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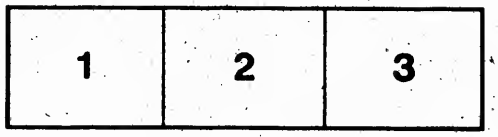

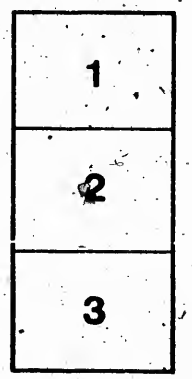

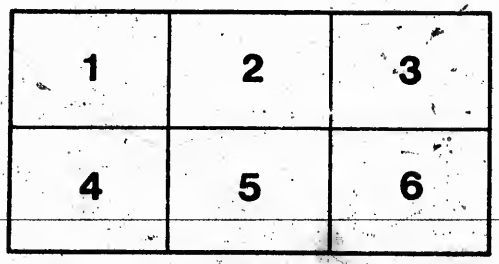

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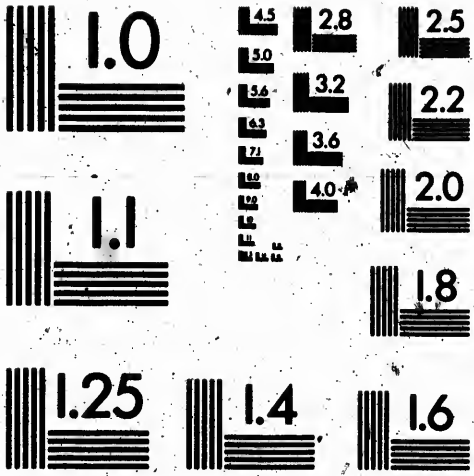

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The Invisible.

BY

JOHN MACLEAN, M. A., PH. D.

MAN is born with an instinct of immortality. His soul darts upward as to his native air. His existence begins with a feeling of kinship for the spiritual and the heavenly. It is not an instinct for an earthly immortality, as that would carry with it such a form of punishment as is extremely revolting to the human soul. The legend of the Wandering Jew, doomed to travel furesting through this world, is an existence not only very undesirable, but terrible in its contemplation. The true instinct is for an immortality beyond the earth. It is inherent among the peoples of every land. Among the savage and civilized races of men there is ever a longing for the land beyond the river, when affliction comes to their hearts and homes. In our serious moments we cry,

> "Oh, may I join the choir invisible,
> Of those immortal dead who live again,
> In minds made better by their presence."

In times of sorrow it is natural for man to cry aloud for help. Upward and not downward his prayers travel. Toward the spirit land his soul aspires. Untaught he may be, still there dwells within a divine teacher, who will guide him toward God. There dwells in man a germ of divinity that, like the seed, is ever striving to climb upward to kiss the sunlight and to find its Maker. The tender plant is ever seeking the light, turning toward it if hidden from

its power, and the soul ever aspires after the light of the world that nourishment might be given. This instinct of immortality is no mockery. It is an eternal necessity of the human mind that man should live forever. Complete annihilation is as hateful to the mind of man as an eternal existence on earth. The souls of men are filled with aspirations after the invisible. Bereaved souls long for union with their departed kindred. It is the same old story of Old Mortality cutting anew the names of the Covenanters upon the weather beaten stones, seeking to find the living among the dead: Man is like unto the gentle maid who has been left alone in a great city, going from street to street, and from group to group, seeking her lost parents. The loved ones are lost to us, and we grope in the darkness of our faith, longing to find them.

We are ever seeking the invisible, and yet we seem to say that the invisible is only a shadow. The material things of God's universe appear to us as the only real things in life. Because they are visible to us we conclude that they are real. Must we conclude that all else is unreal and that there is no existence save that which we see? Then must we reject our belief in a supreme power, although all around us are evidences of the work of a Divine person.

Last year I travelled across the prairie far from the houses of civilized man until I came to the lodges of the Red men, and still northward I journeyed. One evening before, camping for the night. I saw some embers lying in a hole dug in the ground, as the custom was, to keep the prairie fires from spreading. Not a

house was there for many miles, and not an Indian lodge could be seen. Yet I doubted not that an Indian family had been there and had made the fire to cook some food. Around the fire were the prints of mocassins, large and small, of men and women and children, some small beads, a few pieces of pemmican and an Indian finger-ring lay upon the ground, and alongside the fire were the marks of the Indian *travaille.* These were strong evidences of the presence of Indians. Not a red man was seen and yet some Indians had been there. Far out upon the trackless prairie the marks of the presence of Deity are seen. In every canyon in the mountains, in every coulee on the plains, and in the midnight sky, strewn with stars, God himself speaks out when man is dumb. No man hath seen God at any time, and yet he is known by his works. The invisible is known by the visible.

The visible is transient, changing and temporal. It assumes new forms daily, and has in itself nothing abiding. It is like the over changing scenes of the kaleidescope. Man's handicraft is only temporary. The house, machine, instrument, article of furniture, all are real, but they have in them the germs of decay. Even God's handicraft, as seen in the world, is temporal, changing. The mountains, rivers and forests are only forms of nature which must pass away. All of these things existed in other forms before they appeared in these shapes to us. The materials which make up our cities were brought from the bowels of the earth and the depths of the sea. Our prairies were made by the fingers of the sun. The sun

is the great builder and leveller of the nations. Is it any wonder that the savage man has fallen in adoration before the great luminary of heaven?

Before the visible existed, the invisible was in existence. The seen is temporal, but the unseen is abiding, external, permanent. The invisible, the spiritual alone, is eternal and real, that which we see exists in its present form for a season, and then returns to its original condition. Before the mechanic made a vessel, the materials existed in the sun. The coal we burn, the bread we eat, the clothes we wear all existed in other forms before man's genius changed them to suit the wants of mortals.

