

AN OCCULT RETROSPECT

That we are surrounded by an invisible world peopled with invisible beings, and that we can, under certain circumstances, communicate with those who have passed beyond the veil, is a belief as old as human civilization. There have been times in the world's history when attempts at suppression of this belief have been made, but it still survives strongly in our present communities, and although in modern times science has striven at times to kill this belief with ridicule, recent scientific discoveries have tended to justify the faith in occult phenomena rather than to discourage it.

The Bible gives considerable justification for this belief that it is possible to communicate with those who are in the invisible world—the so-called dead. It tells us that the Witch of Endor called up the ghost of Samuel at the request of Saul. We may reason, of course, that the Witch was an impostor, but the Bible does not say so. It is possible that this dramatic passage in the Bible has done more than anything else to preserve the popular belief in communication with the departed spirits, and this belief is held among some of the most enlightened people in the world. It is true that the Bible condemns Saul for seeking to call up the ghost of Samuel and that disaster came from his daring experiment. It may also be that that has been a factor in giving an evil reputation to attempts to communicate with the dead and with all those dealings generally known under the name of magic; nevertheless, it is an historical fact that the earliest scientists were all magicians and had dealings with disembodied spirits and departed beings. The Babylonian and Egyptian priests were the most distinguished of these practitioners of magic, and yet they undoubtedly made considerable progress in what is now called natural science. These early Oriental priests were above all astrologers and they always mixed the occult side with their studies of astronomy, as has been well shown by Richard Proctor in his book dealing with the Observatory of the Great Pyramid.

The Arabs were the pioneers of mathematics, the most exact of all the sciences, and yet they were astrologers and profound believers in magic. They worshiped the star angels, the planetary spirits, which have never lost their place in religion and are embodied in the Catholic rituals of today.

Throughout the middle ages, the belief in magic and the invisible spirits, which are all around us, persisted, nor was it fostered among the lower classes alone; as a matter of fact, it was strongest among the most highly civilized people, though in places attended by much evil and degradation. Both Church and State sought to stamp it out, but without success, perhaps because many of those in authority were the strongest believers in magic and practitioners of the science.

The brother of King Louis XIV of France, officially known as “the most Christian King,” and many members of the Court, were discovered to be holding secret orgies and séances with the spirits of the dead and “worshipping Satan.” As the story goes, the King's relatives and some of the highest personages in the aristocracy of France were saved by their rank, but those of lesser position were tortured and executed for their sins. Famous magicians like Johannes Trismegistus lorded it over whole communities; even the Rosicrucians were accused of practicing mysterious rites in secret, and they included the most wealthy and important members of society; but they, of course, were not concerned with the phenomena of conjuring up the spirits of the dead. They had other and more important work to do, and whatever magic they practiced at that time, or today, is

pure and white, without the slightest touch of the black, such as characterized most all the rest of those who practiced the secret séances.

Modern science, which is said to have begun with Francis Bacon, made from the first the most serious inroads into the claims of the magicians, astrologers, and all dealers in the occult; though Bacon himself, being of the Rosicrucians, had nothing to do with these persecutions. It is true that the phenomena of the magicians would not bear investigation by laboratory methods in the cold light of day; there are ample reasons why these phenomena can only be produced in the dark, but that does not give any justification for the contention that they are fraudulent.

We cannot take a photograph with a camera in a dark place because the vibrations in the ether are too slow; neither can we materialize a spirit in sunlight because the etheric vibrations are then too rapid and will tear to pieces the filmy structure whereof the spirit body is formed. This is a fact not even understood by science at the present day. On account of these foolish persecutions and false appeals to reason and intellect, the educated classes began to grow more skeptical concerning magic and communication with the departed spirits, and only the so-called ignorant classes and people of unusually sensitive disposition clung to them.

It must be said that the latter were always numerous, even in the highest classes. Queen Marie Antoinette, at the end of the eighteenth century, believed and practiced spiritualism, and in our day the Czar of Russia has been much criticized for the friendship that he showed towards Rasputin, the monk, who, according to all accounts, was an occultist of the first water, whether belonging to the black or to the white school.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, modern science had apparently crushed ancient magic and all that went with it; the very word 'occultist' or 'magician' that once struck terror in the mind, was then given to prestidigitators and traveling fakirs, who produced rabbits and bowls of goldfish out of somebody's hat. Science had almost entirely squelched the practice of phenomena connected with the occult, but then came the irresistible wave of spiritualism. From various parts of the world, principally America, came reports of materialization of spirits, whereby the departed were seen and heard in groups gathered together for the purpose of evoking them through a medium.

Science put up a hard and bitter fight, but the belief could not be put down; in fact, it grew and grew the more science cried "fraud!" and finally it invaded even the ranks of scientific men, changing some of the foremost among them from scoffers to ardent advocates, for they saw that these phenomena were in line with modern scientific discoveries, and the further science has gone in its investigations of the secrets of nature, the more it has been found that these psychic phenomena are in line with the operation of the natural laws discovered by them.

