

# CRYSTAL-GAZING



Theodore Besterman,

W. Rider & Son: London  
1924

This electronic edition, J. H. Peterson,  
[esotericarchives.com/besterman](http://esotericarchives.com/besterman), 2005.



## PREFACE

Before Miss Goodrich-Freer's paper in the fifth volume (1888-9) of the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research* nothing of any importance had been written about scrying. Miss Freer was the first to study the matter scientifically, and the first also to study its history. During the following years Frederic Myers, Andrew Lang, and other investigators tried to give the subject its place in the whole field of psychical phenomena. Only one serious book has as yet been published about scrying, that by Mr N.W. Thomas, and that is unfortunately marred by much hasty writing and by much padding — it remains useful principally for Andrew Lang's Introduction. Needless to say, a number of unscientific works have been printed round and about the subject.<sup>1</sup>

I have tried to make this book equally useful to all those to whom scrying is of interest; it is my hope that the anthropologist and the folklorist as well as the psychical researcher and the scryer will find matter of interest in the following pages. Several points have naturally arisen in the course of my study that I have not been

---

<sup>1</sup> I think the following list is complete: W. W. Atkinson, *Practical Psychomancy and Crystal Gazing* (Chicago, 1908); "Carolus Rex," *The Magnetic Mirror* Bayswater [1906]; "Frater Achad" [i.e., C. Stansfeld-Jones], *Crystal Vision through Crystal Gazing* (Chicago, 1923); W. Goldston, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905); J. Melville, *Crystal-Gazing and the Wonders of Clairvoyance* (London, 1920); *Modern Crystal Gazing* (London, [1903]); *Recollections of a Society Clairvoyant* (London, 1911); "Sephariel" [i.e., Walter R. Old], *How to Read the Crystal* (London, 1922); C. Thorpe, *Practical Crystal-Gazing* (London, 1916); A. Verner, *Clairvoyance and Crystal Gazing* (Bolton, 1903).

able to discuss, that have not indeed properly come within the scope of my subject. I hope that other students will make use of this material; they are referred to several articles in the Subject Index. It is with regret that I have been unable to include any new experimental results; this is due to bad luck, for though I have conducted numerous experiments with several scryers, I have not obtained any results worth including in this book. I shall always be glad to receive well-authenticated accounts of scrying visions.

Chapters IX. and XI. were sketched in an article "On Crystal-Gazing," in *The Occult Review* for January 1924 (xxxix. 19-29), and part of the section on "Dr. Dee's Shew-Stone" has already appeared in *Notes and Queries*, cxlvi. 223-225. I am grateful to the Council of the Society for Psychical Research for permission to quote from their *Journal and Proceedings*.

I had intended to reproduce as a Frontispiece Mr. Henry Pegram's *Sibylla Fatidica*. Unfortunately the authorities at the Tate Gallery have placed the statue in a corridor which is so dark as to make a good photograph impossible.

TH. B.

## CONTENTS

### PREFACE

### CHAPTER I — SCRYING AND ITS METHODS

- § 1 SCRYING
- § 2 CATOPTROMANCY
- § 3 CRYSTALLOMANCY
- § 4 CYLICOMANCY
- § 5 GASTROMANCY
- § 6 HYDROMANCY
- § 7 LECANOMANCY
- § 8 LITHOMANCY
- § 9 ONYCHOMANCY
- § 10 PEGOMANCY
- § 11 MISCELLANEOUS METHODS

### CHAPTER II — SCRYING IN LEGEND AND TRADITION

- § 1 THE LEGEND OF THE MAGICAL TOWER
- § 2 FRIAR BACON'S GLASS PROSPECTIVE
- § 3 CORNELIUS AGRIPPA
- § 4 NOSTRADAMUS
- § 5 SCRYING IN THE FAUST LEGEND
- § 6 DR. DEE'S SHEW-STONE
- § 7 WILLIAM LILLY
- § 8 COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

### CHAPTER III — SCRYING IN LITERATURE

- § 1 SCRYING IN EARLY LITERATURE
- § 2 SCRYING IN MODERN LITERATURE

### CHAPTER IV — SCRYING IN ANCIENT AND EARLY EUROPE

- § 1 SCRYING IN ANCIENT GREECE
- § 2 SCRYING IN ANCIENT ROME
- § 3 SCRYING IN EARLY EUROPE
- § 4 SCRYING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

#### CHAPTER V — SCRYING IN MODERN EUROPE

- § 1 SCRYING IN ENGLAND
- § 2 SCRYING IN SCOTLAND
- § 3 SCRYING IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA
- § 4 SCRYING AMONG THE GERMANS AND SCANDINAVIANS
- § 5 SCRYING IN FRANCE
- § 6 SCRYING IN ITALY
- § 7 SCRYING IN MODERN GREECE
- § 8 SCRYING IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

#### CHAPTER VI — SCRYING IN THE EAST

- § 1 SCRYING AMONG THE SEMITIC NATIONS
- § 2 SCRYING AMONG THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS
- § 3 SCRYING IN ISLAM
- § 4 SCRYING IN PERSIA
- § 5 SCRYING IN INDIA
- § 6 MONGOLIAN SCRYING

#### CHAPTER VII — SCRYING IN OTHER CONTINENTS

- § 1 SCRYING AMONG THE MALAYANS AND PAPUANS
- § 2 SCRYING IN AUSTRALIA
- § 3 AMERICAN SCRYING
- § 4 SCRYING AMONG THE AFRICAN NEGROES

CHAPTER VIII — THE PROCEDURE OF SCRYING AND THE  
GENESIS OF VISIONS

- § 1 EXPERIMENT AND FRAUD
- § 2 THE PROCEDURE OF SCRYING
- § 3 THE GENESIS OF VISIONS
- § 4 EFFECT OF SCRYING ON THE HEALTH

CHAPTER IX — THE MECHANISM OF SCRYING

- § 1 NORMAL
- § 2 SEMI-HYPNOTIC AND HYPNOTIC
- § 3 POINTS DE REPÈRE
- § 4 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER X — MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA OF  
SCRYING

- § 1 COLLECTIVE SCRYING
- § 2 SCRYING AND AUTOMATIC WRITING
- § 3 SCRYING AND HALLUCINATORY AUDITION
- § 4 SCRYING AND HALLUCINATORY TASTE
- § 5 SCRYING AND RAPS
- § 6 SCRYING AND HAUNTINGS
- § 7 SCRYING AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY
- § 8 SCRYING AND EXPERIMENTS WITH  
MAGNIFYING GLASSES
- § 9 COLOUR IN SCRYING VISIONS
- § 10 THE NUMBER OF NORMAL SCRYERS
- § 11 CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XI — THE RATIONALE OF SCRYING

- § 1 SUGGESTION
- § 2 SUBCONSCIOUS KNOWLEDGE
- § 3 TELEPATHY
- § 4 CRYPTESTHESIA



§ 5 SPIRIT-GUIDANCE

§ 6 THE DEFINITION OF SCRYING

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INDEX

SUBJECT INDEX

#### **Abbreviations**

*E.R.E.* for *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*.

*Journ. S.P.R.* for *Journal of the Society for Psychical Research*.

*Proc. S.P.R.* for *Proceedings of the Society for Psychical Research*.



# CRYSTAL-GAZING

## CHAPTER I

### SCRYING AND ITS METHODS

The word crystal-gazing is loosely used to indicate a large class of methods of divination employed in all periods of history and all over the world, which have an element in common. This common element can be more readily perceived when this form of divination is called by the North English dialect word “scrying,” from “to descry.”<sup>1</sup> Scrying has been defined in many ways; according to one writer, “One of the oldest ways to explore the future is to have it looked for, by means of a pure boy, in a crystal, in a glass, or in the transparency of water.”<sup>2</sup> Sir Walter Scott says that the old astrologers “affirmed that they could bind into their service, and imprison in a ring, a mirror, or a stone, some fairy, sylph, or salamander, and compel it to appear when called, and render answers to such questions as the viewer should propose. It is remarkable that the sage himself did not pretend to see the spirit, but the task of viewer, or reader, was intrusted to a third party, a boy [2] or girl usually under the years of puberty.”<sup>3</sup> Andrew Lang defines the faculty of scrying as that of “seeing faces, places, persons in motion, sometimes recognisable, in a glass ball, or in

<sup>1</sup> See J. Wright, *The English Dialect Dictionary* (London, 1898-1905, 6 vols.) v. 293, s.v. “scry.”

<sup>2</sup> J. von Görres, *Die christliche Mystik* (Regensburg, 1836-42, 4 vols.), iii. 600.

<sup>3</sup> *Demonology and Witchcraft* (London, (1876]), pp. 347-8.

water, ink, or any clear deep.”<sup>4</sup> Without multiplying quotations we may at this point broadly define a scryer as one who has the faculty of seeing visions in a smooth surface or clear deep, or both. It is not proposed to discriminate in this book between the various methods which have been and are used for scrying, but it will be convenient to glance rapidly over them. In a footnote to each section is given a list of the lesser known works to which the reader can turn for further information.

## §2 CATOPTROMANCY<sup>5</sup>

Catoptromancy (κατοπτρον, mirror + μαντεια, divination), sometimes called enoptromancy (ενοπτρον, mirror + μντεια), has probably been the most widely used of all the methods [3] of scrying, not only because of the convenience, in later times, of a small steel or glass mirror, but because of the association, in earlier times, of mirrors with astrological and astronomical practices. These latter uses we shall see more of among the aboriginal stocks of Mexico and Guatemala.

## § 3 CRYSTALLOMANCY<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Introduction to N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905), p. ix; cp. *id.*, *Longman's Magazine* (London, 1896), xxvii. 104-7.

<sup>5</sup> T. Blount, *Glossographia* (London, 1656), s.v. "Catoptiomancy"; J. Bodin, *Le Fleav des Demons et Sorciers* (2nd ed., Niort, 1616), pp. 129-131; J. L. Boulenger, *Opvsevlorvm systemata* (Lyons, 1621, 2 vols.), I. iii. 7; R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, II. 1. i. i.; J. C. Frommann, *Tractatus de fascinatione* (Nüremberg, 1675), pp. 726-7, 775; J. Gaule, *The Mag-Astro-Mancer, or the Magicall-Astrologicall Diviner Posed and Puzzled* (London, 1652), p. 165; J. G. Gödelmann, *Von Zauberern, Hexen und Unholden* (Frankfort o.M., 1592), I. v. 13; J. von Görres, *op. cit.*, iii. 600; John of Salisbury, *Policraticus*, I. xii.; C. Kiesewetter, *Faust in der Geschichte und Tradition* (Leipzig, 1894), pp. 463-5; *id.*, *Geschichte des Occultismus* (Leipzig, 1891-5, 2 vols.), ii. 363-4; E. Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions* (Contemporary Science Series, London, 1897), p. 65; M. A. del Rio, *Disquisitionum magicarum libri sex* (Lyons, 1612), p. 244; E. Smedley and others, "The Occult Sciences" (*Encyclopædia Metropolitana*, London, 1~5), pp. 321-2; *Journ. S.P.R.* (1901-2), x. 179; *Proc. S.P.R.* (1889), v. 286; J. Tahureau, *Les Dialogues* (Paris, 1565), pp. 163, *sqq.*

<sup>6</sup> J. Gaule, *op. cit.*, p. 165; J. G. Gödelmann, *op. cit.*, I. v. 12; J. von Görres, *op. cit.*, iii. 600; C. Kiesewetter, *Faust ...*, *op. cit.*, pp. 466-9, 472-3; *id.*, *Geschichte ...*, ii. 367; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, pp. 244-5; *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 286.

Crystallomancy (κρυσταλλοζ, crystal + μαντεια), though not originally one of the common forms of scrying, is now practically the only one used, the usual name of scrying, crystal-gazing, speaking for itself. The first use of crystals in scrying was to place a crystal in water, which was thus made fit for use as a speculum. An early writer thus describes the practice: “Crystallomancy is a method of divination by the crystal which gave its answers whether pyramidal, cylindrical, or of any other manufactured shape of crystal. Or else it was done by means of pieces or kinds of crystal enclosed in rings, or else enclosed in some vase, and cylindrical or oval in shape, in which the devil feigns and makes it seem as though he were in it.”<sup>7</sup>

#### § 4 CYLICOMANCY<sup>8</sup>

Use the word cylicomancy (κυλιξ, cup + μαντεια), though it has not the countenance of the New English Dictionary, for the very common practice of scrying in [4] cups filled with water or wine or some other liquid. This method is one of the most extensively used in the East, and always has been.

#### § 5 GASTROMANCY<sup>9</sup>

This method of scrying should not be confused with another method of divination with the same name but of a very different kind. Gastromancy (χαστηρ, belly + μαντεια) was originally a method of divination from the marks on the human belly, and came later to be used for scrying in the water contained in the belly of

<sup>7</sup> P. de l'Ancre, *L'Incredulité et Mescreance du Sortilege Plainement convaince* (Paris, 1622), p. 258.

<sup>8</sup> C. Kiesewetter, *Geschichte ...*, ii. 377-8; John of Salisbury, *op. cit.*, I. xii.; J. Tahureau, *op. cit.*, p. 162.

<sup>9</sup> J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 121; *Borderland* (London, 1897), iv. 319; J. L. Boulenger, *op. cit.*, I. iii. 6; G. F. Creuzer, *Dionysus, sive commentationes academicæ de rerum Bacchicarum . . .* (Heidelberg, 1809), pp. 27-8, 303-4; J. G. Gödelmann, *op. cit.*, I. v. 16; C. Kiesewetter, *Geschichte. . .*, ii. 366-7; P. de l'Ancre, *op. cit.*, p. 252; E. Parish, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. Psellus, *De operatione Dæmonum* (Nüremberg, 1838), p. 42; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, p. 244; E. Smedley, *op. cit.*, p. 324; *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 286; J. L. Vives, in St Augustine, *De civitate Dei* (Paris, 1570), p. 217.

some receptacle. It was principally employed by the Greeks and also in medieval Europe, the bottles in use in those days being of course of a belly-like shape. One writer defines the practice thus: "Gastromancy, a species of divination amongst the Greeks, in which they filled certain round glasses with pure water, placing lighted torches around them; then they prayed to the deity in a low, muttering voice, and proposed their question: A chaste and unpolluted boy, or a woman big with child, observed every alteration in the glasses, begging and requiring an answer, which at last, they say, was given by certain images in the glasses, representing what should come to pass."<sup>10</sup> [5]

## §6 HYDROMANCY<sup>11</sup>

Hydromancy (ὕδωρ, water + μαντεία) has so many forms that it has been a fruitful source of error concerning scrying. The name is used for those forms of scrying in which the water of rivers, lakes, wells, etc., is used as a speculum. It should not be confused with those kinds of divination in which the omens are derived from signs in the water, such as eddies, waves, floating matter, etc. This form of scrying has been sometimes restricted to water running under ground, as can be seen from this early passage: "Also he forbideth men to make them simylitude of any thyng in the Water vndre the erth. In which worde he forbideth ydromancy. . . ." <sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> T. Wilson, *An Archaeological Dictionary* (London, 1783), s.v. "Gastromancy."

<sup>11</sup> H. C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London, 1651), I. lvii. 125; T. Blount, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Hydromantie"; J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, pp. 35, 121; J. L. Boulenger, *op. cit.*, I. iii. 9; R. Burton, *op. cit.*, I. II. i. ii.; N. Comes, *Mythologie* (Paris, 1627), p. 333; G. F. Creuzer, *op. cit.*, p. 320 [*sic* for 302]; J. Gaule, *op. cit.*, p. 165; J. G. Godelmann, *op. cit.*, I. v. 18; J. von Görres, *op. cit.*, iii. 600; C. Kiesewetter, *Geschichte . . .*, ii. 365-6; L. Le Roy, *Of the Interchangeable cause or variety of things in the whole world* (London, 1594), f. 50a; J. Melton, *Astrologaster, or The Figure-Caster* (London, 1620), p. 69; E. Parish, *op. cit.*, p. 65; G. Ragusaes, *Epistolarvm Mathematicorvm sev de divinatione* (Paris, 1623), II. viii. 451-7; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, pp. 179, 143-4; J. Tahureau, *op. cit.*, p. 162; T. Wilson, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Hydromancy."

<sup>12</sup> H. Parker, *Dives and Pauper* (London, 1493), I. xxxvi., sig. E5a.

## § 7 LECANOMANCY<sup>13</sup>

Lecanomancy (λεκανη, dish + μαντεια) is a form of scrying very similar to cylicomancy, instead of a cup a basin [6] or similar open receptacle being used. This method of scrying has also been misconstrued, as the following passage shows: “Lecanomancy, a kind of divination performed in a basin with wedges of gold and silver, distinguished with certain characters. The wedges were suspended on the water, and the Dæmon formally invoked, who returned the answer in a small hissing voice thro’ the fluid. How open to imposition is human credulity.”<sup>14</sup>

## § 8 LITHOMANCY<sup>15</sup>

Of all the different modes of scrying lithomancy (λιθοζ, stone + μαντεια) is probably the most peculiar. In general it is a stone that is used as speculum, but in particular there are several special stones which are supposed to possess some inherent virtue which makes them especially suitable for scrying. Among these stones are the bætyl, the sideritis, the ophitis. Pliny says: “As for the Anachitis, it is said that spirits may be raised in it by means of Hydromancy: as with the Synochitis, the ghosts that are raised may be kept above.”<sup>16</sup> To which a disciple of Pliny adds: “Affrick breedeth the Hyene. . . . There is a great varietie in their eyes, and chaungableness of colours, and in the balles of them is founde a stone called Hyenie, endued with such power, ye under what mans tongue soever it be put, he shall prophesie of thinges to come.”<sup>17</sup>

<sup>13</sup> T. Blount, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Licanomancy"; J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 121; J. L. Boulenger, *op. cit.*, I. iii. 5; N. Comes, *op. cit.*, p. 335; G. F. Creuzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 302-3; J. Gaule, *op. cit.*, p. 165; J. G. Gödelmann, *op. cit.*, I. v. 17; C. Kiesewetter, *Geschichte . . .*, ii. 364-5; E. Parish, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, p. 244; J. Tahureau, *op. cit.*, p. 162; J. L. Vives, *op. cit.*, p. 217.