Is there an invisible world, a spiritual world around us which we cannot see? Dwell there in our midst beings of another realm? We see them not with our earthly vision. The constitution of our spiritual nature leads us into a spiritual realm, away from the material, sensual world. Revelation tells us of the existence of a spiritual world around us. Messengers of God wait upon those who are striving to serve the Most High. Angels or messengers we call these spirits who differ in nothing from us, save in the fact that some of them have never had bodies assigned them, but have always waited upon God as spiritual attendants. They belong not to a higher order of beings but are sons of God like ourselves, who desire to look into the great work of redemption. These are the spirits that help us in our struggles against sin.

The weary hearts of men and women have longed for union with their dead kindred, and they have cried in agony of spirit, "Shall we

find them again? Shall we know them? "Where are now the blessed ones who formerly mingled with us on earth? Amongst the ministering hosts of heaven are to be found the men and women who have returned to their native land associated with Moses and Elijah as messengers of God. Associated are they with the spiritual inhabitants of the upper world who never possessed garments of flesh which mortals wear. Our departed loved ones have not changed their real and true form, they have only thrown aside the body as an encumbrance which they needed not in the spiritual world. As one with those who are not higher than they, but of the same order we may conclude that they are to be found among the ministering spirits, who minister unto them who are heirs of salvation.

Blessed ministry, the ministry of our dead kindred. It was this feeling which prompted many of the weak and sinful amongst men to feel that their kindred being near to God, and having a sympathetic knowledge of their sins and sorrows, they could pray unto them to assist them so long as they were subject to the frailties of life. Prayers to the dead is not such a heinous crime when studied in the relation of the ministry of the dead, but that it is needless is true, when man can draw near to God without the intervention of frail mortality, or even disembodied spirits.

The dead have only changed their relation to us. They are not dead to God. "They are equal unto the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the resurrection." God is the God of all things, animate and inanimate, perishable and imperishable, but "he is not the God of the dead

but of the living; for all live unto him" Unto God there is no dead man, all are alive unto Him but unto us they have assumed new forms, and we look upon them as beings of another world. They have gone from us but they are still of us. Life is continuous and the entrance into eternity is a continuation of life in another form. The spirits of the departed are still employed as pupils, students and servants, ever learning and ever executing the divine will Spiritual messengers visited this earth as the first preachers of the resurrection, and they also reproved the disciples for gazing idly up into heaven, thus manifesting an interest in the affairs of this life, and can be impatient when mortals are idly going astray.

The unseen world is superior to the visible in not being dependent upon the contingencies of time. Liberated from all that belongs to the flesh, they are no longer bound by that which is changeable. They are superior in knowledge and blessedness.

Blessed is the lot of a few of God's seers who can gaze into the spiritual world. Unseen powers seem to touch the souls of some men, or to come so near to them that they can almost hear the rustle of their garments as they pass by. Blessed is the experience of those who can realize the power of the invisible. Has there never seemed to your spiritual vision the presence of an unseen power when the vacant chair has remained unoccupied in your home? This intense realization of the invisible was the experience of the Princess Alice who seemed to feel her father's presence always by her side helping

her toward a noble life. When her little two-year-old "Frittie" fell out of the window and was killed, she mourned for him as lost, but above her grief there came to her spirit this power of the invisible. In her walks with her son "Ernie" they talked to each other about "Frittie" who seemed to be near them, and it seemed quite natural for them to pray for him. In her letters she refers to her lost treasure in words of tenderness and suppressed sorrow—"Having so many girls I was proud of our two boys! The pleasure did not last long, but he is *mine* more than ever now. He seems near me always; I carry his precious image in my heart everywhere." Death cannot sever the bond which unites loving hearts. Love is more enduring than death, and can bridge the apparent gulf which separates the seen from the unseen. Our hearts are touched by the fingers of the spirits, and they whisper thoughts of the far-away land as they visit us on earth. Attended by angelic messengers amongst whom are numbered some of those you love, there rests upon you an overshadowing power which begets feelings of awe, leading you to feel your kinship with the spirits of the just. Life does not then seem so empty; sin has not so many charms and the temptations of life are not so strong. The consciousness of the invisible lifts you away from the petty annoyances of the world. The consciousness of a gentle face always looking at you keeps the heart strong and brave. The friends who have left us are living to God, and they are living to us. They are still here; there are no dead. When the sun sank behind the western hills it was lost to our view, but its

light went not out; still it shone on, although unseen by us, and the voices that are silent, and the lives which are still, are living and shining. It is night with us but it is day-dawn with them.

"If there is naught but what we see,
What is the wide world worth to me?
But is there naught save what we see?

If there is naught but what we see,
The friend I loved is lost to me;
He fell asleep; who dares to say
His spirit is so far away?
Who knows but wings are round about?
These thoughts—who proves but from without
They still are whispered? Who can think
They rise from morning's food and drink?
These thoughts that stream on like the sea,
And darkly beat incessantly
The feet of some great hope and break,
And only broken glimmers make,
Nor ever climb the shore to lie
And calmly mirror the far sky,
And image forth in tranquil deeps
The secret that its silence keeps.

Because he never comes, and stands,
And stretches out to me both hands;
Because he never leans before
The gate, when I set wide the door
At morning, nor is ever found
Just at my side when I turn round,
Half thinking I shall meet his eyes,
From watching the broad moon-globe rise—
For all this shall I homage pay
To Death, grow cold of heart and say,
He perished, and has ceased to be;
Another comes, but never he!
Nay, by our wondrous being, nay;
Although his face I never see
Through all the infinite to be,
I know he lives and cares for me."