was speaking, yet John understood. Freed from the body and its limitations for the time being, he had eyes that saw, ears that heard and hearts into which *did* enter the things God hath prepared.

It has been my privilege a few times to look upon a life, trembling as it were for a moment on the border land, standing between the visible and the invisible world, and there I have witnessed sights and heard testimony that proved to me beyond a doubt, that while the body and its senses were all but dead, the soul was waking to new life, and even there in the presence of the body coming into its real relation with all things. There in the moment of transition, when the dying body was so far dead as to be blind to the faces of friends and deaf to the sound of their voices, I have heard the lips testify to sights and sounds not to be recognized by any physical sense.

I call to mind a scene, in one of the wards of a large hospital, like the following: A little girl some eight years of age while engaged in some sport with her playmates was accidentally shot, a small bullet that was intended for a sparrow entering her body and causing a fatal injury. She lived some few miles from the city but was seen to at once, being brought into the city on a special train and was soon at the hospital. It was quite late in the evening when she came in. Everything possible was done but it was plain that she could not live. Her mother and a friend that came with her remained by the cot all the time. She grew rapidly worse and by and by though the ward was quite brightly lighted she said, "Oh, mama, I cannot see you, why have they taken the lights away." But the lights were not taken away, and the child's mother was just beside the cot with her face almost close to that of the little sufferer. It was not because the room was