<sup>14</sup> T. Wilson, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Lecanomancy."

<sup>15</sup> J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 35; G. Cardano, *De rerum varietate* (Basel, 1557), p. 259; J. L. Boulenger, *op. cit.*, I. iii. 30; Damascius, *Vita Isidori* (Leipzig, 1911), pp. 121—3; Marbodius, *Liber Lapidum*, v.; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, p. 249; T. Wilson, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Lithomancy."

<sup>16</sup> *Natural History*, XXXVII. xi.

<sup>17</sup> C. J. Solinus, *The excellent and pleasant worke of Iulius Solinus Polyhistor* (London, 1587), xxxix., sig. S [1] a-b.

And again, “The *Glossopetre* falleth from the [7] skye in the wane of the Moone, lyke to a mans tongue, and it is of no small power as the Magicians affirme. . . .”<sup>18</sup>

## § 9 ONYCHOMANCY<sup>19</sup>

In onychomancy (ονυξ, finger-nail + μαντεια) the procedure is rather out of the ordinary, but as it was never widespread we need not enter into it too closely. Here is a description: “Onychomancy, a sort of divination performed by examining the nails of an unpolluted boy. For this purpose they were covered with oil and soot, and turned to the sun: The images represented by the reflections gave the answers required.”<sup>20</sup> This form of scrying should not be confused with that part of chiromancy which consists of the examination of the natural marks on the finger-nails.

## §10 PEGOMANCY<sup>21</sup>

Finally we come to that specialised form of hydromancy known as pegomancy (μαντεια, spring + μαντεια). In this method of scrying the water of springs forms the speculum. This practice was almost entirely limited to ancient Greece, where certain springs were peculiarly revered because of their association with oracles.

[8]

## §11 MISCELLANEOUS METHODS

<sup>18</sup> C. J. Solinus, *The excellent and pleasant worke of Iulius Solinus Polyhistor* (London, 1587), xlix., sig. V [4] b.

<sup>19</sup> T. Blount, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Onymancy"; J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 130; L. J. Boulenger, *op. cit.*, I. iii. 8; J. Gaule, *op. cit.*, p. 165; C. Kiesewetter, *Faust . . .*, pp. 477, *sqq.*; *id.*, *Geschichte . . .*, ii. 367-8; E. Parish, *op. cit.*, p. 65; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, p. 245; A. de Rochas d'Aiglun, "Les Forces non définies," *Mémoires de la Société des Sciences et Lettres de Loir-et-Cher* (Blois, 1886), xi. 642.

<sup>20</sup> T. Wilson, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Onychomancy."

<sup>21</sup> H. C. Agrippa, *op. cit.*, I. lvii. 126; J. Bodin, *op. cit.*, p. 121; A. de Rochas d'Aiglun, *op. cit.*, xi. 642; M. A. del Rio, *op. cit.*, pp. 243-4; J. L. Vives, *op. cit.*, p. 217; T. Wilson, *op. cit.*, s.v. "Pegomancy."



In addition to the above generally employed methods of scrying, various unclassifiable objects have been used from time to time for experiment or for lack of better means. For the information of the curious and the amusement of the cynical, these miscellaneous objects, or as many of them as I have noted, have been listed in the Subject Index under “Scrying, miscellaneous objects used for,” to which article the reader is referred.<sup>22</sup>

## CHAPTER II

### SCRYING IN LEGEND AND TRADITION

#### §1 THE LEGEND OF THE MAGICAL TOWER

This legend is best known as one of the tales in the collection *The Seven Wise Masters*. Originating apparently in India these stories exist in early Persian, Arabic, Turkish and Hebrew versions, passing through Greek, Latin and Armenian transcriptions into most modern European tongues.<sup>23</sup> The Legend of the Magical Tower makes its first European appearance in a Latin manuscript of the eighth century, after which it is found in different versions in a number of romances and narrative poems.<sup>24</sup> The story is that in a certain town a magician set up a tower having many wonderful qualities; one of the most marvellous of these was a mirror which shone over all the town and warned the inhabitants in time, by reflecting the enemy while he was still at a great distance, of any threatened invasion. One of the earliest English versions has it thus:

... hit was a mane,  
 Merlyn he hatte, and was a clerke,  
 And bygan a wondir werke;  
 [10] He made in Rome thourow clergyse,

<sup>23</sup> See H. A. von Keller's learned Introduction to his edition of *Li Roman des Sept Sages* (Tübingen, 1836).

<sup>24</sup> For an account of these see H. A. von Keller, *op. cit.*, pp. ccvii, sqq.

A piler that stode fol heyghe,  
 Heyer wel than ony tour,  
 And ther-oppon a myrrour,  
 That schon over al the toun by nyght  
 As hyt were day lyght,  
 That the wayetys<sup>25</sup> myght see;  
 Yf any man came to cité  
 Any harme for to doon,  
 The cite was warnyd soone.<sup>26</sup>

In a prose version of about the same date, the mirror is replaced by a “grete round balle of golde,”<sup>27</sup> and Gower, writing at the end of the fourteenth century, reverts to the Latin accretion Virgil instead of the Northern Merlin:

Whan Rome stood in noble plite,  
 Virgile, which was the parfite,  
 A mirroure made of his clergie,<sup>28</sup>  
 And sette it in the townes eye  
 Of marbre on a pillcr without,  
 That they by thritty mile about,  
 By day and eke also by night  
 In that mirroure beholde might  
 Her ennemies, if any were,  
 With all her ordenaunce there  
 Which they ayein the citee cast.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> wayetys = watchmen.

<sup>26</sup> *The Seven Sages*, ed. by T. Wright (Percy Soc, London, 1846), pp. 64-5, 11. 1879-91.

<sup>27</sup> *The History of the Seven Wise Masters of Rome*, ed. by G. L. Gomme (Villon Soc, London, 1885), p. 82. For an account of other variations see *The Book of Sindibâd*, ed. by W. A. Clouston (privately printed, 1884), p. 337; D. Comparetti, *Researches respecting the Book of Sindibâd* (Folk-Lore Soc, London, 1882), and *Vergil in the Middle Ages* (London, 1895), pp. 303, *sqq.*; E. du Ménil, *Mélanges Archéologiques et Littéraires* (Paris, 1850), pp. 467, *sqq.*

<sup>28</sup> clergie = learning.

<sup>29</sup> *Confessio Amantis*, V. iii. 61-71, ed. by R. Pauli (London, 1857, 3 vols.), ii. 195.

[11] The old French poem Balan refers, while speaking of Rome, to the Mirror-Castle,<sup>30</sup> and Ser Giovanni even confuses it with the Capitol.<sup>31</sup> But all such names of persons and places are not integral parts of the story, being added by able craftsmen for the sake of local colour. This is well enough shown by Caxton's translation of Raoul Le Fevre's rendering of the story, in which we read that on the top of the tower of the city Coragne, Hercules "maad an ymage of copre loking in to the see and gaf hym in his hand a myrroure hauyng suche vertue that yf hit happend that ony men of warre were on the see in entencion to do ony harme to the Cyte sodaynly their Oost<sup>32</sup> and theyr comynge shold appere in thys said myrroure."<sup>33</sup>

Guillaume Bouchet moves the tower still further, writing that the inhabitants of Rhodes could see in a mirror which was hung round the neck of "their Sun or Colossus, the ships journeying to Syria, or to Egypt."<sup>34</sup> By this we are led to the legend brought home from the East, to which Spenser refers after describing Britomart's wonderful mirror:

Who wonders not, that reades so wonderous worke?  
 But who does wonder, that has red the Towre  
 Wherein th' Aegyptian Phao long did lurke  
 From all men's vew, that none might her discourse,  
 Yet she might all men vew out of her bowre?  
 Great Ptolomæe it for his lemans sake  
 Ybuilded all of glasse, by Magicke poure,  
 And also it impregnable did make;  
 Yet when his love was false he with a peaze it brake.<sup>35</sup>

[12] Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah, who travelled in the twelfth century, writes of Alexandria: "Here is also erected a high tower,

<sup>30</sup> In G. Paris, *Histoire poétique de Charlemagne* (2nd ed., Paris, 1905), p. 251. There is a similar expression in the Letter of Prester John.

<sup>31</sup> Giovanni Fiorentino, *Pecorone*, V. i.

<sup>32</sup> Oost=host.

<sup>33</sup> *The Recuyell of the Historyes of Troye*, ed. by H. O. Sommer (London, 1894, 2 vols.), ii. 414-5.

<sup>34</sup> *Les Séréés*, ed. by C. E. Roybet (Paris, 1873—82, 6 vols.), ii. 205.

<sup>35</sup> *The Faerie Queene*, III. ii. 20; see p. 32 below.

called lighthouse, in Arabic Minar of Alexandria, on the summit of which was placed a glass mirror. All vessels, which approached with hostile intentions from Greece and from the western side, could be observed at fifty days distance by means of this mirror.”<sup>36</sup> A native writer has a similar tale; speaking of a king “named Saurid, son of Sabaloc, three hundred years before the flood,” he relates from hearsay that this king caused to be made “a mirror of all kinds of minerals, in which could be seen all the climates in which there was abundance or sterility, and what new things occurred in all the parts of Egypt. This mirror stood on a lighthouse of bronze in the middle of the ancient sea that was Emsos.”<sup>37</sup> Norden’s account is to the same effect; he places the tower at Alexandria in 50 B.C., and adds that the mirror “had a diameter of five palms; certain authors say that it was made of crystal, and according to others it was made of polished Chinese steel, or of various metals melted together. Sentinels were placed by this mirror and saw in it vessels when still at a great distance.”<sup>38</sup> According to many Oriental writers, says Reinaud, this mirror was the work of Aristotle.<sup>39</sup> Buffon holds the existence of such a mirror on the Pharos of Alexandria to have been not impossible, and provides a pseudo-scientific explanation rather reminiscent of Porta [13] on “how to see in a smooth glass things that take place at a distance and in other places.”<sup>40</sup> Whether this story derives from the same source as the one in *The Seven Wise Masters* it is now impossible to determine with certainty, but any other origin is highly improbable.

According to Le Fevre the miraculous tower lasted, by an equally miraculous handling of history, until the time of “Nabugodonosor,” who deceived the mirror by filling his boats

<sup>36</sup> Benjamin of Tudela, *The Itinerary*, ed. by A. Asher (London and Berlin, 1840-1, 2 vols.), i. 155.

<sup>37</sup> Murtadha ibn al-Khafif, *L’Egyple de Mvrtadi, fils du Gaphiphe, ov il est traité des Pyramides* (Paris, 1666), pp. 27, 31—2.

<sup>38</sup> F. L. Norden, *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie* (new ed., Paris, 1795) 3 vols.), iii. 163. See also Isma’il ibn ‘Ali, *Descriptio Aegypti*, ed. by J. D. Michaelis (Göttingen, 1776), pp. 5-6, 38.

<sup>39</sup> J. T. Reinaud, *Description des Monumens Musulmans du cabinet de M. le Due de Blacas* (Paris, 1828, 2 vols.), ii. 418.

<sup>40</sup> G. L. Le Clerc de Buffon, *Œuvres complètes* (Paris, 1884, 14 vols.), ii. 401-2. G. B. Porta, *Magia naturalis*, XVII. ii.

with trees, causing the fleet to look like a forest, and thus destroyed the tower. As for the mirror itself, it was preserved at the beginning of the seventeenth century in the Abbey of St Denys in France,<sup>41</sup> where it was seen by Evelyn half-way through the century.<sup>42</sup> And according to M. Anatole France, that most laborious and accurate historian, it is still shown in a certain Italian city.<sup>43</sup>

## §2 FRIAR BACON'S GLASS PROSPECTIVE

Roger Bacon (1214 ?-1294), the chief founder of scientific method in modern times, had to submit to almost unceasing persecution and contempt during the whole of his life. And for two centuries after his death the only references to him that can be found relate to his supposedly magical activities. For long this was the current opinion of him:

Bacon we hear, that long we haue suspect,  
That thou art read in Magicks mysterie,  
In Piromancie to diuine by flames,  
To tell by Hadromaticke,<sup>44</sup> ebbes and tides, [14]  
By Aeromancie, to discouer doubts,  
To plaine out questions, as Appollo did.<sup>45</sup>

In all the stories told of Bacon appear the brazen head and the magic glass that between them could speak and see all things. In the play just quoted, Bacon looks into the glass for his friends with such dire consequences that he addresses himself thus:

See Frier where the fathers both lie dead.  
Bacon thy magick doth effect this massacre:  
This glasse prospectiue worketh manie woes,  
And therefore seeing these braue lustie brutes,

<sup>41</sup> J. Doublet, *Histoire de l'Abbaye de S. Denys en France* (Paris 1625), p. 347

<sup>42</sup> John Evelyn, *The Diary*, ed. by A. Dobson (London, 1908), p. 28, 12th of November 1643.

<sup>43</sup> *L'Île des Pingouins*, III. vi.

<sup>44</sup> hadromaticke = hydromancy.

<sup>45</sup> R. Greene, *The Honorable Historic of frier Bacon and frier Bongay* (London, 1594), scene 2.

These friendly youths did perish by thine art,  
 End all thy magicke and thine art at once:  
 The poniard that did end the fatall liues,  
 Shall breake the cause efficiat of their woes,  
 So fade the glasse, and end with it the showes,  
 That Nigromancie did infuse the christall with.  
*He breakes the glasse?*<sup>46</sup>

In the chap-book about Bacon that was very widely read in the seventeenth century, this glass is described as having been “of that excellent nature, that any man might beholde any thing that he desired to see, within the compass of fifty miles round about him: With this Glass he had pleased divers kinds of people: for Fathers did oftentimes desire to see (thereby) how their Children did, and Children how their Parents did, one Friend how another did, and one Enemy (sometimes) how his Enemies did; so that from far they would come to see this wonderful Glass.”<sup>47</sup>

Except for a passage in a doubtful book, “Glasses and Perspectives may be framed to make one thing appear [15] many? one man an Army, the Sun and Moon to be as many as we please,”<sup>48</sup> (and there is nothing magical about that), Bacon’s works are free from anything that could be interpreted as showing that he really practised scrying. The statement that “Francis Picus says, that he read in one of Bacon’s books, That a man might become a prophet, and foretell things to come by means of a looking glass (which Alchumesi composed according to the rules of perspective), provided he used it under a good constellation, and first brought his body into an even and temperate state by chemistry,”<sup>49</sup> is quite false. It is no doubt true that the fable of Bacon’s

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, scene 14.

<sup>47</sup> *Famous History of Fryer Bacon* (London, 1627), sig. F3a.

<sup>48</sup> *Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature and Magick* (London, 1659), p. 19-

<sup>49</sup> F. Grose, *The Antiquarian Repository* (London, 1807-9, 4 vols.), ii. 306; cp. G. F. Pico della Mirandola, *De rerum Prænotione*, VII. vii.

wonderful glass “derives its origin from his well-known skill in optics.”<sup>50</sup>

### §3 CORNELIUS AGRIPPA

Henry Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535), was an excellent and learned German student. But if his name became associated with magic mirrors, among other occult implements, he has only himself to blame. Irony was not appreciated in his time, so that his reference, while speaking of various kinds of mirrors, to one “that causeth the Images of all thinges to appeare”<sup>51</sup> was probably taken seriously. However that may be, the association stuck: Thomas Nashe, for instance, writes how the bored courtiers of his story “to wearie out time would tell vs further tales of [16] *Cornelius Agrippa*. . . . How the Lord *Cromwell* being the kings Ambassador there ... in a perspective glasse hee [*i.e.*, Agrippa] set before his eyes king *Henrie* the eight with all his lordes. ...” Later, Nashe and the Earl of Surrey having become friendly with the wonder-worker, they requested him to show them in the mirror the Earl’s Geraldine. “He shewed her vs without anie more adoe, sicke weeping on her bed, and resolved all into deuout religion for the absence of her Lord.” Whereat her delighted Lord incontinent “framed an extempore ditty.”<sup>52</sup> Sir Richard Burton declares it as a fact, without giving any reference, that Agrippa used a crystal mirror.<sup>53</sup>

### § 4 NOSTRADAMUS

Michel de Nostredame (1503-1556), or, to give him his affected name, Nostradamus, was not so respectable a body as Agrippa.

<sup>50</sup> W. J. Thorns, *Early Prose Romances* (2nd ed., London, 1858, 3 vols.), i. 186.

<sup>51</sup> *Of the Vanitie and vncertaintie of Artes and Sciences* (London, 1569), xxvi; cp. *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London, 1651), I. lvii.

<sup>52</sup> *The Unfortunate Traveller*, in *Works*, ed. by R. B. McKerrow (London, 1903-7, 5 vols.), ii. 253-4.

<sup>53</sup> *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387-9n.



However, he was an official astrologer under the patronage of Catherine, and there seems to be no particular reason why his name should have become connected with the speculative art.<sup>54</sup> Perhaps there is some connexion between these stories and the legend that Catherine was shown in a mirror, in the manner of Macbeth, the future kings of France.<sup>55</sup> [17]

## §5 SCRYING IN THE FAUST LEGEND

This is not the place for discussion of the Faust legend as a whole: it dates from the sixteenth century, and the flood of literature evoked by it has continued unabated ever since. It will be sufficient to note that in one offshoot of the legend, the *Höllenzwang* (1575), scrying is especially in evidence.<sup>56</sup> Here we find directions for the discovery of a thief by looking, after appropriate prayers and incantations, into the neck of a bottle, where “the whole man in his clothes” will appear, and remain visible for three hours (chapter lxxii.). In the previous chapter is given a long account of the requisite procedure to enable a devotee to see whatever he wishes to learn in a glass; but “this experiment must be made in a place where neither clocks strike nor cocks crow,” on Friday, after having put on clean clothes.<sup>57</sup> Goethe duly introduces the magic mirror into the Witches’ Kitchen, and causes Faust to see a great many things in it.<sup>58</sup> No doubt it re-appears in other plays and tales about the same subject.

