

Our Contributors.

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Dreamland, and What it May Help us to Understand.

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There is a province of our life that we all seem to regard as largely unreal, illusory or even mythical. Few, if any, look upon it as being a part that has to be reckoned with in summing up the assets of life. And that province is Dreamland.

Wordsworth evidently regarded this province as part, and a valuable part too, of his existence. For when in his poem "Personal Talk" he is speaking against the emptiness and unsatisfactory nature of ordinary converse, and what to him took its place, he says: "Dream" books are each a world, and books, we know, are a substantial world both pure and good."

Whatever of depreciation may lie in the contrast which is evidently made in these words between "Dreams," and "Books," yet enough is left in the affirmation, "Dreams, Books, are each a world," to show that to him dreams were not all idle, empty unmeaning phantasms. That they did not lie in the realm of cloudland, but that they possessed firm fibre enough to be coupled with books. Our ordinary judgment would strongly dispute that. But is it right? If we take the Scripture account of this world's life, what place does it give to dreams? What value does it attach to them? Are they a real factor in human existence? Or are they an insubstantial color created by the refraction of its light? Do they possess any right to reasonable regard as forces that play a part in the shaping of human destiny? What in the view of Divine Revelation is the place and the power of the dream? Every one acquainted with the Scriptures will recall the large place given to the dream in the record they make of human life. They tell us that men have dreamed from the first. That God had intercourse with men while they slept as well as when they waked. That he brought to them his treasures of grace in the night seasons as well as in the daytime. And this not only to those who were his people, but to those who were idolatrous heathens. For God never lets men go out of his hand. Joseph's dreams were prophetic of his future, and so were the dreams of the heathen servants of Pharaoh, his butler and his baker. Belshazzar's dream was also a message to him touching the events with which the coming days were burdened. And his dream like those of Pharaoh's butler and baker had substance enough in it to bear an interpretation. Solomon in a dream received a rich promise that had ample fulfilment in the remainder of his life. Jacob's dream at Bethel was such a reality that it not only illumined all his way, but also cast its brilliant light into the very heart of the Christian dispensation. To Joseph, the espoused to Mary the Mother of our Lord, messages from God were sent in dreams. Paul enjoyed the same privilege. And strange to say, they had such simple faith that they never doubted the reality and truth of the communication. They acted on what was told them, without a single question being raised. Their mental attitude is never given, save that of Paul, when in a vision, "There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him saying: come over into Macedonia and help us." And after he had

seen the vision, the writer of the narrative continues, immediately we endeavored to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them."

These are only a few biblical instances and their force cannot be disputed. They prove that the province of dreamland is a part of the solid but mysterious continent of human existence, and that God works there as truly as in any other realm. As it is written in the old book of Job. "God speaketh once, yea twice, yet man perceiveth it not. In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, in slumberings upon the bed. Then he openeth the ears of men and sealeth their instruction, that he may withdraw man from his purpose, etc."