In fact, the marvels of scientific discoveries almost vie with the wildest and most fantastic claims of the ancient magician: invisible forces reproduce the human voice, messages fly through the air around the world without even a wire to guide them. Levitation has been accomplished by mechanical means and many other modern wonders, due in part to the discovery of electricity, that most wonderful of all our modern servitors, are forcing a belief in the invisible world and the spirits that live therein. Here is a force that is invisible, intangible, imponderable, and yet capable of exerting the most tremendous powers, capable of taking life and destroying every work of the human hand in a moment. Here is a power that accomplishes practically everything that has been

claimed by ancient magicians in performing what we style 'miracles'. It is well known that the priests of the Egyptian temples, and others, created the most awe-inspiring effects by producing a human voice speaking out of the void. Today the same phenomenon may be seen at the so-called trumpet séances where disembodied spirits speak through a trumpet; but we have in our homes similar instruments in the telephone and phonograph, which are operated by the human voice. Then, with respect to wireless telegraphy, due largely to the researches of Sir Oliver Lodge, who has since become the strongest believer in psychical phenomena, by this use of electricity, vibrations are caused to flow completely around the world, carrying messages without hindrance over mountains, deserts, and all natural obstructions. This is similar to the telepathic messages and communications that are often recorded as feats of the ancient magician, feats that are duplicated every day in thousands upon thousands of instances, sometimes consciously and more often unconsciously.

Perhaps we think of a certain tune and someone in the room begins to hum it. Sometimes when visiting a friend we are greeted with an "Oh, I have just been wanting to see you," showing, if we think it over, that we have responded to a message of telepathy. And in a thousand and one other ways we are becoming more and more powerful thinkers, also increasingly sensitive to the thoughts of others. It was this faculty consciously cultivated among magicians of old that enabled them to perform many of their celebrated phenomena, and the time will come in a not distant future when we shall be able to read one another's thoughts and convey them from brain to brain without the intervention of speech, writing, or any of the present known methods of communication.

Among other scientific wonders related to the ancient magic, we may also mention X-rays, discovered by Sir William Crookes, which enable one to see through a solid object. This is in line with the powers described as clairvoyance or spiritual sight, possessed by all the ancient occultists and by an increasingly large number of people now living in the world. The X-rays are also due to that great magician electricity, but they are only a poor substitute for the powers of the spiritual sight, which enable its possessor to see equally well what happens on the other side of the globe and in the room where he or she is sitting. It is worthy of note that Sir William Crookes, like Sir Oliver Lodge, is a believer in occult phenomena and has been led thereto by his scientific discoveries which showed him that there must be an invisible world, and experiment convinced him of the possibility of communicating with those who had departed this life and are now living in the invisible world.

It is impossible to catalog in a magazine article all the scientific discoveries and their connection with or bearing upon the question of communication with the invisible world and the unseen spirits in the air. But in view of all scientific facts, how can we escape the conclusion that the human spirit will continue to exist apart from its gross material body, and these scientific discoveries point to a time not far distant when we shall all see without eyes, hear without ears, and speak without tongues.

In view of what has been accomplished, this is no mere idle speculation, even from the scientific standpoint, and it has a legitimate value to indulge in such dreams, as the man of science would call them, for nothing was ever accomplished as a physical fact that had not previously been the subject of such a dream. Had not Alexander Graham Bell, the inventor of the telephone, dreamed of the possibility of communication by such means,

we should not possess this valuable instrument today. If Morse had not dreamed of spanning space by a wire and transmitting messages along this tiny thread by means of electricity, we should not now have the telegraph. Had Edison not dreamed of the electric light, that today would not be included among the conveniences which we employ, and so on. These dreams help the individual worker to achieve his object and stimulate interest and enthusiasm in others. Hence it is helpful when the most open minded of the scientists are looking into the future to see what may be the line of progress, it is ridiculous to hear them say that the human spirit is some form of electricity, but that may nevertheless help them in the right direction. Alexander Graham Bell, for instance, thinks that the day will come when people will go about with coils of wire about their heads communicating thought to one another by induction. He is unaware that man has the dynamic energy within to transmit these vibrations without other instrument than the brain, but it is interesting to study the scientific idea. Briefly, the scientific hypothesis that mind can communicate directly with mind rests on the theory that thought or vital force is a form of electrical disturbance, that it can be taken up by induction and transmitted to a distance either through a wire or simply through the all-pervading ether, as in the case of wireless telegraphy.

There are many analogies that suggest that thought is of the nature of an electrical disturbance, that is, to the scientific mind. A nerve, which is of the same substance as the brain, is an excellent conductor of electric current. When scientists first passed an electric current through the nerves of a dead man, they were shocked and amazed to see him sit up and move; the electrified nerves produced contraction of the muscles very much as in life.