<sup>54</sup> See e.g., D. G. Morhof, *Polyhistor Literarius, Philosophicus et Practicus* (Lübeck, 1732, 2 vols.), i. 95. There exists a publication entitled *The Complete Fortune-teller, being The Magical Mirror of Michael Nostradamus*.

<sup>55</sup> J. C. Frommann, *Tractatus de fascinatione* (Nuremberg, 1765), pp. 726-7; P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (new ed., Paris, 1820, 14 vols.), xii. 126, *sqq.*, s.v. "Pythagoras"; *Remarques sur le gouvernement du royaume durant les règnes de Henri IV, de Louis XIII et de Louis XIV* (Cologne, 1688), pp. 15-16.

<sup>56</sup> The very scarce *Höllenzwang* is reprinted by J. C. Adelung, *Geschichte des menschlichen Narrheit* (Leipzig, 1785-9, 7 vols.), vii. 365, *sqq.*

<sup>57</sup> These chapters are quoted by C. Kiesewetter, *Faust in der Geschichte und Tradition* (Leipzig, 1893), pp. 466-8.

<sup>58</sup> *Faust*, I. 2078, *sqq.*, in Anna Swanwick's trans., see pp. 64-5 below.

## §6 DR DEE'S SHEW-STONE

John Dee (1527-1608) is a unique figure in the history of experimental psychology. He was a man of uncommon attainments who has left a large number of learned and ingenious works on mathematics, geography, navigation, calendar reform, and other subjects, together with a quantity of autobiographical material. After many years of study and useful work in the world he turned to what we [18] would now call spiritualism, in this being followed by not a few of his scientific successors. His special interest was scrying: on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of December 1581 he swore in one Barnabas Saul as his scryer, but a few months later he made the acquaintance of Edward Kelly whom he installed as permanent scryer at a salary of £50 a year. On the 21<sup>st</sup> of November 1582 he was brought a crystal “as big as an egg: most bryght, clere, and glorious,”<sup>59</sup> by his angels, having had in the meanwhile and continuing to have regular sittings with Kelly, of which he took practically verbatim notes, which have all come down to us.

Dee himself nearly always refers to the speculum as the “shew-stone” or as “the stone.” There are occasional references to the “great Christaline Globe,”<sup>60</sup> to the “Stone in the frame (which was given me of a frende),”<sup>61</sup> to the “diaphanous globe,”<sup>62</sup> to the “principal stone,” to “this other stone,” to the “first sanctified stone,” to the “usual shew stone,” and to the “holy stone.”<sup>63</sup> The marginal sketches in Dee’s MSS. give the stone a globular form.<sup>64</sup> All this — which is the whole of our first-hand information — is enough to show that Dee possessed more than one speculum, and that one stone, a crystal globe (the one he claimed to have had brought to him by angels ?)<sup>65</sup> and which he describes as above, was

<sup>59</sup> *Doctoris Dee Mysteriorum Libri Sex (sic)*, Sloane 3188, f. 596.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 10a.

<sup>61</sup>

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, f. 58a.

<sup>63</sup> These last names are listed by the editor of J. Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of What passed for many Yeers Between Dr John Dee . . . and Some Spirits*, ed. by Meric Casaubon (London, 1659), p. 47 of first pagination.

<sup>64</sup> Sloane, 3188, 3677; Cotton App. XLVI.

<sup>65</sup> *True Relation*, pp. 46 (1<sup>st</sup> pag.), 246 (2<sup>nd</sup> pag.); Sloane 3188, f. 59.

the most important. During the years that Dee was on the continent he became [19] suspect of magical dealings and a mob invaded his house at Mortlake, many of his books and other objects liable to be misconstrued being destroyed. As the crowd would certainly not have overlooked so well-known a magical object as a scrying crystal, it is very probable that the stone Dee carried with him on his travels was the only one left to him on his return to England and the only one that could have come down to us. We know from various references in his diaries to the loss of the stone and so forth, that he only carried with him one speculum; there can be no doubt that he would have taken the angelical crystal. On this point Casaubon says, "... he carried with him where ever he went A stone, which he called his *Angelicall Stone, as brought unto him by an Angell, but by a spirit sure enough*. . . ."<sup>66</sup> Even if this conjecture is unfounded, the authenticity of any kind of speculum other than a crystal globe must be very doubtful, since there is no indication anywhere in Dee's writings of his possession of a stone other than globular in shape.

In the Cottonian collection, acquired in 1700, came to the British Museum a globe which has been variously described as "a piece of solid pink tinted glass, size and form of a full-grown orange;"<sup>67</sup> as a "globe of polished crystal";<sup>68</sup> and as "a smoky ball."<sup>69</sup> It is in fact a very poor spherical piece of some slightly opaque vitreous substance, probably that known as cairngorm or morion. It has been equally emphatically asserted that this ball is<sup>70</sup> and is not<sup>71</sup> Dr Dee's [20] speculum. I have not been able to discover how it got with the Cotton MSS.

In a letter to Sir Horace Mann, dated the 22<sup>nd</sup> of March 1771, Horace Walpole wrote: "Among other odd things he [Lord Frederick Campbell] produced a round piece of shining black

<sup>66</sup> *True Relation*, p. 28 (1<sup>st</sup> pag.).

<sup>67</sup> G. Ellis, *Notes and Queries* (1887), 7 S. iv. 306; *Encyclopædia Britannica* (11<sup>th</sup> ed.), vii. 921.

<sup>68</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, xiv. (1888), 277.

<sup>69</sup> J. Raine, *Archaeological Journal* (London, 1856), xiii. 372.

<sup>70</sup> G. Ellis, *Encyc. Brit., D.N.B., locc. cit.*

<sup>71</sup> W. A. Clouston, *On the Magical Elements in Chaucer's Squire's Tale* (Chaucer Soc., London, 1888-90), p. 311.

marble in a leathern case, as big as the crown of a hat and asked me what that could possibly be? I screamed out, ‘Oh, Lord, I am the only man in England that can tell you! it is Dr Dee’s black stone!’ it certainly is; Lady Betty Germaine had formerly given away or sold, time out of mind, for she was a thousand years old, that part of the Peterborough collection that contained Natural Philosophy. So, or since, the black stone had wandered into an auction, for the lotted paper is still on it. The Duke of Argyll, who bought of everything, bought it. Lord Frederick Campbell gave it to me . . . <sup>72</sup> He adds, contradicting himself, that the stone is “only of highly polished coal.” So there is at once some doubt regarding the material of which it is made, a doubt not resolved by the various descriptions of it existing: the stone has been declared to be of anthracite (? schottischer Steinkohle),<sup>73</sup> cannel-coal,<sup>74</sup> a “polished mass of jet,”<sup>75</sup> a “flat black stone of very close texture,”<sup>76</sup> obsidian,<sup>77</sup> and, more particularly, [21] Mexican obsidian.<sup>78</sup> It has also been said, though this is evidently mistaken, that the speculum put up at the Strawberry Hill sale was “a crystal globe (pierced through the middle).”<sup>79</sup> The entry in the catalogue reads: “84. A singularly interesting and curious relic of the superstitions of our ancestors — the celebrated *SPECULUM* of *KENNEL COAL*, highly polished, in a leathern case. It is remarkable for having been used to deceive the mob, by the celebrated Dr Dee, the conjuror, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth. It was originally in the collection of the Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough, in whose catalogue it is called the black stone, into which Dr Dee used to call his spirits. From the Mordaunts it passed to Lady Elizabeth Germaine, and

<sup>72</sup> *Letters*, ed. by Mrs Paget Toynbee (Oxford, 1903-5, 16 vols.), viii. 22-3; cp. the letter to the Countess of Upper Ossory, 12<sup>th</sup> of January 1782, xii. 145.

<sup>73</sup> J. C. Adelung, *Geschichte der menschlichen Narrheit* (Leipzig, 1785-9, 7 vols.), vii. 80.

<sup>74</sup> J. Berkenhout, *Biographia Literaria* (London, 1777), p. 427n; *Penny Encyclopædia*, viii. (1837), 347; Sir R. F. Burton, *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387n; H. S. Cumings, *Journal of the British Archæological Assoc.* (London, 1850), v. 52; *D.N.B.*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>75</sup> W. Gregory, *Animal Magnetism* (London, 1896), p. 163.

<sup>76</sup> W. C., *Notes and Queries* (1863), 3 S. iv. 155.

<sup>77</sup> G. F. Kunz, *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (Philadelphia, 1913), p. 190.

<sup>78</sup> C. Fell-Smith, *John Dee* (London, 1909), p. 63; O. M. Dalton, *Proceedings of the Soc. of Antiquaries* (London, 1900), xxi. 382-3.

<sup>79</sup> A. R. Bayley, *Notes and Queries* (1907), 10 S. i. 16.

from her to John, last Duke of Argyll, whose son, Lord Frederick Campbell, presented it to Mr Walpole.”<sup>80</sup>

The stone was apparently purchased by Mr J. H. Smythe Piggott (though according to some accounts it first passed through the hands of a Mr Strong of Bristol),<sup>81</sup> and we are thereby enabled to know what the stone really looked like: “At the sale of the effects of J. H. S. Piggott, Esq., at Brockway Hall, Somerset, in October 1849<sup>82</sup> ... the Shew-Stone of the celebrated astrologer, Dr Dee, was one of the curiosities disposed of... [here follows a cut of the stone] ... we cannot do better than to quote the notice written and pasted at the back of the stone, by Horace Walpole. ... ‘The black stone, into which Dr Dee [22] used to call his spirits by his book. This stone was mentioned in the catalogue of the collection of the Earls of Peterborough,<sup>83</sup> from whom it came to Lady Elizabeth Germaine. H. W.’ The stone is eight inches long, and seven inches and a half across in its widest part.”<sup>84</sup> The speculum has been accurately described elsewhere in a passage worth transcribing notwithstanding the risk of repetition, if only to compare the versions of Horace Walpole’s label: “This magic speculum of Dr Dee is composed of a flat black stone of very close texture, with a highly polished surface, half an inch in thickness, and seven inches and a quarter in diameter; of a circular form, except at the top, where there is a hole for suspension. It came from Strawberry Hill; and Horace Walpole has attached a statement of its history in his own handwriting on the back of the original leather case, in which it has been preserved:— ‘The black stone into which Dr Dee used to call his spirits, v. his book. This stone was mentioned in the Catalogue of the collection of the Mordaunts, Earls of Peterborough, and passed into the hands of Lady Elizabeth Germaine; from whom it went to John Campbell,

<sup>80</sup> *A Catalogue of the Classic Contents of Strawberry Hill* [1842], p. 167.

<sup>81</sup> D.N.B., Cuming, *loc. cit.*

<sup>82</sup> This date was wrongly given as 1853 by W. C., *loc. cit.*, followed by D.N.B. and Kunz, *loc. cit.*

<sup>83</sup> I have not been able to see a copy of this catalogue.

<sup>84</sup> *Illustrated London News* (London, 1850), xvi. 157; I am indebted to Mr O. M. Dalton for this reference.

Duke of Argyll, whose son, Lord Frederick Campbell, presented it to H. W.”<sup>85</sup>

At the Piggott sale the stone was bought by Lord Londesborough,<sup>86</sup> from whom it apparently passed to Prince Alexis Soltykoff.<sup>87</sup> But “another mirror, also of Mexican obsidian, and said to have belonged to Dr Dee, was sold at the Jeffrey Whitehead sale at Sotheby’s in March 1906”!<sup>88</sup> And to entangle the matter still further the following passages will be useful: one writer reminds us that Dr Dee’s magic mirror “was included in the Tudor Exhibition in 1890. There were indeed two such relics on view. One was a pear-shaped, polished black stone, which would, I presume, be the ‘disc of highly polished cannel coal.’ It is catalogued as ‘Dr Dee’s Shew-Stone or Speculum. . . .’ The latter was a crystal globe, described in the catalogue as ‘Dr Dee’s Divining Crystal.’ The latter was lent by G. Milner-Gibson-Cullum, Esq., but no owner’s name was appended to the first-mentioned exhibit.”<sup>89</sup> Miss Goodrich-Freer records having seen Dee’s crystal at the Stuart Exhibition, but this is no doubt a slip of the pen, though Lang repeats the mistake.<sup>90</sup>

To turn from the black stone to the crystal, one writer declares that a magic crystal supposed to have been Dr Dee’s came into the possession of “a noble lady, distinguished in the literary world, who has died since that time.”<sup>91</sup> Finally, Dr Dee’s crystal is said to have been in the possession of Mr Henry Huth.<sup>92</sup> In answer to my query Mrs O. Huth (who is the daughter-in-law of Mr Henry Huth) kindly informs me that this stone is now in her possession and is

---

<sup>85</sup> W. C., *loc. cit.*

<sup>86</sup> T. Wright, *Miscellanea Graphica: . . . Remains in the possession of Lord Londesborough* (London, 1857), pp. 81-2.

<sup>87</sup> Cp. Dalton and Kunz, *loc. cit.*

<sup>88</sup> O. M. Dalton, *loc. cit.*

<sup>89</sup> J. T. Page, *Notes and Queries*, 9 S. xii. 467; cp. [*Catalogue of the*] *Exhibition of the Royal House of Tudor* (New Gallery, London, 1890), pp. 205 (No. 1050), 208 (No. 1964\*).

<sup>90</sup> A. Goodrich-Freer, *Essays in Psychical Research* (London, 1899), p. 127; A. Lang, *Cock Lane and Common Sense* (London, 1896), p. 217; no such crystal is recorded in the [*Catalogue of the*] *Exhibition of the Royal House of Stuart* (New Gallery, London, 1889).

<sup>91</sup> W. Gregory, *Animal Magnetism* (London, 1896), p. 134.

<sup>92</sup> J. Brand, *Popular Antiquities*, ed. by W. C. Hazlitt (London, 1905, 2 vols.), i. 46, s.v. “Beryl.”

“oval, and rather larger than a duck’s egg.”<sup>93</sup> It will be noted that this description is the [24] only one that tallies with Dee’s description of his angelical stone as being “big as an egg. . . .”<sup>94</sup>

To return now to Dee himself, we find that in the year following his receipt of the crystal from the angels, Albert Laski, a nobleman of Bohemia, came to England and induced Dee to return to the continent with him, in the hope that the latter would be able to make gold for him, in which, Dee notes in his diary, he was successful. During the next four years Dee and his family, with Kelly and the crystal and all, travelled about Europe, visiting Rudolph II, Emperor of the Romans, and Stephen, King of Poland, on their way. He refused an offer to visit the Emperor of Russia and to remain with him with a stipend of £2000 a year, a considerable sacrifice for the constantly impecunious Dee. Early in 1589 he broke with Kelly, and at the end of the same year was back in England, where he was most graciously received by Elizabeth, who had already given signs of her favour. In 1595 Dee was appointed Warden of Manchester College, whence he returned to his house at Mortlake in 1604 owing to bad health, and in 1608, at the age of eighty-one, he died.

The diary that Dee kept of his scrying experiments, which run into several bulky volumes, forms a very valuable source of information, having once set aside the absurdities and inconsistencies due to the temperaments of Dee and of Kelly. There can be no doubt that the latter was a [25] thorough scoundrel and frequently deceived the kindly Dee, yet there is equally little doubt that the mass of the visions recorded in these diaries are genuine. For there is much in them — the records, that is, of things actually seen, not the interpretations of Dee and Kelly — that is in accord with modern experience. In no case, however, can the

<sup>93</sup> In a letter dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 1924.

<sup>94</sup> It may be worth noting that in early writers Dee’s speculum, in common with Bacon’s, is described as being constructed according to the rules of perspective, see *e.g.*, G. Naudé, *Apologie povr tovs les grands personnages qui ont esté faussement soupçonner de Magie* (Paris, 1625), p. 490. For the speculum in general see also A. Lang, *Longman’s Magazine* (London, 1895), xxvi. 110; W. Godwin, *Lives of the Necromancers* (London, 1834), pp. 376-7; D. G. Morhof, *Polyhistor Literarius, Philosophicus et Practicus* (Lübeck, 1732, 3 vols.), II. iii. 460.

absolute honesty of Dee be doubted, and the absurd reflections, after the fashion set by Butler,

Kelly did all his feats upon  
The Devil's looking-glass — a stone,  
Where, playing with him at bo-peep,  
He solv'd all problems ne'er so deep,<sup>95</sup>

which have been made on his integrity and even on his sanity, are quite undeserved.<sup>96</sup>

## §7 WILLIAM LILLY

In the case of William Lilly (1602-1681), astrologer and political double-dealer, there is not much evidence to show that he knew of scrying and used a crystal for that purpose. He writes in his Autobiography that he was very familiar with one Sarah Skelhorn who had been a Speculatrix to one Arthut Gauntlet, a doctor. “This *Sarah* lived a long time, even until her Death, with one Mrs *Stockman* in the Isle of *Purbeck*, and died about sixteen Years since: Her Mistress one time being desirous to accompany her Mother, the Lady *Beconsfield*, unto *London*, who lived twelve miles from her Habitation, caused *Sarah* to inspect her Crystal to see if she, *viz.* her Mother was gone, yea or not; the Angels appeared, and shewed [26] her Mother opening a Trunk and taking out a red Wastcoat, whereby she perceived she was not gone; next Day she went to her Mother, and there, as she entred the Chamber, she was opening a Trunk, and had a red Wastcoat in her Hand”: Lilly also knew one Gladwell of Suffolk “who had formerly had Sight and Conference with *Uriel* and *Raphael*, but lost them both by Carelessness.” Lilly describes this gentleman's Beryl as having been of the largeness “of a good big Orange, set in Silver, with a

<sup>95</sup> Samuel Butler, *Hudibras*, II. iii. 631-4.

<sup>96</sup> See for instance H. D. Traill, *English Illustrated Magazine* (London, 1889), vi. 480; *D.N.B.*, xiv. 279; A. F. Pollard, in *Lives of Twelve Bad Men*, ed. by T. Seccombe (London, 1894), p. 36.



