

object of perception, and the intuitions and primitive judgments of the mind, as witnesses, are to be ruled out of court, what is to save us from the skeptical conclusion of David Hume, that what we call the universe is made up of sensations and impressions. Or if with Aristotle and Locke and their followers, we make ideas the only objects of perception the case is not made better. In that case we have no evidence of the existence of anything beyond an ideal world. And if ideas be, as they have been defined, phantasms, then, phantasmagoria is the word, assuredly, that most accurately expresses the sum of material things at least: and perhaps a rigorous criticism would show that the logical outcome would be the wreck of mind as well as of matter, so that when the goal was reached, philosophically speaking, all that would be left us of the universe would be an infinite series of dissolving views.

Happily for me I am not a philosopher, neither am I writing for the entertainment or instruction of philosophers. Never having got beyond the region of common sense myself, and writing only for the behoof of common sense people, though it may be regarded as a vulgar prejudice by advanced thinkers, I shall take for granted the reality of the material world; and by so doing shall limit Nature's phantasmagoria to those phantasmal appearances or illusions which are ever and anon produced by the play of the elements around us, and the unreality of which is being as constantly demonstrated by our experience. Among these are the phenomena of optical illusions. To some of these aerial creations which have come within my own observation what remains of this article is to be devoted.

The first of these that I shall mention I met with among the foot hills of the

Rocky Mountains. I was travelling on the Denver and Rio Grande railroad, between Pueblo and Denver. Our road lay, during the first half of the journey or thereabout, through the valley of a stream which empties itself into the Arkansas at the former of these places, and the latter half through the valley of another stream which scarcely could be distinguished from it, but for the fact that, upon close observation, it was to be found to be running in the opposite direction, and, as I afterward found, emptied itself into the Platte. As both of these streams are brawling mountain torrents which take their rise about the same place, this point constitutes "the divide" between the water-sheds of these two great rivers. Here we reach, as I was informed, an altitude of eight thousand feet above the level of the sea.

It was at this point that one of the most charming sights that can easily be imagined came into view. It was that of a mountain which seemed to be a mile distant, or two miles at most, but which subsequent experience led me to conclude was ten or twelve miles off, or more. The surface of the mountain, so distant in fact, and yet apparently so near, in consequence of the rarity and extraordinary transparency of the atmosphere, was dark, almost black, and it was covered from its base to its summit with trees of frosted silver. I have but little, I fear, of the poetic temperament. I seldom become ecstatic in the presence of either the beauties or the sublimities of nature, and yet I confess my feelings nearly touched the ecstatic point as I gazed entranced at this thing of beauty, the memory of which, though I knew it to be an illusion, has entered permanently into my dreams, and will be to me "a joy forever."

It was almost cruel in me, I see now