It is not alone within the Scriptures that the potent force of the dream is recognized. In the classic literature of every nation it finds its place. He who reads wisely notes repeatedly the influence of the dream upon human destiny. It comes to wield its weird power over the heart of the most skeptical and unbelieving. The man most firmly entrenched in materialism is mightily moved by it. It touches him like the cold hand of a spectre. And it impresses him whether he will or no. In our time we have pushed our boat far out upon the sea of unbelief. The scientific spirit has so mastered us that we must see and feel and handle else we believe. And how poor and narrow and empty of the noblest elements of the highest life that makes us! It robs life of many of its spiritual grandeurs. Dr. Horace Bushnell years ago, did what he could to bring men to see that all the heavenly light had not died out of the sky, but that it still lingered there; and still retained its old-time meaning. This he did in his book, "*Nature and the Supernatural*." In that there is a chapter entitled, "miracles and spiritual gifts are not discontinued." In that chapter he has something to our purpose, and that is, Captain Yonnt the California Trapper's dream, which came to him three times in the one night, after vain endeavors to make himself believe it was only an idle phantom. In it he saw a party of immigrants snowed up in the mountain, and perishing rapidly from cold and hunger. When he could not shake off the deep impression it had made, he told it to an old hunter comrade, who, as he proceeded with his narration, recognized the Carson Valley Pass, as the spot he had seen in his dream, one hundred and fifty miles away. Whereupon a company of men and mules was gathered together, and furnished with all necessary provisions, and at once set out on their long journey, and at length found the party as seen in the dream, and brought in the remnant alive. This realm of dream, even in this twentieth century, so far as our psychology goes is an unsolved mystery. Every Collegian remembers how his professor of mental philosophy straitened himself up, pursed his lips to a proper pronunciation, and with not a little pompous stage effect, with great deliberation quoted the celebrated saying of Phalaris: "On earth there is nothing great but man, in man there is nothing great but mind." And every heart thrilled and every head bowed to the unquestionable fact. But how much more do we know of the mind and its activity since the days of Phalaris? We have made little or no progress.

Dreams have very different sources—Solomon saith: "A dream cometh through the multitude of business." In diseased conditions of mind or body dreams are born. But the most ordinary source is as Homer declares, and the scripture confirms, is this "Dreams descend from God." Space will, not allow us to discuss these sources. We may only deal with the fact. The subject of dreams is one of great compass. It reaches out into a wide province, and has in it much matter for thought and entertaining speculation and even practical deduction. What is a dream? It is an activity of the spiritual nature when the physical nature is quiescent. When sleep locks up the senses and bars out every element that would disturb or break the spell that comes upon the soul. Can we go any deeper than that? Is the dream drawn out from within the soul, or is it an objective influence resting upon it? Is it the turning round of the soul like the moon coming to its full? Or is it the unfolding of a capacity for which there is little room here? Or is it the indication of what the spiritual being can do apart from the body? Perhaps what is of most moment to us lies in the last question.

In our dreams there are often phantastic experiences that show that the physical or mental system is out of joint. But while that is the case there are also actual life scenes, marked by sanity, and healthy moral movement and even high spiritual feeling. Individuals whom we know, or have known, come upon the scene, and engage our attention, and call forth in activity our heart and our mind and our moral nature. We seek, we reason, we contend in argument; we rejoice in victory or are humbled by defeat. We have an experience of the full flood of the tide of life. And it is all so real! So real that we in our dream draw upon the stores of memory, and hope serves us with its anticipations, and conscience is alive with its judgment and the heart pours out its treasure of affection. The entire spiritual being is called into play. And the fairy phantasms on which the inner eye looks, and the voices which the inner ear hears are all as real as any physical fact that the senses perceive. There is no thought of any illusion, or deception. To the spiritual part of man it is all truth. And more than that the dream with its vision comes in as an integral part of life. It is not felt to be a sudden break; it is not some strange thing. It is at once taken as ordinary and usual, and accepted as being perfectly opportune and fit. That is the soul without the body is alive, active, discoursing, recognizing with marvellous completeness and distinctness, that which lies outside of the physical realm altogether; but that which at the same time the physical order has provided for in friendship, in subjects of thought, in matters of discourse. Now is not this for us apart from any bearing it has upon our present life, is not this a clear beam of light on the transition of the soul at death. It lingers not in the body, but steps out into the spiritual sphere, and hands it furnished with friends, converse, and active service which is a sweet delight. All its capacities are met by correspondent realities which satisfy it and give it rest.

In the dream how oblivious we are to so much of the past. The past is effectually hidden, and it does not pain us. Shall it be so with the translated soul? The dream is founded on our past life, and brings many of its magic elements out of it, and builds itself up of them. Will it not be so in death? In our going hence we carry with us all the spiritual elements of our character. Ah, methinks, as the door of the house of dreams opens on us, the light that breaks through it, is a light that falls upon the great mystery of death, which is absence from the