Cross on the Top, and another on the Handle; and round about engraved the Names of these Angels, Raphael, Gabriel, Uriel.”<sup>97</sup> Lilly gained a pretty reputation during his life, being thus restrainedly described in a satirical broadsheet:

He that *foresees all* thing in *Church and State*,  
By help oth’ *Chrystal*, And his *Book of Fate*.<sup>98</sup>

## §8 COUNT CAGLIOSTRO

Giuseppe Balsamo (1743-1795), professionally known as Count Alessandro Cagliostro, is not unknown to notoriety. He was a dangerous kind of charlatan: for to his sincere interest in occult matters and to his smattering of knowledge were added considerable baseness and duplicity. His conquering march over the whole of Europe and most of the Near East has been burned with the molten lead of Carlyle’s eloquence.<sup>99</sup> What chiefly annoyed the angry [27] sage was Cagliostro’s use of children for scrying: it must be confessed, alas! that Carlyle’s knowledge (here as elsewhere?) lagged behind his indignation; for the Grand Copt was in the direct line of soothsayers in so doing. There is no reason for doubting that Cagliostro was a genuine believer in the facts of scrying, and did indeed sometimes obtain interesting results. But the manner in which he conducted his performances does not leave much room for sympathy: “Cagliostro brought to the [Masonic] Lodge ... a little child ... he placed the child on his knees in front of a table on which stood a carafe of pure water, behind which were several lighted candles. He made an exorcism around him, placed his hands on the child’s head, and both, in that attitude, addressed their prayers to God for the happy accomplishment of the work. Having been told to look into the carafe, the child exclaimed all of

<sup>97</sup> W. Lilly, *History of His Life and Times, From the Year 1602, to 1681, Written by himself* (London, 1715), pp. 101-2, 103 and note.

<sup>98</sup> *Lilly Lash’t with his own Rod, or an Epigram On the quaint Skill of that Arch Temporizing Astrologer, Mr William Lilly* (London, 1660).

<sup>99</sup> *Count Cagliostro*, in *Works* (London, 1899, 30 vols.), xxviii. 288

a sudden that he saw a garden. Knowing by this that God was helping him, Cagliostro took courage, and told the child to ask God for the grace of seeing the angel Michael. First of all the child said: ‘I see something white, without being able to distinguish what it is.

...<sup>100</sup>

Count Beugnot, a mediocre statesman of the transition period, has left a similar picture, which deserves quoting for its interesting details: “One of the tricks of Cagliostro was to make known at Paris an event occurring at the moment at Vienna, at Paris, or Pekin; or that would take place in six days, six months, six years, or twenty years from the moment. But this required an apparatus which consisted of a glass globe full of clear water. . . . The apparatus being all ready, a clairvoyante was to kneel [28] before the glass globe — that is to say, a young person was to observe the scenes of which the globe should offer a representation, and to relate them. . . . The young person must be of a purity unequalled, except by the angels; she was to be born under a given constellation, have delicate nerves, great susceptibility, and blue eyes. By unspeakable good luck, Mademoiselle de Latour, niece of Madame de Lamotte . . . was stated to fulfil all the conditions. . .

...<sup>101</sup>

In Alexandre Dumas’s novel *Mémoires d’un médecin*, which is based on Cagliostro’s adventures, occurs a very dramatic scene in which Marie Antoinette is shown, in a glass of water, her impending fate (I. xv.).

The Count of St Germain, whom Cagliostro claimed as his friend, has also been said, on about as much evidence as most statements about that mysterious personage, to have gone in for scrying.<sup>102</sup>

<sup>100</sup> *Vie de Joseph Balsamo . . . Comte Cagliostro, Extraite de la Procédure instruite contre lui à Rome, en 1790, traduite d’après l’original italien* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, 1791), pp. 122-3; cp. *Biographie Universelle*, vi. (1843), 340, s.v. “Cagliostro.”

<sup>101</sup> J. C. Beugnot, *Life and Adventures of Count Beugnot*, ed. by Charlotte Yonge (London, 1871, 2 vols.), i. 55-7. For a different interpretation of the identity and character of Cagliostro see W. R. H. Trowbridge, *Cagliostro, The Splendour and Misery of a Master of Magic* (London, 1910).

<sup>102</sup> Sir R. F. Burton, *Personal Narrative of a Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387n.



## CHAPTER III

### SCRYING IN LITERATURE

#### §1 SCRYING IN EARLY LITERATURE

Inspired no doubt by the magical legends then current, the early writers frequently used supernormal themes. Scrying, providing good enough matter for the imagination, was naturally not overlooked. Thus in the *Gesta Romanorum*, which were first translated into English at the beginning of the fourteenth century, we find a most instructive tale, with its moral duly appended. A knight on a pilgrimage across the seas is accosted in a street of Rome by a strange clerk from whom he learns that the wife he left behind him is deceiving him with a magician, who, as a price for her favours, is employing his magical skill to dispose of the knight. The latter, not at all incredulous it must be confessed, is taken home by the stranger, where he is persuaded to undress and to step into a bath. The clerk then hands him a mirror in which the knight sees his wife with the magician, who is shooting at an image of her husband; but each time he draws his bow the latter ducks under the water and is saved. The third and last arrow permitted by the magical art is thereby not only prevented from hitting the image but recoils with deadly effect on the magician himself. The knight

then presumably steps out of the [30] bath; and having taken another wife he “faire endid his liffe.”<sup>103</sup> The moral I omit.

Piers Plowman was almost as fortunate, for his lady made him look into a mirror in which he saw wonders:

Sithen she sayd to me, “Here mightest thou se wonders.”<sup>104</sup>

Froissart has framed the tale to a pretty conceit:

Je vodroie qu’il peüst estre  
Que je ressamblasse le mestre  
Qui fist le miréoir à Romme  
Dont estoient veu li homme  
Qui chevauçoient environ.  
Se le sens avoie ossi bon  
Que cils que le miréoir fist  
En cesti ci, par Jhesu-Christ!  
En quelconques lieu que g’iroie  
Ma dame apertement veroie.<sup>105</sup>

In those days we could look forward to seeing a rider of a horse of brass come to our door, if we were a pretty lady, and hand us a mirror with some such pleasant speech as this:

This mirrour eek, that I have in myn hond,  
Hath swich a myght that men might in it see  
Whan ther shal fallen any adversitee  
Unto youre regne, or to youre self also,  
And openly who is youre freend or foo;  
[31] And over al this, if any lady bright  
Hath set hire herte on any maner wight,

<sup>103</sup> *The Early English Versions of the Gesta Romanorum*, ed. by S. J. H. Herrtage (Early English Text Soc, London, 1879), pp. 1-3. This episode also occurs in a German tale about the magician Virgil, see C. J. Simrock, *Die deutschen Volksbücher* (Frankfort o.M., 1845-67, 13 vols.), vi. 380, *sq*

<sup>104</sup> Cited by W. A. Clouston, *On the Magical Elements in Chaucer’s Squire’s Tale* (Chaucer Soc, London, 1888-90), p. 309.

<sup>105</sup> J. Froissart, *Poécies*, ed. by J. A. Buchon (Paris, 1829), pp. 270-1. “I wish it were possible for me to resemble the master who made the mirror at Rome in which were seen all men who rode nearby. For if in this I were as able as he, by Heaven, to whatever place I went I could clearly see my lady.”

If he be fals she shal his tresoun see,  
 His newe love, and al his subtiltee,  
 So openly that ther shal no thyng hyde.

And later, if we had Chaucer's sly humour, we could listen to this conversation:

And somme of hem wondred on the mirour  
 That born was up into the hye tour,  
 Hou men myghte in it swiche thinges se.  
 Another answerde and seyde it myghte wel be  
 Naturelly by composiciouns  
 Of anglis, and of slye reflexiouns;  
 And seyden that in Rome was swich oon.  
 They speken of Alocen and Vitulon,<sup>106</sup> And Aristotle, that  
 writen in hir lyves  
 Of queynte mirours, and of prospcctives,  
 As knowen they that han hir bookes herd.<sup>107</sup>

Camoens writes (here not impeccably translated by Fanshawe) of the Muse as

With a sweet Voyce she raises to the skies  
 Rare men to come into the world; whose cleare  
*Ideas* were beheld by Protheus wise  
 In a *Diaphane* and *Phantastick Sphere*,  
 Which in a *Dream* JOVE shew'd to his shut Eyes. . . .<sup>108</sup>

An early work printed by Caxton was his translation of the Dutch tales about Reynard the Fox. Reynard was another sly one, and certainly a reader of Chaucer: "I fonde this ryng in my fadres tresour, & in the same place I toke a glass or a mirrour. . . . Now ye shal here of [32] the mirrour. The glas that stod theron was of such

<sup>106</sup> "Alhazen was an Arab astronomer of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, and Vitellio a Polish, of the 13<sup>th</sup>." A. W. Pollard.

<sup>107</sup> *Canterbury Tales*, ed. by A. W. Pollard (London, 1894, 2 vols.), ii. 196-7, 200; *Squire's Tale*, ll. 132-41, 225-35.

<sup>108</sup> *The Lusiad*, X. vii.

vertu that men myght see therin alle that was don within a myle, of men, of beestis, and of al thyng that men wold desire to wyte and knowe.”<sup>109</sup> It is not a far step from Reynard, the Dutch Fox, to Gavin Douglas, the Scottish Bishop, who wrote of the mirror that stood before the throne of Venus in the wonderful Palace, that it surmounted far in brightness to his deme

The coistlie subtell spectakill of Rome,  
Or yit the mirroure send to Canace,  
Quhairin men micht mony wonders se.

In that mirroure I micht se at ane sicht,  
The deidis and fatis of euerie eirdlie wicht,  
All thingis gane like as thay war present.<sup>110</sup>

Another imitator of Chaucer, charmingly human this time, was Edmund Spenser, who added broideries to the old textures. When Britomart wanted to see her lover

By straunge occasion she did him behold,  
And much more straungely gan to love his sight,  
As it in bookes hath written beene of old.  
In Deheubarth, that now South-wales is hight,  
What time king Ryence raign'd and dealed right,  
The great Magicien Merlin had deviz'd,  
A looking glasse, right wondrously aguiz'd,  
Whose vertues through the wyde worlde soone were  
solemniz'd.

It vertue had to shew in perfect sight  
Whatever thing was in the world contaynd,  
Betwixt the lowest earth and hevens hight,  
So that it to the looker appertaynd:

<sup>109</sup> *The Historie of Reynarde the Foxe*, xxxii.

<sup>110</sup> *The Palice of Honour*, III. xxiii—xxiv.

[33] Whatever foe had wrought, or frend had faynd,  
 Therein discovered was, ne ought mote pas,  
 Ne ought in secret from the same remaynd;  
 Forthy it round and hollow shaped was,  
 Like to the world itselſe, and seemed a world of glas.<sup>111</sup>

To depart still further from the chronological order, Spenser in turn inspired, though not so felicitously, James Thomson:

One great Amusement of our Household was,  
 In a huge crystal magic Globe to spy,  
 Still as you turn'd it, all Things that do pass  
 Upon this Ant-Hill Earth. . . .<sup>112</sup>

Before Spenser, in 1576, George Gascoigne referred to the philosopher Lucilius, a worthy man

Who at his death, bequeathed the christal glasse,  
 To such as love, to seme but not to be,  
 And unto those, that love to see themselves,  
 How foule or fayre, soever that they are,  
 He gan bequeath, a glasse of trustie Steele,  
 Wherin they may be bolde alwayes to looke,  
 Bycause it shewes, all things in their degree.<sup>113</sup>

Thomas Lodge, a scribbler, referred to one of his pamphlets as a “Christall in which can be seen the common appearance of devils . . .,”<sup>114</sup> and Robert Armin, another, writes of a “grumbling sir, one that was wise enough, and fond enough, and solde all for a glasse

<sup>111</sup> *The Faerie Queene*, III. ii. 18-19; see p. 11 above.

<sup>112</sup> *The Castle of Indolence*, I. xlix.

<sup>113</sup> *The Steele Glas*, in *Complete Works*, ed. by J. W. Cunliffe (Cambridge, 1907-10, 2 vols.), ii. 148-9.

<sup>114</sup> *Wits Miserie and the Worlds Madnesse: Discovering the Devils Incarnat of this Age* (London, 1596), sig. A4b.



prospective, because hee would wisely see into all but himselfe. . .  
 ”<sup>115</sup>

But by a couple of years we have passed over Shakespeare, [34] who has everything; in *Measure for Measure* (1604) he wrote of the law’s resemblance to one who

like a Prophet,  
 Lookes in a glasse, that shewes what future euils  
 Either new, or by remissenesse, new conceiu’d,  
 And so in progresse to be hatch’d, and borne,  
 Are now to haue no successiue degrees,  
 But ere they Hue to end.<sup>116</sup>

In these lines are set out the whole argument of the New Academy against prophecy as expounded by Cicero in his second book *On Divination*. Shakespeare returned to this theme two years later in *Macbeth*: in the stage directions to the second witches’ scene we find “A shew of eight Kings, and Banquo last, with a glasse in his hand.” And a few lines further Macbeth says, after the figures of the future rulers have passed, “And yet the eight appeares, who beares a glasse, Which shewes me many more. . .  
 ”<sup>117</sup>

A few years later Ben Jonson brought out *The Alchemist*, one of the choice crew in which reproaches another with

Erecting figures, in your rowes of *Houses*,  
 And taking in of shadowes, with a glasse. . . .<sup>118</sup>

But now, alas, the old writers are

<sup>115</sup> *A Nest of Ninnies*, in *Works*, ed. by A. B. Grosart (privately printed, 1880), p. 47.

<sup>116</sup> Act II, Scene ii.

<sup>117</sup> Act IV, Scene i.

<sup>118</sup> Act I, Scene i; the passage in the Argument, “... casting Figures, telling Fortunes, Newes, Selling of Flyes, flat Bawdry, with the Stone:” has been erroneously cited, the stone in question being the philosopher’s variety; cp. C. M. Hathaway’s ed. of *The Alchemist* (New York, 1903), p. 251.

declining from *Theourgia*,  
*Artenosoria*, *Pharmacia*, reiecting  
*Necro-puro-geo-hydro-chiero-coscinomancy*,  
 With other vaine and superstitious Sciences.<sup>119</sup>

## §2 SCRYING IN MODERN LITERATURE

After this decline national affairs, in England at least, were too unsettled to allow writers the time for consideration of supernatural affairs, and afterwards the spread of the rationalistic spirit made it impossible. It was not until the passing of the eighteenth century that Sir Walter Scott again made witchcraft and demonology respectable subjects. His earliest reference to scrying occurs in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* (1805), in which Fitzraven's song opens thus:

Dark was the vaulted room of gramarye,  
 To which the wizard led the gallant knight,  
 Save that before a mirror, huge and high,  
 A hallow'd taper shed a glimmering light,  
 On mystic implements of magic might;  
 On cross, and character, and talisman,  
 And almagest, and altar, nothing bright:  
 For fitful was the lustre, pale and wan,  
 As watchlight by the bed of some departing man.

But soon, within that mirror huge and high,  
 Was seen a self-emitted light to gleam;  
 And forms upon its breast the Earl 'gan spy,  
 Cloudy and indistinct, as feverish dream;

---

<sup>119</sup> T. Tomkis, *Albumazar* (London, 1615), II. iii. The play by J. Donneau de Visé and T. Cornicille, *La Devineresse, ou les Faux enchantments* (Paris, 1680), introduces scrying as an item in its infernal machinery.

Till, slow arranging, and denned, they seem  
To form a lordly and a lofty room. . . .<sup>120</sup>

Nearly a quarter of a century later (1828) Scott returned to this theme, this time in prose, and wrote the story *Aunt Margaret's Mirror*.<sup>121</sup> In the meanwhile Professor John Wilson, of *Noctes Ambrosianæ* fame, wrote a whole narrative [36] poem about a magic mirror, addressing it to Scott; here is a specimen:

. . . ere long I grew  
Familiar with the wizard of my dream,  
When from his lofty breast he slowly drew  
What seem'd a Mirror by its glancing gleam,  
And bade me therein look, where I might see  
Wild nights come floating by in cloud of glamoury.<sup>122</sup>

Robert Southey, renowned though unconfessed copier, had published a couple of years before *The Curse of Kehama*, in which occur these poetic lines:

At this the Witch, through shrivell'd lips and thin,  
Sent forth a sound half-whistle and half-hiss.  
Two winged Hands came in,  
Armless and bodyless,  
Bearing a globe of liquid crystal, set  
In frame as diamond bright, yet black as jet.  
A thousand eyes were quench'd in endless night,  
To form that magic globe; for Lorrinite  
Had, from their sockets, drawn the liquid sight,  
And kneaded it, with re-creating skill,  
Into this organ of her mighty will,

<sup>120</sup> VI. xvii-xviii.

<sup>121</sup> Those who care for a heavier touch in these things can turn to "A Manx Witch: a Weird Story of Crystal Vision and Warning," *Borderland* (London, 1897), iv. 286, sqq.

<sup>122</sup> *The Magic Mirror* (Edinburgh, 1812), X. ix.

”Look in yonder orb,” she cried,  
 ”Tell me what is there descried.”<sup>123</sup>

Harrison Ainsworth also borrowed liberally from Scott in his description of the mirror vision shown by Dr Dee and Kelly to Guy Fawkes.<sup>124</sup>

Later in the century several writers make use of scrying themes. Robert Browning has a bare reference to peeping in the glass ball,<sup>125</sup> but William Morris has some stately lines describing Sigurd’s arrival at the hall of Gripir:

[37]

There he looks and beholdeth the high-seat, and he sees it  
 strangely wrought,  
 Of the tooth of the sea-beast fashioned ere the Dwarf-kind  
 came to nought;  
 And he looks, and thereon is Gripir, the King exceeding old,  
 With the sword of his father girded, and his raiment wrought of  
 gold;  
 With the ivory rod in his right-hand, with his left on the crystal  
 laid,  
 That is round as the world of men-folk, and after its image  
 made,  
 And clear is it wrought to the eyen that may read therein of  
 fate,  
 Though little indeed be its sea, and its earth not wondrous  
 great.<sup>126</sup>

And D. G. Rossetti let loose his enchanted imagination (and, it should be said, his precise learning and observation) on the theme in *Rose Mary*:

The lady unbound her jewelled zone  
 And drew from her robe the Beryl-stone.

<sup>123</sup> XI. cxvi—cxvii.