The nerves appeared to act upon the muscles very much as electric current acts upon an electromagnet. The current magnetizes a bar of iron placed at right angles to it and the nerves produce through the intangible current of vital force that flows through them, contracting the muscular fibers that are arranged at right angles to them.

It would be possible to cite many reasons why thought and vital force may be regarded from the scientific standpoint as of the same nature as electricity. Electric current is held to be a wave-motion of the ether, the hypothetical substance of science that fills all space and pervades all substances. They believe that there must be ether because without it electric current could not pass through a vacuum or sunlight through space; therefore it is, in their estimation, reasonable to believe that only wave-motion of a similar character can produce the phenomena of thought and vital force, and they assume that brain cells act as a battery and that the current produced flows along the line of the nerves. In this idea they are very close to the actual facts, for it is known and taught by occultists, who can see these phenomena by spiritual sight, that the solar force passes into the human body through the spleen and is directed from the solar plexus through the nerves to all the different parts of the body, where it appears as a rose-colored fluid, and it is this fluid which produces the vital phenomena. This is very much like electricity, but is not by any means the ego any more than the operator in a telegraph office is identical with the current that flows through the electric wire. As the telegraph operator directs the current into the wire or through the ether and sends the message out into the wide world, so also can the ego in the body utilize this vital fluid to clothe the thought-message and send it out in whatever direction he desires, when he has been put through the proper training of how to use this fluid, the same as the telegraph operator is put through a course of study

in order to learn to operate the keys which control the electric force that speeds along the wires or through the ether.

In the *Rosicrucian Cosmo-Conception* there is given a table of vibrations compiled by scientists, and a study of this table will disclose the fact that there are many gaps or rates of vibration whose effects are unknown. It is a remarkable fact that nearly all the recent steps in science have had to do with discoveries of hitherto unknown vibrations. Suppose we can make an iron bar vibrate at any desired frequency in a dark room; at first, when vibrating slowly, its movement will be indicated by only one sense, that of touch. As soon as the vibrations increase, a low sound will emanate from it and it will appeal to two senses, touch and hearing. At about 32,000 vibrations per second the sound will be loud and shrill, but at 40,000 vibrations it will be silent and its movements will not be perceived by touch; in fact, we are unable to sense it. From this point up to one million and a half vibrations per second, we have no sense that can appreciate any effect of the intervening vibrations. After that stage is reached, its movement is indicated first by the sense of temperature, then when the rod becomes red hot, by the sense of sight; at three million vibrations it sheds a violet light; above that it passes into the ultra-violet rays and other invisible radiations, some of which can be perceived by instruments and employed by us.

Now when science learns to perceive the effect of those vibrations in the great gaps where the human senses are unable to hear, see, or feel the movement, then science will be in touch with those powers that are exercised in clairvoyance and clairaudience, spiritual sight and spiritual hearing. Then it will not be a matter of faith whether there are invisible worlds and whether they are inhabited by people who have formerly lived among us in the physical world, but everyone will then know and see for himself.

Science has done wonderful work in its efforts to grapple with the problems confronting it, but it has always been limited because it depends upon instruments.

A coil of wire may be, and is, used with splendid effect in transmitting a wireless wave to the furthest corners of the earth, but coils of wire are unnecessary around the human head to transmit thoughts, and what the scientists need to recognize is the limitation of their instruments and commence to cultivate the powers within themselves, for every human being has these spiritual powers latent within himself, and our future evolution depends upon the development of these powers. The telephone is only a crutch to enable us to hear better with our present ears. The telescope is another crutch to enable us to see better with our present eyes. The microscope is another crutch that helps us to perceive the infinitely small, as the telescope reveals the infinitely great; but in addition to these organs of sense, we have finer organs and finer forces which will some day come into use. Had Alexander Graham Bell lived in the dark ages and produced his telephone, the chances are that he would have been burned as an evil magician. Had Edison lived and produced his electric light and phonograph at that time, he would probably have shared the same fate. Today even those who possess the finer senses are looked upon as frauds and cranks, and only the fact that the general sentiment is against violence protects them from being confined in prisons or insane asylums.

But the tears that are flowing from millions of eyes and the yearning that is almost breaking millions of hearts for a glimpse or a message from those who have gone to the land beyond the veil, are gradually wearing the scale from the eyes and attuning an increasingly large number to the vibrations of spiritual sight and hearing. And the

thoughts of the so-called dead, their yearning to communicate with the friends they have left behind, is an equally intense dynamic force. Two great armies are thus tunneling through the wall of the great divide, and soon faith and hope shall give place to direct first-hand knowledge that the dead live, for we shall then see and communicate with them at will, just as easily as we do now with the so-called living.