<sup>124</sup> *Guy Fawkes*, I. viii.

<sup>125</sup> *Mr Sludge, “The Medium”* in *Works*, ed. by A. Birrell (London, 1898, 2 vols.), ii. 605.

<sup>126</sup> *The Story of Sigurd the Volsung*, II. v. 25-32. 8 I. vii-ix.; see pp. 85-6 below.

Shaped it was to a shadowy sphere,—  
 World of our world, the sun's compeer,  
 That bears and buries the toiling year.

With shuddering light 'twas stirred and strewn  
 Like the cloud-nest of the wading moon:  
 Flecked it was as the bubble's ball,  
 Rainbow-hued through a misty pall  
 Like the middle light of the waterfall.

Shadows dwelt in its teeming girth  
 Of the known and unknown things of earth;  
 The cloud above and the wave around,—  
 The central fire at the sphere's heart bound,  
 Like doomsday prisoned underground.<sup>127</sup>

[38] In the famous jewel speech at the end of *Salome*, Herod says, "I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young men behold it until they have been beaten with rods." Oscar Wilde probably learned this from his master J. K. Huysmans' *À Rebours*, in which (chapter x.) there is a very complicated and peculiar mirror vision, which in turn derives, admittedly, from that most witty and stimulating writer Villiers de l'Isle Adam, whose *Clair Lenoir* is based on the medieval legend that the last thing seen before death remains visibly printed on the eyes.<sup>128</sup>

To come to contemporary times we find, now that magic and thaumaturgy are quite the thing, numerous allusions in all sorts of works. Mr Wells, as usual, set the ball rolling with his story *The Crystal Egg*,<sup>129</sup> which is still the best tale of its kind. In *The Eyes of Youth*,<sup>130</sup> which was brought to the St James's Theatre from America in the autumn of 1918, crystal-gazing played an important

<sup>127</sup> I. vii-ix.; see pp. 85-6 below.

<sup>128</sup> See especially chapters iv. and xx.; in chapter xviii. is the original of des Esseintes's vision.

<sup>129</sup> In *The Country of the Blind* (London, 1911), pp. 285-307.

<sup>130</sup> By Charles Guernon and Max Marcein.

part. In Mr Russel Thorndike's version of Dickens's *Christmas Carol* which was shown at the Old Vic. during Christmas of 1923 (together with the *Chester Play of the Shepherds*), Scrooge is shown his visions in a mirror. And Mr Lennox Robinson has written a little play all about crystal-gazing and card-reading.<sup>131</sup> Miss Rose Macaulay duly trounces crystal-gazing and its devotees in her *Potterism*.<sup>132</sup> Mr Arthur Machen has these lines in his suggestive tale *The Secret Glory*, as introduction to a vision: "Among the precious stones which were set into the wonder [cup] was a [39] great crystal, shining with the pure light of the moon; about the rim of it there was the appearance of faint and feathery clouds, but in the centre it was a white splendour; and as Ambrose gazed he thought that from the heart of this jewel there streamed continually a shower of glittering stars, dazzling his eyes with their incessant motion and brightness. . . ." <sup>133</sup>

An interesting crystal-gazing scene occurs in Mr James Stephens's beautiful *Deirdre*.<sup>134</sup> The witch in one of Mr Cabell's alcove romances sees visions in a "dark polished stone,"<sup>135</sup> and of course the magic mirror duly appears in that repository of all things strange and hidden, Mr Joyce's *Ulysses*,<sup>136</sup> as well as in its offspring *Antic Hay*.<sup>137</sup> After which, for some light relief, we can turn to the chapter on "The Magic Mirror" in *The Brave Little Tailor, or Seven at a Blow*.<sup>138</sup>

Even Mr Nahum did not escape the general contagion, for had he not on his wall the picture of a "man in rags looking into a small round mirror or looking-glass, but at what you couldn't see"?<sup>139</sup>

<sup>131</sup> "Never the Time and the Place," *The Dublin Magazine* (Dublin, May 1924), i. 856-867.

<sup>132</sup> (London, 1920), pp. 108, 132-3.

<sup>133</sup> (London, 1922), pp. 97-100.

<sup>134</sup> (London, 1923), pp. 32, 223-5. See also Shane Leslie, *Doomsland* (London, 1923), pp. 298, *sqq.*

<sup>135</sup> *The High Place* (London, 1923), p. 25.

<sup>136</sup> (Paris, 1922), pp. 528-9.

<sup>137</sup> By Aldous Huxley (London, 1923), p. 235. See also J. Middleton Murry, *The Voyage* (London [1924]), p. 47

<sup>138</sup> By George Calderon and William Caine (London, 1923), pp. 208, *sqq.*

<sup>139</sup> Walter de la Mare, *Come Hither* (London, 1923), p. 498; other such pictures are Miss E. F. Birkdale's *To-day for me* (1901) and Mr G. R. Wolseley's *Visions*, No. 267 in this year's (1924) *Academy*. A recent book of memoirs, by Elizabeth Marbury, is entitled *My Crystal Ball* (London, 1924). It should not be necessary to note that this section does not aim at completeness: these are simply the allusions I have come across.



## CHAPTER IV

### SCRYING IN ANCIENT AND EARLY EUROPE

#### §1 SCRYING IN ANCIENT GREECE

Among the innumerable modes of divination employed by the Greeks the different methods of scrying (all of them are known to have been used in Greece) play an important part.<sup>140</sup> Bouché-Leclercq curiously enough has little to say about them, commenting in one place, quite mistakenly, that hydromancy did not have a great vogue in historical Greece.<sup>141</sup>

Pausanias records three springs in Greece which were used for divination by scrying. One was in front of the sanctuary of Demeter at Patræ. "Between the spring and the temple is a stone wall, but on the outside there is a way down to the spring. Here is an infallible mode of divination, not, however, for all matters, but only in cases of sickness. They tie a mirror to a fine cord, and let it down so far that it shall not plunge into the spring, but merely [41] graze the surface of the water with its rim. Then after praying to the goddess and burning incense, they look into the mirror, and it shows them the sick person either living or dead. So truthful is this water."<sup>142</sup> Another of these springs was at the oracle of Apollo

<sup>140</sup> T. Wilson, *An Archæological Dictionary* (London, 1783), under the names of the various methods of scrying; F. Lenormant, *Le Divination et la Science des Présages chez les Chaldéens* (Paris, 1875), p. 78; F. T. Elworthy, *The Evil Eye* (London, 1895), pp. 443, *sqq.*; and any standard work of an appropriate nature.

<sup>141</sup> *Histoire de la Divination dans l'antiquité* (Paris, 1879-92, 4 vols.), i. 186; cp. i. 187, 340*n*.

<sup>142</sup> *Description of Greece*, VII. xxi. 12; Sir J. G. Frazer's trans. (London, 1898, 8 vols.), i. 360-1.



Thyrxeus, very near Cyaneæ in Lycia, which showed anyone who looked into it whatever he wished to see.<sup>143</sup> The third spring was at Tænarum: “Nowadays there is nothing wonderful about the spring; but they say that formerly when people looked into the water they could see the harbours and the ships. A woman stopped these exhibitions for ever by washing dirty clothes in the water.”<sup>144</sup>

Damascius writes of a holy woman who poured pure water into a drinking-glass and saw in the water the images of things to come. He himself, adds Damascius, had not encountered anything of the sort.<sup>145</sup> The procedure in this gastromancy has been thus described: “They filled certain round glasses with fair water about which they placed lighted torches: then invoked the question to be solved. A chaste and unpolluted boy, or a woman big with child, was appointed to observe with the greatest care and exactness all the alterations in the glasses: at the same time desiring, beseeching, and also commanding an answer, which at length the demon used to return by images in the glasses, which by reflections from the water represented what should come to pass.”<sup>146</sup> Iamblichus has it that the visions were seen by a divine light shining [42] through the water.<sup>147</sup> According to Macrobius the lakes of Sicily, which, he says, are of small size but of immense depth, were used for scrying.<sup>148</sup> Cicero relates that Pherecydes, the teacher of Pythagoras, foretold an earthquake from the appearance of some water drawn from a well; but he ridicules the idea of this being a genuine instance of divination.<sup>149</sup> The legend that Pythagoras himself used a magic mirror may or may not have some foundation in fact, but the tradition has no connexion with scrying.<sup>150</sup>

<sup>143</sup> VII. xxi. 13; Frazer, i. 361.

<sup>144</sup> III. xxv. 8; Frazer, i. 176.

<sup>145</sup> *Vita Isidori*, ed. by R. Asmus (Leipzig, 1911), p. 118.

<sup>146</sup> J. Potter, *Archæologia Græca*, ed. by J. Boyd (new ed., London, 1837), pp. 327-8; which see also for some account of the other methods of scrying; cp. p. 4 above.

<sup>147</sup> *De Mysteriis*, II. xiv.

<sup>148</sup> *Saturnalia*, V. xix.

<sup>149</sup> *De Divinatione*, I. 1., II. xiii.

<sup>150</sup> For a summary of this legend see P. Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique* (new ed., Paris, 1820, 14 vols.), xii. 126, *sqq.*, s.v. “Pythagoras.”

At the top of a great pit in the moon Lucian saw “a mighty great glass” in which could be seen all cities and nations as well as if one were in them. And, adds the narrator, if any disbelieve “let them take the pains to go thither themselves and they shall find my words true.”<sup>151</sup> Nevertheless, I have been unable to find any confirmation of this statement in the textbooks of M. Verne and of Mr Wells.

Sir Richard Burton says that the Greeks used for purposes of divination oil poured into a boy’s hand,<sup>152</sup> but Burton’s delightful imagination was apt at times to run away with him. It is true, however, that scrying from the finger-nails was used in Greece, and in a Græco-Egyptian MS. are directions for a magical operation “to be wrought by help of a boy, with a lamp, a bowl, and a pit.”<sup>153</sup>

Finally, in an old number of *Notes and Queries* a writer quotes an ancient treatise (unspecified) on precious stones: [43] “Among the stones of choicest esteeme, that of Pyrrhus in ancient times was accounted to be most excellent. For in that precious stone (without any helpe, invention, or arte of man) was naturally discerned the figures of nine goddesses and a young naked child standing by them: so that they were censured, by grave opinion, to bee the portraits of the nine Muses and Apollo. A matter very strange, and somewhat difficult to be credited.”<sup>154</sup>

## §2 SCRYING IN ANCIENT ROME

Scrying can have been little used in Rome, for it is seldom mentioned in the numerous records of its divinatory practices which survive. St Augustine says that “Numa himself, being not instructed by any prophet of God, was fain to fall to hydromancy; making his gods (or rather his devils) to appear in water, and

<sup>151</sup> *Vera Historia*, i.; Francis Hickers’s trans.

<sup>152</sup> *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387-9n.

<sup>153</sup> *Fragment of a Græco-Egyptian Work upon Magic*, ed. by C. W. Goodwin (Cambridge Antiquarian Soc, Cambridge, 1852), pp. 2-3; cp. pp. 4-5, 22-3, 27, *sqq.*

<sup>154</sup> J. B. Rowlands, 3 S. iv. 108-9.

instruct him in his religious institutions.”<sup>155</sup> Horace has a passage which has been supposed to be a reference to scrying in blood in a trench.<sup>156</sup> Among the houses unearthed at Rome there is one which is supposed to have been the home of Livy. On the walls of a room in this house are paintings depicting lecanomantic ceremonies in progress.<sup>157</sup> When Apuleius was accused of magical practices, he denied, during the course of his defence, that he had engaged in catoptromancy and hydromancy.<sup>158</sup> During the same century (the second of the present era) flourished Pertinax, of whom “*Iulius Capitolinus*, which setteth out a fewe liues of the common Emperours, reporteth, that Pertinax for ye space of three [44] dayes before he was slayne by a thrust, sawe a certayn shaddowe in one of his fishpondes, whiche with a sword ready drawn threatned to slay him, & thereby much disquieted him.”<sup>159</sup> And the Emperor Julian, it is related, had some events foreseen for him by a child in a mirror.<sup>160</sup>

### § 3 SCRYING IN EARLY EUROPE

Scrying seems to have existed in Europe from very early times, even in the parts to which the civilisations of the East and of the Mediterranean did not penetrate, *pace* Messrs Elliot Smith and W. J. Perry. It is possible that the Druids employed crystals as one of their modes of divination. One writer on the subject had in his possession a round piece of rock crystal almost 3 inches in diameter and 11 inches thick in the middle. On it was an old and partially illegible label, “Druidical magic *Plentz*, or mirror of the deviner’s cell, belonging to the Arch Druid: from a barrow in the

<sup>155</sup> *De civitate Dei*, VII. xxxv.

<sup>156</sup> *Saliræ*, V. viii.

<sup>157</sup> G. Perrot, *Mémoires d’Archéologie, d’Epigraphie et d’Histoire* (Paris, 1875), pp. 123, *sqq.* and plate VII.

<sup>158</sup> *Apologia*, xiii. 11-14, xlii.

<sup>159</sup> L. Lavater, *Of ghostes and spirites walking by nyght* (London, 1572), p. 61; rather embroidered from Julius Capitolinus, *Pertinax Imperator*, xiv.; cp. P. de Valderrama, *Histoire Generate dv Monde* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, 1619-17, 2 vols.), ii. 83.

<sup>160</sup> Spartianus, *Didii Juliani Vita*, vii.

plain of Stonehenge, in all accounts the finest known; formerly the property of Edward Jones, bard to George the Third. This magic Plentz is also used by the Arch Druid in the -----N----- games.”<sup>161</sup> There can, of course, be no guarantee of the authenticity of this description, but it seems likely, to judge from what is known and from what has survived of the practices of the Druids, that they knew of scrying.<sup>162</sup>

[45] As far back as the second century scrying must have been very widely practised to have elicited this imaginative excursus from Hippolytus: “But neither shall I be silent respecting that piece of knavery of these sorcerers, which consists in the divination by means of the cauldron. For, making a closed chamber, and anointing the ceiling with cyanus<sup>163</sup> for present use, they introduce certain vessels of cyanus, and stretch them upwards. The cauldron, however, full of water, is placed in the middle of the ground; and the reflection of the cyanus falling upon it, presents the appearance of heaven. But the floor also has a certain concealed aperture, on which the cauldron is laid, having been previously supplied with a bottom of crystal, while itself is composed of stone. Underneath, however, unnoticed by the spectators, is a compartement, into which the accomplices assembling, appear invested with the figures of such gods and demons as the magician wishes to exhibit.”<sup>164</sup>

Among the objects found in the tomb of Childeric I at Tournay in 1653 was a crystal ball of 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches in diameter. It was for long impossible to know what the purpose of this ball had been. Some fantastic theories were advanced. Thus, it was supposed at first that the globe was used for medicinal purposes;<sup>165</sup> others looked upon

<sup>161</sup> J. Davidson, *Notes and Queries* (1863), 3 S. iv. 155.

<sup>162</sup> Cp. C. Vallancey, *Collectanea de Rebus Hibernicis* (Dublin, 1786, 4 vols.), iv. 83, *sqq.*; H. S. Cuming, “On Crystals of Augury,” *Journal of the British Archaeological Assoc.* (London, 1850), v. 51-3; Marie Trevelyan, *Folk-lore and Folk-Stories of Wales* (London, 1909), pp. 231-2.

<sup>163</sup> A dark blue substance.

<sup>164</sup> *Refutation of all Heresies*, IV. xxxv.; Salmond’s trans., Ante-Nicene Library.

<sup>165</sup> J. J. Chiflet, *Anastasis Childerici I Francorum Regis* (Antwerp, 1655), pp. 243—5; C. Lecointe, *Annales Ecclesiastici Francorum* (Paris, 1665-83, 8 vols.), i. 109; N. Poutrain, *Histoire de la ville et cité de Tournai* (The Hague, 1750, 2 vols.), i. 400.

the sphere as emblematical of the power of the king.<sup>166</sup> [46] But later similar globes<sup>167</sup> were found in many other Merovingian, and in Saxon, tombs,<sup>168</sup> and it was observed that most of them bore the marks of metal mountings. Some indeed were found complete, with hoops of iron or of some other substance and with a ring for suspension. In consequence it became generally believed that these balls were used for ornament, which theory still holds good to some extent.<sup>169</sup> However, still further research has shown that the mountings of these pieces of crystal were identical with those of globes used as charms and for magical and divinatory purposes.<sup>170</sup> It is, therefore, at least probable that the Merovingians in France and the Saxons in England used crystals for scrying. This supposition is strengthened by one of the canons of a synod held by St Patrick (c. 389-461) and the bishops Auxilius and Isserninus.<sup>171</sup> This canon declares that any Christian who believes that a lamia<sup>172</sup> can be seen in a mirror<sup>173</sup> shall be anathematised and not received again into the Church until he shall have renounced his belief and diligently performed the penance imposed upon him.<sup>174</sup> At this time there was a legend [47] current in the Church that when the pure of heart looked into a well at Bethlehem associated with the Virgin Mary, they saw in it a star.<sup>175</sup> And it is related of St Remigius (437-533), Archbishop of Rheims and Apostle of the Franks, that on one occasion he caused a cup of

<sup>166</sup> J. B. Dubos, *Histoire Critique de l'Etablissement de la Monarchie Françoise dans les Gaules* (Amsterdam, 1734, 3 vols.), III. xvi. (ii. 252-3); J. Ribault de Rochefort, *Dissertation sur le Tombeau de Childeric I* (Collection des meilleurs dissertations, Paris, 1862), ii. 112-3.

<sup>167</sup> Twenty were found in one place, B. de Montfaucon, *Les Monumens de la Monarchie Françoise* (Paris, 1729—33, 5 vols.), i. 15.

<sup>168</sup> See J. B. D. Cochet, *Le Tombeau de Childeric I* (Paris, 1859), pp. 301, *sqq.*; cp. Sir T. Browne, *Hydriotaphia*, ii., in *Works*, ed. by C. Sayle (The English Library, Edinburgh, 191a, 3 vols.), iii. 110.

<sup>169</sup> J. B. D. Cochet, *op. cit.*, pp. 300-1.

<sup>170</sup> See *e.g.*, G. F. Kunz, *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (Philadelphia, 1913), plate facing p. 182; J. Collin de Plancy, *Dictionnaire Infernal* (Paris, 1863), p. 190.

<sup>171</sup> The authenticity of these canons has been doubted by *e.g.*, A. W. Haddon and W. Stubbs, *Councils and Ecclesiastical Documents* (Oxford, 1867-78, 3 vols.), ii. 331*n*; but see J. B. Bury, *The Life of St Patrick* (London, 1905), pp. 234, *sqq.*

<sup>172</sup> *New English Dictionary*: "A fabulous monster supposed to have the body of a woman, and to prey upon human beings and suck the blood of children."

<sup>173</sup> The original "sæculo" has been emended to "speculo."

<sup>174</sup> Haddon and Stubbs, *op. cit.*, ii. 329.

<sup>175</sup> C. A. Bernoulli, *Die Heiligen der Merovinger* (Tubingen, 1900), pp. 284-7.

wine to remain full and divined in it.<sup>176</sup>

In the ninth century Hincmarus, another Archbishop of Rheims, inveighed against hydromancy.<sup>177</sup> In the twelfth John of Salisbury waxed indignant against those who divine in “objects which are polished and shining, like a kettle of good brass, glasses, cups, and different kinds of mirrors.”<sup>178</sup> All scryers, he says in the heading of one chapter, who believe that evil spirits can sometimes know the future by means of their subtle nature, deceive themselves and will inevitably come to a bad end.<sup>179</sup> In 1398 the Faculty of Theology in Paris condemned *Specularii* as being of Satanic origin.<sup>180</sup> But the fulminations of the Church were unavailing, and soon the practice of scrying, as one writer says, “prevailed to a very considerable extent in all parts of Western Europe.”<sup>181</sup>

#### § 4 SCRYING IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The period to be considered in this section is not the conventional Middle Ages of art and literature. The unproductive period of science and scientific observation [48] closed later than the parallel period of art and philosophy. It is in this broader sense that the title of this section should be taken. During these obscure years magic of all kinds flourished exceedingly. All the known methods of divination, for instance, were practised, and more were invented. Scrying in all its forms played its part in all these activities. Thus, Gulielmus Arvernus writes of the practice of predicting the future by gazing upon reflecting surfaces polished with oil to increase their lucidity. Among the substances employed, he says, were two-edged swords, children’s finger-nails, egg-

<sup>176</sup> P. Cotton, *Institution Catholique* (Paris, 1610, 2 vols.), ii. 1351.

<sup>177</sup> *De divortio Lotharii et Teutbergæ*, xii.

<sup>178</sup> *Policraticus*, I. xii.

<sup>179</sup> *Policraticus*, I. xii.

<sup>180</sup> E. Clodd, *The Question* (London, 1917), p. 159; after E. Parish, *Hallucinations and Illusions* (Contemporary Science Series, London, 1897), p. 65.

<sup>181</sup> T. Wright, *Miscellanea Graphica* (London, 1857), pp. 81-2.

shells, and ivory handles. Usually a boy or a virgin was employed as scryer.<sup>182</sup>

Scrying became connected with astrology; Martin Ruland writes of the attribution of the crystal to the sun.<sup>183</sup> Unsavory activities duly attached themselves to scrying: in a Arabic MS. translated in the thirteenth century we read, “Thus in making a magic mirror a suffumigation is employed of seven products of the human body, namely, tears, blood, ear-wax, spittle, semen, dung, urine.”<sup>184</sup> One writer speaks of a mirror which shows, when looked into, as many faces as there are hours in the day.<sup>185</sup> However, the characters of these early investigators have been unduly depreciated; a great deal of nonsense has been written [49] about their Satanic invocations and so forth. Here is a quite typical specimen of these invocations; it is said to be translated from a manuscript of Johann Tritheim: “Oh, God! who art the author of all good things, strengthen, I beseech thee, thy poor servant, that he may stand fast, without fear, through this dealing and work; enlighten I beseech thee, oh Lord! the dark understanding of thy creature, so that his spiritual eye may be opened to know and see the angelic spirits descending here in this crystal: (*Then lay the hand on the crystal, saying*), and thou, oh inanimate creature of God, be sanctified and consecrated, and blessed to this purpose, that no evil phantasy may appear in thee; or, if they do gain ingress into this creature, they may be constrained to speak intelligibly, and truly, and without the least ambiguity, for Christ’s sake. Amen. And forasmuch as thy servant here standing before thee, oh, Lord ! desires neither evil treasures, nor injury to his neighbour, nor hurt to any living creature, grant him the power of descrying those

<sup>182</sup> Quoted by Lynn Thorndike, *A History of Magic and Experimental Science during the First Thirteen Centuries of our Era* (London, 1923, 2 vols.), ii. 364-5; cp. ii. 287.

<sup>183</sup> *Lexicon Alchemiæ* (Frankfort o.M., 1612), p. 178. The passage reads, “Veteres Astrologi crystallum Soli dicarunt,” which has been translated, *A Lexicon of Alchemy* [London, 1894, six copies only printed], p. 119, as “the crystal was referred by the old astrologers to the moon,” which, though an incorrect translation, is more in harmony with the teaching of other astrologers.

<sup>184</sup> L. Thorndike, *op. cit.*, ii. 817; in the same work (ii. 702) is quoted a thirteenth-century MS. in which hydromancy is defined as- divination by inspection of entrails!

<sup>185</sup> P. Boaistuau, *Le Theatre dv Monde ov il est fait vn ample discours des misereres humaines* (Paris, 1561), f. 114b.

celestial spirits or intelligences, that may appear in this crystal, and whatever good gifts (whether the power of healing infirmities, or of imbibing wisdom, or discovering any evil likely to afflict any person or family, or any other good gift thou mayest be pleased to bestowe on me), enable me, by thy mercy and wisdom, to use whatever I may receive to the honour of thy holy name. Grant this for thy son Christ's sake. Amen."<sup>186</sup>

But, to pass from these fantastical absurdities to others a little less absurd, we find equally little of value when these writers struggling for the truth unaided by precise knowledge or philosophical reflection, sought to give [50] explanations of the phenomena which they imperfectly observed. Demons, of course, are well to the fore. Crystal-gazers, we are told, see and hear demons when looking into the speculum;<sup>187</sup> this is done by means of a clean and clear crystal in which the devil is hidden, and in which, by means of evocations, pictures of various matters are displayed.<sup>188</sup> Or it may be done with a cut and polished crystal in which the devil hides himself and plays, appearing sometimes as a little figure.<sup>189</sup>

Gastromancy is accomplished with the help of glasses of circular shape filled with clear water and surrounded with lighted candles; the spirit is then invoked by secret mutterings and a virgin boy or a pregnant woman is set to examine the glass. Finally, the devil, by his artifice, impresses images on the water."<sup>190</sup> Divination in mirrors is done by means of a clear and very clean mirror in which the images of things proposed appear, framed and represented by the devil.<sup>191</sup> However, this catalogue could be continued indefinitely,<sup>192</sup> but it is scarcely more satisfactory to turn to the

<sup>186</sup> F. Barrett, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer* (London, 1801), II. iv. 136.

<sup>187</sup> J. C. Frommann, *Tractatus de fascinatione* (Nüremberg, 1675), p. 503; see also pp. 726-7, 775.1 F. Barrett, *The Magus or Celestial Intelligencer* (London, 1801), II. iv. 136.

<sup>188</sup> J. J. Boissardus, *De Divinatione et Magicis Praestigiis* (Oppenheim, 1616 ?), p. 17.

<sup>189</sup> G. Peucer, *Les Devins, ou Commentaire des principales sortes de divination* (Antwerp, 1584), p. 222.

<sup>190</sup> G. Peucer, *op. cit.*, p. 221; cp. J. Wier, *De Praestigiis Daemonum*, II. xii.

<sup>191</sup> G. Peucer, *loc. cit.*; cp. G. Schott, *Physica Curiosa* (Würzburg, 1662, 2 vols.), I. iv. xiii. 635-8.

<sup>192</sup> Those whose curiosity is still unappeased may turn for further references to H. B. Schindler, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters* (Breslau, 1858), p. 213; C. Meyer, *Der Aberglaube des Mittelalters und der nächstfolgenden Jahrhunderte* (Basel, 1884), pp. 281-4; A. Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei den*



more mystical writers. Philipp Aureol Theophrast Bombast von Hohenheim, known as Paracelsus, gives minute instructions “How to Conjure the Crystal so [51] that all things may be seen in it. To conjure is nothing else than to observe rightly, to know and to understand what it is. The crystal is a figure of the air. Whatever appears in the air, movable or immovable, the same appears also in the speculum or crystal as a wave. For the air, the water, and the crystal, so far as vision is concerned, are one, like a mirror in which an inverted copy of an object is seen.”<sup>193</sup> Here at least is an attempt at rational explanation. Boehme is equally precise and equally satisfactory, though hardly in the same way. He writes, “In crystal or mirror-gazing, the Tincture radiates from the eyes of the gazer and collects on the surface of the crystal or mirror, and there forms a sensitive film in which the Astral scenery reflects itself; and thus reveals occasionally past, present, or future events.”<sup>194</sup>

It is no wonder, with such writings as these (the best of their time) forming the main source of information for the contemporary inquirer, that scrying has not as yet been taken very seriously. It is left to the comparative method to show that though these borderline scientific investigations lend themselves only too easily to fools and quacks, yet there remains in them the grain of truth which has to be carefully planted in the soil of calm and dispassionate consideration to yield results of which we are only just beginning to see the ultimate possibilities.

---

*allesten Zeiten an bis in die Gegenwart* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stuttgart, 1908), pp. 217-8.

<sup>193</sup> *Hermetic and Alchemical Writings*, ed. by A. E. Waite (London, 1894, 2 vols.), i. 14.

<sup>194</sup> Quoted by H. Vetterling, *The Illuminate of Görlitz* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 900; cp. C. W. Leadbeater, *The Astral Plane* (London, 1895), p. 6.

## CHAPTER V

### SCRYING IN MODERN EUROPE

#### § I SCRYING IN ENGLAND

The earliest known document<sup>195</sup> relating to scrying is the confession made by one William Byg, *alias* Lech, at Wombwell in Yorkshire, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of August 1467. He had earned his livelihood for a year or two by finding stolen property through the aid of his crystal, but had eventually been charged with heresy, that portmanteau accusation. In his confession Byg describes the procedure he adopted when searching in the crystal for information; it does not differ in the least from that of later scryers. He [53] employed a pure boy, made the usual invocations to the heavens and to all therein, and then addressed the boy (the only English in the document), “Say me trewe, chylde, what man, what woman, or what childe hase stolen y<sup>is</sup> thyng. . . .” As punishment

---

<sup>195</sup> I have taken no account of imprinted documents; but see British Museum MSS., Sloane 3848, ff. 148, *sqq.*: “Here followeth an experyment approved & vnknowne of Ascaryell to see most excellent & certainly e in a Christall stoune what secret thou wilt.” Sloane 3849, ff. 2, *sqq.*: an invocation for the crystal. Sloane 3849, ff. 17, *sqq.*: another. Sloane 3851, ff. 50&, *sqq.*: “How to call Three Heauenly Angells into a Cristall Stone or Seeing Glasse To the visible Signe of a Childe.” Egerton 1090, ff. 5, *sqq.*: a dissertation entitled, “Utrum qui pro inveniendis furtis faciunt pueros vel puellas virgines inspicere in phialas vitreas, inuocando demonem; manifeste suspecti sint de haeresi, inquisi-torisque jurisdictioni subdantur.” Egerton 2618, f. 159: a short account of a vision seen, and shown to other people, by a maidservant, in a copper basin filled with water; the cover is endorsed “These particulars were averred to me June 24, 1691, W. Shippen.” Lansdowne 2, art. 26: this is printed in *Narratives of the Days of the Reformation* (Camden Soc. [London], 1859), pp. 331, *sqq.* See also L. Thorndike, *op. cit.*, i. 774, ii. 86, 320, 354, 702, 800, 806, S17, 964; at i. 831-5, ii. 1027-36, are very full lists of MSS. dealing with magic, divination, etc.

Byg had to walk at the head of a procession in the Cathedral Church of York with a lighted torch in his right hand and his books depending from a stick in his left; three placards were to be fixed on him: one on his head with the words “Ecce sortilegus,” one on his breast inscribed “Invocator Spirituum,” and one on his back bearing the solitary, dread “Sortilegus.” He had to make a full recantation and to burn his books, the recantation to be repeated in the parish churches of Pontefract, Barnsley, Doncaster, and Rotherham. Byg was no doubt thankful to get off so lightly.<sup>196</sup>

The case of which the Abbot of Abingdon wrote to Secretary Cromwell<sup>197</sup> probably had a similar conclusion: “It shall please your Maistership to be advertesed that my Officers have taken here a Preyste, a suspecte parson, and with hym certeyn bokes of conjuracions, in the whiche ys conteyned many conclusions of that worke; as fyndyng out of tresure hydde, consecratyng of ryngs with stones in theym, and consecratyng of a cristal stone wheryn a chylde shall loke, and se many thyngs.”<sup>198</sup>

In his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (first published in 1584) Reginald Scot, writing of the wondrous art perspective, says: “But the woonderous devises, and miraculous sights [54] and conceipts made and conteined in glasse, doo farre exceed all other; whereto the art perspective is verie necessarie. For it sheweth the illusions of them, whose experiments be seene in diverse sorts of glasses; as in the hallowe, the plaine, the embossed, the columnarie, the pyramidate or piked, the turbinall, the bounched, the round, the cornerd, the inversed, the eversed, the massie, the regular, the irregular, the coloured and cleare glasses: for you may have glasses so made, as what image or favour soever you print in your imagination, you shall thinke you see the same therein. Others are so framed, as therein one may see what others doo in places far distant. . . .”<sup>199</sup> Scot also provides us with a bond “to call him [?]”

<sup>196</sup> These details are from J. Raine, “Divination in the Fifteenth Century by Aid of a Magical Crystal,” *The Archceological Journal* (London, 1856), xiii. 372-4.

<sup>197</sup> Thomas Cromwell, Earl of Essex, was Secretary from 1534 to his execution in 1540.

<sup>198</sup> *Original Letters illustrative of English History*, ed. by Sir Henry Ellis (3<sup>rd</sup> series, London, 1846, 4 vols.), iii. 41, Letter CCLXVIII.

<sup>199</sup> XIII. xix.

into your christall stone, or glasse,” with words to say when “h” has duly appeared, and with a “licence to depart.” Here is a specimen: “... by all things created and confirmed in the firmament, and by their vertues & powers I con-streine thee spirit N. to appeare visiblie in that christall stone, in faire forme and shape of a white angell, a greene angell, a black angell, a man, a woman, a boie, a maiden virgine, a white grehound, a divell with great homes, without anie hurte or danger of our bodies or soules, and trulie to informe and shew unto us, true visions of all things in that christall stone, according to thine oth and promise, and that without anie hinderance or tarrieng, to appeare visiblie, by this bond of words read over by mee three times, upon paine of everlasting condemnation. *Fiat, fiat, Amen.*”<sup>200</sup>

Of the scrying practised at this time and later Gifford remarks, “. . . of all the various modes of imposture, this was at once, the most artful and the most impudent. It was usually conducted by confederacy, for the possessor [55] of the glass seldom pretended to see the angels, or hear their answers. His part was to mumble over some incomprehensible prayers: after which a speculatrix, a virgin of pure life (for the angels were very delicate on this point), was called in to inspect the crystal.”<sup>201</sup> The logic of this passage is as deficient as the knowledge of Mr G. A. Sala, “whose discursive genius leads him to take an interest in every branch of literature,” and which led him to write to Cunningham that one of the frequent practices of these imposters was “to show jealous husbands *tableaux vivants* of their wives’ adultery with their paramours.”<sup>202</sup>

About 1645 a minister in Norfolk had in his possession a crystal, together with a call, which.,., could be used for scrying. The minister made over this beryl to a miller who worked great cures with it (“if curable”), seeing in the speculum “either the receipt in writing, or else the herb.” Angels openly appeared to both the minister and the miller, from whom, nevertheless, the stone passed

<sup>200</sup> XV. xix.

<sup>201</sup> Ben Jonson, *Works*, ed. by W. Gifford (London, 1816, 9 vols.), iv. 16, note on *The Alchemist*, I. i.

<sup>202</sup> F. Cunningham’s ed. of Gifford (London, 1875, 9 vols.), iv. 514—5, note on *The Alchemist*, Argument; see p. 34 above.

into the hands of a person in London, who did tell strange things of it, “insomuch that at last he was questioned for it, and it was taken away by authority.” It finally found a resting-place among the Cimelia in Sir Edward Harley’s closet at Brampton-Bryan in Herefordshire.<sup>203</sup>

Joseph Glanvil relates that during a discussion between a Mr Hill and “one *Compton* of *Summersetshire*, who practiseth Physick and pretendeth to strange matters,” which took place about 1662, the latter “took up a Looking-glass that was in the Room, and setting it down again, bid my friend look in it; which he did, and there, as he most [56] solemnly and seriously professeth, he saw the exact Image of his Wife in that habit which she then wore, and working at her Needle in such a part of the Room (there represented also) in which and about which time she really was as he found upon inquiry when he came home. The Gentleman himself averred this to me, and he is a very sober, intelligent and credible person.”<sup>204</sup> Glanvil also writes of the “*Prestigiatory* art or faculty of these ludicrous Dæmons, whereby they can so modifie the Air immediately next to the party they would conceal, that it looks there like the free skie, or what Landskip they please; as when they shew in a Shew-stone or Glass, the very Room in which the party is, the Daemon by the power of his Imagination, so modifying at least his own Vehicle.”<sup>205</sup>

A few years later (in 1671) a clothier was constantly having his goods stolen, but fortunately he possessed a crystal. So when he lost his clothes, he went out about midnight with his crystal and call, with him a little boy and a little maid (for they say it must be a pure virgin) to look into the crystal, and see the likeness of the thief; in which, it is believed, he was successful.<sup>206</sup> In his own times, writes Aubrey (the book first appeared in 1696), “the magician used a crystal sphere, or mineral pearl, for this purpose,

<sup>203</sup> J. Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (London, 1784), pp. 219-20; Aubrey was told this story by Ashmole.

<sup>204</sup> *Saducismus Triumphatus* (London, 1681, 2 vols.), ii. 109-110.

<sup>205</sup> *Saducismus Triumphatus*, ii. 204.

<sup>206</sup> J. Aubrey, *op. cit.*, p. 221.

which is inspected by a boy, or sometimes by the querent himself.”<sup>207</sup>

Although in England there are very many traditions connected with wells, water, mirrors, and so forth, there is very little local tradition concerning scrying. Here and there, however, such beliefs linger. At North Kelsey in [57] Lincolnshire a girl who wants to know who her sweetheart will be goes to the Maidens’ well; she approaches backwards, walks round the well three times in the same way, and then looks into the spring, in which will then appear the face of her future lover.<sup>208</sup>

The following incident deserves a full record: “A few days ago [1845], at Brompton near Northallerton, an honest hard-working weaver, named Mark Jobling, had his shop broken into, and upwards of 40 yards of drill cloth stolen from his loom, as well as weaver’s brushes, etc. A consultation was held by Mark’s friends, as to the best plan to be adopted to find out the thieves, and these ‘wise men of Gotham’ resolved that two out of their number should go and consult the wise man of Sowerby near Thirsk. Truly the fellow is wise enough, to live by the credulity of such willing dupes. The two persons fixed upon for this mission, old Mac and Braidely, reported on their return, that they had seen the wise man; but having the misfortune not to have been born under the proper planet, they could not see through his magic glass; but a young man was procured in the neighbourhood who enjoyed this enviable distinction. This wonderful glass is a piece of solid crystal, in form and size like that of a goose’s egg. All being ready the fellow commenced as follows:— ‘I command, I exorcise ye, the archangels Michael and Gabriel, that ye make Mark Jobling’s shop to appear in the glass, and also the likeness of the thief or thieves, so that they may be seen and identified’; with other simple gibberish. On conclusion of the incantations, ‘Presto, quick, begone,’ lo and behold, Mark’s shop, together with the water-end

<sup>207</sup> J. Aubrey, *op. cit.*, p. 218. See also T. Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society of London* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1734), II. xvi. 97.

<sup>208</sup> Mrs E. Gutch and Mabel Peacock, *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore concerning Lincolnshire* (Folk-Lore Soc, London, 1908), p. 9.

of Brompton, appeared in the glass with the figures of three men cutting [58] the cloth out of the loom. The thieves were traced in this wonderful glass to Yarm, 12 miles distant, where they stopped at a public-house, and had two quarts of ale. They were traced ultimately to South Stockton, 4 miles further on, and were seen in the glass to enter a public-house there, and deposit the spoil under the bed of an upper room, and which house they would leave next morning at eight o'clock, with the cloth in their possession. So reported the Ambassadors. . . . Accordingly at two a.m. on a cold frosty morning, they set out on their wild-goose chase, and arrived at South Stockton at six. On crossing the bridge, a new difficulty presented itself, three public-houses appearing in view, and they had forgot to enquire from the wise man the name of the house from which the thieves were to make their exit. However, like prudent men, as they are, they set a watch on each house and awaited the event. . . . Need we state the result ? No thieves made their appearance . . . and since their return they have been laughed at by the thinking portion of the community, for their simplicity and credulity."<sup>209</sup>

Scrying has not died out as a profession, nor even as a polite hobby. As an instance may be cited the action brought by Lieutenant R. E. Morrison (Zadkiel) against Admiral Sir E. Belcher for libel. The latter having made contemptuous allusions to Zadkiel in *The Daily Telegraph*, Lieutenant Morrison sued him for libel and won the case. Many interesting things came out during the hearing, not the least of which was the number of persons of place and rank who had patronised Zadkiel in crystal-gazing investigations. Zadkiel had originally obtained his crystal ball [59] indirectly from Lady Blessington.<sup>210</sup> Indeed, as one writer observes, the use of divining crystals is quite common today

<sup>209</sup> Quoted from *The Cleveland Repertory and Stokeley Advertiser* (1845), pp. 131-2, by Mrs E. Gutch, *Examples of Printed Folk-Lore concerning the North Riding of Yorkshire, York and the Ainsty* (Folk-Lore Soc, London, 1901), pp. 189-90.

<sup>210</sup> See *The Times* for the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 1863, p. 13b; cp. "Zadkiel's Almanac for 1851 . . . containing . . . Most Wonderful Revelations from the World of Spirits, Which have been given through a Magic Crystal, in which numerous Spirits of the Dead have appeared" (London, 1850); *Household Words* (London, 1851), ii. 284.

among persons of good education,<sup>211</sup> though only seldom animated, it must be confessed, by any scientific spirit.

## § 2 SCRYING IN SCOTLAND

There are probably more superstitions and traditional beliefs to the square mile in Scotland than anywhere else. Scrying has its due place, especially in connection with specific occasions such as Halloween. Thus, Burns notes at the line, "I'll eat the apple at the glass," in his poem *Halloween*, "Take a candle, and go, alone, to a looking-glass: eat an apple before it; and some traditions say you should comb your hair all the time: the face of your conjugal companion, *to be*, will be seen in the glass, as if peeping over your shoulder."<sup>212</sup> In the Hebrides all lads and lasses who look into the looking-glass on this day, take care not to look backwards lest they should see more than they ought.<sup>213</sup>

Also in the Highlands, at Nairn, lives, or lived till recently, a family named Willox, the members of which were traditional [60] cattle-curers. The following relation is certainly entitled to a full reproduction: "The history of such a precious curiosity as this would, no doubt, prove highly interesting to the 'curious reader'; and the writer has to blame the shortness of his memory for not gratifying him to the utmost of his wish, Mr Willox having more than once personally favoured him with a very eloquent account of it. Suffice it to say, that this stone was originally extorted by a very ancient ancestor of Mr Willox from an amorous slut of a mermaid, who, unfortunately for her, happened to take a fancy to him, and no wonder, too, if he possessed in any degree the personal attractions of his lineal posterity. It happened, then, that this silly

<sup>211</sup> E. Hailstone, *Notes and Queries* (1863), 3 S. iv. 180.

<sup>212</sup> *Poems, chiefly in the Scottish Dialect* (Kilmarnock, 1786), p. 10972; cp. Sir J. G. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 520; G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 50; Rev. W. Gregor, *Notes on the Folk-lore of the North-East of Scotland* (Folk-lore Soc, London, 1881), p. 85; W. G. Campbell, *Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland* (Glasgow, 1902), p. 285; E. J. Guthrie, *Old Scottish Customs* (London, 1885), pp. 69-70.

<sup>213</sup> C. F. Gordon Cumming, *In the Hebrides* (London, 1883), p. 211.



fool of a mermaid once thought it proper to throw herself in this gentleman's way expecting, no doubt, very different treatment from that which she experienced, — when her unnatural sweetheart, instead of offering her any endearments, most ungraciously chained her to a post, until she redeemed her liberty by this precious ransom. This was, no doubt, long ago, nobody knows how long, and the *stone* has necessarily seen many revolutions of times and manners in the course of its day. It graced for a long time the warlike standard of the brave clan Gregor, combining, as the upholsterers say, 'great ornament with much utility,' . . . It is a plain-looking article, strongly resembling the knob or bottom of a crystal bottle; and were it not that Mr Willox solemnly assured us of his having been told by the great Lord Henderland himself, it must have at one time composed one of the Pleiades, we should have had much difficulty in believing it to consist of any other substance; but who could resist such respectable authority? . . . Should some miserable vagabond of a thief, residing within the pale of Mr Willox's celebrity, be [61] so foolhardy as to lay his dishonest hands upon the goods or chattels of a neighbour, recovery of the goods, or at least an exposure of the thief, is the absolute consequence. The loser of the goods looks about him for his purpose, and immediately proceeds to consult the GRAND ORACLE, Mr Grigor Willox, as to the person who had the effrontery to steal his goods. Mr Willox, willing to afford every information on reasonable terms, instantly produces the black stocking containing the stone, a single dip of which clearly develops the whole circumstance. After a long consultation, involving some inquiries as to suspected characters, the lynx-eyed Mr Willox easily recognises some figures reflected on the vessel containing the water by the stone, conveying an exact representation of some old hag not very reputable for her habits, residing in the (complainant's neighbourhood; and thus all doubt is removed as to his suspicions being too well founded."<sup>214</sup>

---

<sup>214</sup> W. G. Stewart, *The Popular Superstitions and Festive Amusements of the Highlands of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1833), pp. 217-222.

It is regrettable, however, for the sake of the delightful, if rather cheap, wit of this story, that the facts in the last few sentences are probably accurate enough. Miss Gordon Cumming, a very careful and reliable observer, wrote that a crystal ball “remains to this day in the family of Willox, the hereditary cattle-curers at Nairn, and is reported to have worked wondrous cures in the present generation.” The water in a bucket, into which the crystal is dipped, reflects the face of the neighbour who has bewitched the cattle — the spell thus being broken.<sup>215</sup> I may remind the reader that we are concerned with the facts, not with the interpretations. [62]

### § 3 SCRYING IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

These few examples are placed at this point as the beliefs referred to are obviously of the same character as those detailed above; they were, that is to say, exported to the New World by settlers from the Old. Indigenous traditions are no doubt beginning to make their appearance in North America, but no such scrying beliefs have as yet, as far as I know, been recorded.

All over the United States exists a belief that on Halloween a maiden should go down the cellar-stairs backwards looking all the time into a mirror, in which she will see the face of her future husband.<sup>216</sup> At Taladega in Alabama any single person who holds a mirror over a well on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May, will see reflected in it the likeness of the future wife or husband.<sup>217</sup> In Alabama generally, “on the last night of October place a mirror and a clock in a room that has not been used for some time, and at a quarter to twelve take a lighted candle and an apple, and finish eating the apple just

<sup>215</sup> C. F. Gordon Cumming, *op. cit.*, p. 74. See also A. W. Moore, “Water and Well-Worship in Man,” *Folk-lore* (Folk-lore Soc, London, 1894), v. 214; *Notes and Queries* (1852), 1 S. v. 341.

<sup>216</sup> F. D. Bergen, “Current Superstitions,” *Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Society* (Boston, 1896), iv. 56, note 313.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 58, note 324.

as the clock strikes twelve, and then look into the mirror and you will see your future husband.”<sup>218</sup>

At St John, New Brunswick, on Halloween one should go upstairs backwards looking the while into a mirror, in which the querist’s future husband will appear. In Labrador one should “make ready a mirror, a lamp, a basin of water, a towel and soap. Go to bed backwards, not speaking afterwards, and lie awake till midnight. If your sweetheart comes and washes, combs his hair, and [63] looks at you, you’ll be married. If you don’t see him, you’ll see your coffin.”<sup>219</sup>

#### § 4 SCRYING AMONG THE GERMANS AND SCANDINAVIANS

Clement of Alexandria (*fl.* 200) writes of certain among the Germans who were called holy women and who, by inspecting the whirlpools and eddies of rivers, were enabled to predict events.<sup>220</sup> It is not certain, however, that scrying is in question. In a fifteenth-century work are given interesting descriptions of the arts of hydromancy, of catoptromancy with steel mirrors, and of crystallomancy. If the master wants to “question out theft, to dig treasure, or to know any other secret thing, then he goes on Sunday before the sun rises to three running springs and ladles a little out of each one into a pure polished glass which he carries home to a handsome chamber. There he then burns candles before it and offers it with honour to God Himself.<sup>221</sup> Certainly that is a great sin, witchery and unbelief. After that he takes a pure child and seats it on a handsome chair before the water. Oh how happy is the wicked devil when one so lightly does him service with pure children! . . .”<sup>222</sup>

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 57, note 314.

<sup>219</sup> F. D. Bergen, *op. cit.*, iv. 53, note 285; cp. G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 50.

<sup>220</sup> *Stromata*, I. xv.; cp. M. de Montaigne, *Essais*, I. xi.

<sup>221</sup> “... vnd legt dem wasser ere an sam gott selber.”

<sup>222</sup> J. Hartlieb, *Buch aller verbotenen Kunst*, ed. by D. Ulm (Halle o.S., 1914), lv. 37; cp. liv-lxii., lxxxvi., xciii. See also C. Kohlrusch, *Schweizerisches Sagenbuch* (Leipzig, 1854), pp. 258, *sqq.*, 260*n.*

Scrying appears always to have been common in Germany, especially during the seventeenth century. One writer of that time says: “I know very well that sometimes [64] old wives, soothsayers, astrologers, and witches, run round with crystals prophesying. . . . But most of these gadabout wives are great cheats and understand as much as nothing about the arts, whether good or evil. A few, however, without doubt have real relations with the devil and can show things in the crystal that take place eventually and are proved. ...” The writer then gives an experience of his own, in which one of those women not only saw in the glass herself but enabled her visitors to see a scene which was later acted in reality.<sup>223</sup>

Spengler relates in his edition of Plutarch’s *De defectu oraculorum* that to him once came a Nürnberger of good family who brought with him a round crystal. This had been given to him by a stranger, for services rendered, who had told his benefactor that he should get an innocent boy to look in it if he wanted to see anything forbidden. This Spengler’s visitor had done, and had seen wonderful things; one figure especially frequently appearing in the crystal. One day his wife, being then great with child, suddenly began to see things in it. The mystery of this wonderful crystal became so well known in Niirnberg that the man who appeared in it regularly was used as a bogey to frighten children and other sinners. At last the owner’s conscience troubled him and he made a clean breast of the whole affair to the learned Spengler, who promptly broke the stone to pieces.<sup>224</sup>

In modern Germany, according to Goethe, maidens look into the glass on St Andrew’s eve:

[65]

### *Burgher’s Daughter:*

My future lover, last St Andrew’s E’en,

<sup>223</sup> J. Rist, *Die alleredelste Zeit-Verkürzung der Gantzen Welt* (Frankfort o.M., 1668), pp. 254, *sqq.*

<sup>224</sup> I have been unable to see the original account, but see H. Pröhle, *Deutsche Sagen* (Berlin, 1863), pp. 232-3, No. 173; F. Nork [*i.e.*, F. A. Korn], *Die Sitten und Gebrauche der Deutschen* (Stuttgart, 1849), pp. 647-8.

In flesh and blood she brought before my view.

*Another Burgher's Daughter:*

And since she show'd me also in the glass.<sup>225</sup>

And indeed to this day the Prussians have their “Stiklorei” or diviners by the crystal, and their “Zerkolutte” or diviners by the mirror.<sup>226</sup> There are numerous traditions connected with scrying among the German peoples. Some believe that if a mirror is looked at during the night, the devil is seen in it.<sup>227</sup> Others think it is bad if a child looks into a mirror and cannot speak.<sup>228</sup> A story is told of a hard-working but unlucky miner whom a kindly gnome gave a mirror in which could be seen all things connected with mining, but if the man tried to see anything else in it the glass would disappear.<sup>229</sup> And of course the tale of “Snow-White” is known and loved all over the country. Our information about scrying among the Scandinavians is limited; but we learn that in Norway “on a Thursday, people were to go to the necromancer, in order to see in a pail of water the face of the thief who robbed them.”<sup>230</sup> The custom is also known in Sweden.<sup>231</sup>

## § 5 SCRYING IN FRANCE

When Pierre Cotton was accused of a multitude of malpractices of a political character, one of the counts in the indictment against which he was most energetically [66] defended, was the charge that he had “enabled the King [Henry IV] to see in a starry mirror what took place at the courts and in the council-chambers of all the

<sup>225</sup> *Faust*, I. 11. 530-2; Anna Swanwick's trans.

<sup>226</sup> O. Schrader, “Aryan Religion,” *E.R.E.*, ii. 55.

<sup>227</sup> J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., Berlin, 1875-8, 2 vols.), ii. 438, No. 104.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, ii. 447, No. 1126.

<sup>229</sup> H. Pröhle, *op. cit.*, p. 32, No. 6.

<sup>230</sup> S. Nilsson, *The Primitive Inhabitants of Scandinavia* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed., London, 1868), p. 241.

<sup>231</sup> L. Lloyd, *Peasant Life in Sweden* (London, 1870), p. 269.

kings of the world.”<sup>232</sup> During this century, the seventeenth, scrying must have been a common occupation, for in the records of the Bastille there are three examinations in a year of persons accused of gastromancy.<sup>233</sup> The story told by St Simon of the year 1706 is well known: a little girl looked in a glass of water and saw there many details of a scene taking place elsewhere at that moment (as immediately verified), and many historical incidents which came to be acted as foretold in the course of years.<sup>234</sup> The Duke of Luynes tells substantially the same story in his own Memoirs.<sup>235</sup>

The Mademoiselle de Latour whom we have already encountered in connection with Cagliostro, served the Cardinal, so it is related, in the affair of the necklace, by looking into a globe full of water. Into this globe the Archangel Gabriel condescendingly entered and gave the Cardinal all the information he required.<sup>236</sup> While the Count Beugnot who tells this story lay in prison with some of his friends awaiting their trial, the fate of one of them was foreseen in a glass of water by a boy not more than twelve or fourteen, perfectly pure, and born under Sagittarius, Gemini, or Virgo.<sup>237</sup>

[67] George Sand relates somewhere in her autobiography that as a child she used to see visions on the back of a polished screen standing by the fire.<sup>238</sup>

<sup>232</sup> A. Behotte, *Response à l'Anticoton* (Paris, 1611), p. 141.

<sup>233</sup> F. Ravaillon, *Archives de la Bastille* (Paris, 1866-1904, 19 vols.), v. 348 (28<sup>th</sup> of April 1679), v. 440-1 (14<sup>th</sup> of August 1679), vi. 286 (10<sup>th</sup> of August 1680).

<sup>234</sup> *Mémoires* (Les Grands Ecrivains de la France, Paris, 1879, etc., in progress), xiii. 458, *sqq.*; the whole passage is translated by A. Lang, *Book of Dreams and Ghosts* (London, 1897), pp. 62, *sqq.*

<sup>235</sup> *Mémoires* (Paris, 1860—5, 17 vols.), x. 161.

<sup>236</sup> J. C. Beugnot, *Life and Adventures of Count Beugnot*, ed. by Charlotte Yonge (London, 1871, 2 vols.), i. 202.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, i. 205.

<sup>238</sup> The passage is quoted in *Blackwood's Magazine* (Edinburgh, 1877), cxxi. 176.

## § 6 SCRYING IN ITALY

The learned ecclesiastical historian Jurieu relates that an Ambassador of Henry VII, being in conversation with the Pope, said that he would like to find someone who could tell him what would be the result of the marriage between the enemy Houses of Lancaster and York. “The Pope replied that there was in Rome a diviner who had foretold that he would become Pope.” The Ambassador visited this diviner and was led into a large room on a table in which stood a great mirror. Following the magician’s instructions he attentively observed, without speaking, what appeared in the mirror. He was well rewarded, for into it came a procession of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, Elizabeth, John and Charles I, together with interesting descriptive and prophetic letterpress. “If it were known,” concludes Jurieu, “whence we draw this history, it would not be placed, as are generally other stories of this kind, among fabulous tales. But, knowing it true, I have made a digression with it, which I should not have done had it been a fable.”<sup>239</sup> As has been judiciously observed, “I confess that nevertheless I strongly suspect M. Jurieu’s faith to have been taken advantage of, and it would have been very much more desirable for him to have given his sources. . . .”<sup>240</sup>

[68] Another British Ambassador seems to have been similarly fortunate: John Aubrey writes, “James Harrington (author of *Oceana*) told me that the Earl of Denbigh, the Ambassador at Venice,<sup>241</sup> did tell him, that one did shew him, in a glass, things past and to come.”<sup>242</sup> On his own account Aubrey relates that when Sir Marmaduke Langdale was in Italy “he went to one of those Magi, who did shew him in a glass, where he saw himself kneeling before the crucifix: he was then a Protestant; afterwards he became a Roman Catholic.”<sup>243</sup> Unfortunately for the veracity of this history

<sup>239</sup> P. Jurieu, *Histoire Critique des Dogmes et des Cultes* (Amsterdam, 1704), p. 472.

<sup>240</sup> J. Saurin, *Discours . . . sur les evenemens les plus remarquables du vieux et du nouveau Testament* (The Hague, 1728-39, 6 vols.), iii. 409.

<sup>241</sup> 1634-1639.

<sup>242</sup> *Miscellanies* (London, 1784), p. 318.

<sup>243</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 219.

Sir Marmaduke was born of Roman Catholic parents and, so far as is known, was never anything else than a Roman Catholic.<sup>244</sup>

In modern times to detect theft the following procedure is adopted: a damsel approaches a phial of holy water with a sanctified taper in her hand, and says, “Angelo bianco, angelo santo, per la tua santita et per la mia virginata, mostra mi che ha tolto tal cosa.”<sup>245</sup> A diminutive figure of the offender then appears in the phial.<sup>246</sup> Among Italian folk-tales is one which tells of a monster who gains the love of a girl; when she wants to go to visit her friends, the monster gives her a mirror into which she can look and discover how he is.<sup>247</sup> In another tale a fountain fulfils a similar purpose.<sup>248</sup> [69]

## § 7 SCRYING IN MODERN GREECE

In the island of Andros it is the custom for the girls to hold a mirror over a well if they wish to see reflected in it, from the water in the well, the likeness of the future husband.<sup>249</sup> In North Eubœa the people tell a tale which starts, “There was once a king who had three sons and a mirror in which he could see every enemy that entered the kingdom.”<sup>250</sup> The young girls in the Greek-speaking districts of Salonica are in the habit on the eve of the feast of the Nativity of St John (who is popularly known as St John of the Divination) of gathering together in a purposely darkened room, armed with a mirror. They then take turns to look into the mirror. Those who are to marry within the year see the future husband’s face in the glass. In Salonica itself the following couplet is sung:  
A lump of gold shall I drop into the well,

<sup>244</sup> *Dictionary of National Biography*, xxxiii. (1892), 96.

<sup>245</sup> White angel, holy angel, by thy sanctity and by my virginity, show me who has stolen this thing.

<sup>246</sup> Sir J. G. Dalyell, *The Darker Superstitions of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1834), p. 520.

<sup>247</sup> R. H. Busk, *The Folk-Lore of Rome* (London, 1874), p. 117.

<sup>248</sup> D. Comparetti, *Novelline Popolari Italiane* (Torino, 1875), p. 269; cp. E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (Grimm Library, London, 1894-6, 3 vols.), ii. 18. See also G. Schott, *Magia universalis naturæ et artis* (Würzburg, 1657-9, 4 vols.), I. iv. 1. 174-6.

<sup>249</sup> Sir Rennell Rodd, *The Customs and Lore of Modern Greece* (London, 1892), p. 185.

<sup>250</sup> J. G. von Hahn, *Griechische und albanesische Märchen* (Leipzig, 1864, 2 vols.), i. 284-6.



That the water may grow clear, and I may see who my husband is to be.<sup>251</sup>

Greek girls appear to concentrate on husbands.

## § 8 SCRYING IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE

According to the omniscient Sir Richard Burton, the Finns, whom he calls barbarous, scry in a glass of brandy,<sup>252</sup> [70] but some confirmation of this statement would be desirable. In Lithuania the natives cover the mirrors of a house in which there is a corpse because they believe that the dead rise and show themselves in mirrors.<sup>253</sup> There is also a Lithuanian version of the Snow-White tale.<sup>254</sup> One writer mentions “a curious instance of seeing visions in a flat looking-glass, looked at almost edgewise,” with which he had met in Russia.<sup>255</sup> Scrying duly makes its appearance in Russian fairy-tales.<sup>256</sup>

The Magyars have a story of a woman who questions her mirror,<sup>257</sup> and the Armenians use a child to look at the surface of the water in a pit to discover the cause of illness or of theft.<sup>258</sup> In a Walachian story we read of a princess who would only marry the man who could approach her without being seen in her magic mirror.<sup>259</sup> Here also occurs the story of Snow-White, whose mirror tells her whether she is the most beautiful lady in the world.<sup>260</sup> The

<sup>251</sup> G. F. Abbott, *Macedonian Folklore* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 50.

<sup>252</sup> *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387-9??.

<sup>253</sup> J. Grimm, *Deutsche Mythologie* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., Berlin, 1875-8, 2 vols.), ii. 492, *Lithuanian beliefs*, No. 2. See *Notes and Queries* (1924), cxlvi. 325, 386, 420.

<sup>254</sup> A. N. Athanas'ev, *Narodnyja Russkija Skuzki* (Moscow, 1855-63, 8 vols.), vii. 8, *sqq.*

<sup>255</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1889-90), iv. 156.

<sup>256</sup> A. N. Athanas'ev, *op. cit.*, viii. 173.

<sup>257</sup> W. H. Jones and L. L. Kropf, *The Folk-Tales of the Magyars* (Folk-Lore Soc, London, 1889), pp. 163, *sqq.*

<sup>258</sup> M. Tcheraz, “Notes sur la mythologie armenienne,” *Transactions of the Ninth International Congress of Orientalists* (London, 1893, 2 vols.), ii. 832.

<sup>259</sup> Arthur and Albert Schott, *Walachische Maehrchen* (Stuttgart and Tubingen, 1845), pp. 153, *sqq.*

<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 105, *sqq.*; this story occurs among nearly all European races and is to be found in most collections of folk-tales.

Roumanian Gipsies tell of a mirror which shows, when looked into, both the dead and the living.<sup>261</sup> The Transylvanian Gipsies have a beautiful story in which is introduced a [71] wonderful mirror which shows all things.<sup>262</sup> The Gipsies in general have tales about seeing the devil in mirrors and so forth.<sup>263</sup> Space will not permit entering upon these various stories in detail.

---

<sup>261</sup> Barbu Constantinescu's *Roumanian-Gipsy Collection* (Bukar-est, 1878), no. 9; cited thus by W. A. Clouston, *On the Magical Elements in Chaucer's Squire's Tale* (Chaucer Soc, London, 1888-90), p. 332W.

<sup>262</sup> H. von Wlislöcki, *Märchen und Sagen der Transilvanischen Zigeuner* (Berlin, 1886), pp. 111-3, No. 47. See also C. G. Leland, *Gypsy Sorcery and Fortune-Telling* (London, 1891), p. 118.

<sup>263</sup> H. von Wlislöcki, *Von wandernden Zigeunervölke* (Hamburg, 1090), p. 2f8. See also O. van Reinsberg-Duringsfeld, *Fast-Kalender aus Böhmen* (Prague, 1862), p. 312; M. Toeppen, *Aberglauben aus Masuren* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Danzig, 1867), p. 72.

## CHAPTER VI

### SCRYING IN THE EAST

#### § 1 SCRYING AMONG THE SEMITIC NATIONS

Although the astrological supremacy of the Assyrians caused them to be looked upon by the writers of past centuries as the originators of all divination, we have, in fact, little direct evidence to determine the existence of any other particular kind of divination among the Assyrians and their neighbours. The bare fact that they knew of scrying and used it is, however, established. On the walls of the Hall of Divination in one of the buildings at Nineveh, soothsayers are shown looking into cups.<sup>264</sup> In Babylon the sacrificial blood was run from the altar on the sacred baetyl stone for the purposes of divination,<sup>265</sup> and cup-like bowls with magical inscriptions found here seem also to have been used for scrying.<sup>266</sup> It is also said that the Assyrians practised scrying in a “skin full of water,”<sup>267</sup> [73] and that they employed the sapphire for a similar purpose.<sup>268</sup>

<sup>264</sup> J. Bonomi, *Nineveh and its Palaces* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1869), pp. 304-6, and illustration.

<sup>265</sup> M. J. Lagrange, *Etudes sur les Religions Sémitiques* (Paris, 1905), pp. 187, *sqq.*

<sup>266</sup> M. Gaster, “Jewish Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 807; cp. S. Burder, *Oriental Customs* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1822, 2 vols.), i. 61; E. Pococke, *A Commentary on the Prophecy of Hosea* (Oxford, 1685), p. 132; F. Rabelais, *Pantagruel*, III. xxv.

<sup>267</sup> H. C. Agrippa, *Three Books of Occult Philosophy* (London, 1651), I. lvii. 125-6.

<sup>268</sup> J. Selden, *De Dis Syris* (London, 1617), p. 33.

In the episode of Joseph and his brethren we have at any rate a direct allusion to scrying in the cup. On the departure of the brethren Joseph ordered his silver cup to be placed in the sack's mouth of the youngest, and then sent the steward after them with these words in his mouth: "Wherefore have ye rewarded evil for good? Is not this it in which my lord drinketh, and whereby he indeed divineth?" And Joseph later adds, a trifle self-consciously, "Know ye not that such a man as I can indeed divine?"<sup>269</sup> That we have here an example of cylicomancy is generally admitted,<sup>270</sup> and weight is added to the supposition by the fact that the practice has not died out among the Jews. There are allusions to it in the Talmud<sup>271</sup> (in which there are also references to scrying in brass objects, mirrors, and crystals), and in medieval Hebrew MSS.<sup>272</sup> In this literature are allusions to divination in the "cup-like palm of the hand," and in egg-cups.

There are interesting relics of these practices in the ceremonials still observed by the Jews. During the ceremony of Habdalah, celebrated at the passing over from an ordinary day to a holy-day and vice versa, a blessing is said over a glass of wine and a light, generally a candle. While saying this blessing the celebrant opens [74] and closes his hand looking the while at his finger-nails in the light of the candle. The meaning of this of course has been forgotten, but in the light of comparative study it is not difficult to find here a fragment of some ony-chomantic practice. The same applies to the custom among illiterate Jews of looking into a glass of water on certain occasions, especially on the eve of Hosh'annah Rabba, and also, apparently, on the Day of Atonement.

Dean Plumptre gave the support of his learning to the theory that the Urim and Thummim were used for the purpose of

---

<sup>269</sup> *Genesis*, xliv. 2, 5, 15.

<sup>270</sup> Sir J. G. Frazer, *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament* (London, 1918, 3 vols.), ii. 437; T. Harmer, *Observations on various Passages of Scripture*, ed. by A. Clarke (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1808, 4 vols.), iv. 405; M. Gaster, *loc. cit.*

<sup>271</sup> M. Schwab, *Les Coupes Magiques et l'Hydromancie dans l'Antiquité*, reprinted from the *Proceedings of the Soc. of Biblical Archæology* (April, 1890), p. 2; M. Gaster, *loc. cit.*, which compare for most of what follows.

<sup>272</sup> M. Gaster, *Proceedings of the Society of Biblical Archæology* (London, 1900), xxii. 330.

scrying,<sup>273</sup> and this idea has gained some support;<sup>274</sup> but more careful consideration of the texts and the application of the comparative method have shown this position to be untenable.

## § 2 SCRYING AMONG THE ANCIENT EGYPTIANS

An early writer declares that in an Egyptian temple (“in templo Aphaceno”) stood a cistern full of water for divination, but there is little evidence to sustain the existence of scrying among the Egyptians.<sup>275</sup> What little there is differs: Plutarch says that at the head of all religious processions a receptacle filled with water was carried,<sup>276</sup> while a modern scholar writes that in these processions “last of all came the Prophet carrying in his bosom the water-pot. . . .”<sup>277</sup> According to one authority the Pharaohs held between their hands a mirror in which they discovered the state of their various provinces.<sup>278</sup> And Pliny has it that the people of Egypt stained their silver vessels to enable them to see reflected in them their god Anubis.<sup>279</sup> A modern writer says, on apparently insufficient grounds, that children were used to see this god Anubis in a divining vase.<sup>280</sup>

Scrying persisted among the Berbers, a people difficult to place ethnologically, but who appear to be descended from the Egyptians. In an Arabic MS., which survives in a unique copy at the Bibliothèque Nationale, a story is told of a mirror with marvellous properties which was to be found in a church at the time of the Greek empire (not a very compromising localisation).

<sup>273</sup> In W. Smith, *Dictionary of the Bible*, s.v. “Urim and Thummim.”

<sup>274</sup> See e.g., E. S. Hartland, *The Legend of Perseus* (Grimm Library, London, 1894-6, 3 vols.), ii. 15; among earlier writers this belief was universal, see e.g., J. Aubrey, *Miscellanies upon Various Subjects* (London, 1784), p. 217.

<sup>275</sup> G. Foucart, “Egyptian Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 792.

<sup>276</sup> *De Iside et Osiride*, xxxvi.

<sup>277</sup> The editor in Horapollo, *Hieroglyphics*, ed. by A. T. Cory (London, 1840), p. 167.

<sup>278</sup> J. T. Reinaud, *Description des Monumens Musulmans du cabinet de M. le Due de Blacas* (Paris, 1828, 2 vols.), ii. 419.

<sup>279</sup> *Natural History*, XXXIII. xlvi.; cp. *Fragment of a Græco-Egyptian Work upon Magic*, ed. by C. W. Goodwin (Cambridge Antiquarian Soc, Cambridge, 1852), pp. 2—5.

<sup>280</sup> V. Ermoni, *La Religion de l’Egypte Ancienne* (Paris, 1909), p. 122.

When a Berber doubted the virtue of his wife he looked into this mirror, and if his doubts were justified he saw in it the features of the offending man. “When the Berbers embraced Christianity, one of them, distinguished by his zeal for the new religion, had obtained the rank of deacon. A Berber who formed suspicions concerning the fidelity of his wife went to consult the mirror, which showed him the face of the deacon. The deacon was cited before the emperor, was ordered to have his nose cut, and was ignominiously marched in procession and expelled from the Church. His compatriots, irritated by such cruel treatment, broke the mirror; but the emperor marched troops against them and exterminated them.”<sup>281</sup> [76]

### §3 SCRYING IN ISLAM

Various methods of scrying have been and are used by the Muslims. The Khalif Mansur had a mirror which told whether a man was a friend or an enemy.<sup>282</sup> Another Khalif caused to be made a ruby ring which, together with more sinister properties, had the power of showing shining figures when looked at in the dark.<sup>283</sup> Leo Africanus, writing of “the fortune-tellers and some other artisans in Fez,” describes another mode of scrying. “Others powring a drop of oile into a viall or glasse of water, make the saide water to bee transparent and bright, wherein, as it were in a mirrou, they affirme that they see huge swarmes of diuels . . . and the diuels give them answer with beckning, or with some gesture of their hands or eies: so inconsiderate and damnable is their credulitie in this behalfe. The foresaid glasse-viall they will deliver into children’s hands scarce of eight yeers old, of whom they will aske whether they see on that diuell. Many of these cities are so

<sup>281</sup> E. M. Quatremère, “Notice d’un manuscrit arabe contenant la Description de l’Afrique,” *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliotheque du Roi* (Paris, 1787, etc., in progress), xii. 484-5.

<sup>282</sup> D. S. Margoliouth, “Muslim Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 817.

<sup>283</sup> ‘Ali ibn Husain al-Mas’udi, *Les Prairies d’Or* (Paris, 1861-77, 9 vols.), vii. 377. For further references to Arabic literature see E. Lefébure, “Le miroir d’encre dans la magie arabe,” *Revue Africaine* (Paris, 1905), pp. 205, *sqq.*

besotted with these vanities, that they spend great summes upon them.”<sup>284</sup> In his travels in Egypt Norden met an Arab who was known to have foreseen in a cup the coming of the French.<sup>285</sup> At Medina a sick man who wants to get better looks into a pot full of water. “Other have ‘Mirayat,’ magic mirrors, on which the patient looks, and looses the complaint.”<sup>286</sup>

[77] A traveller was told by the Khedive at Cairo that in the city was to be found a Turk who possessed a ring which he pretended was endowed with magic virtues. “I have seen him and the ring — it is a plain hoop of gold set with a red stone, which is said to have come from Mecca. The Turk also showed me a plate of silver engraved with verses from the Koran. He explained that he could not work the charm himself, but required a child under ten years of age. The child takes the ring, the silver plate is put on his head, and in a little while the colour of the stone changes to white. Thereupon the child looks into the stone, and sees in it visions, and can answer any questions.”<sup>287</sup> Douttè mentions hydromancy, leconamancy, catoptromancy, and onychomancy as the methods used by the Arabs, and adds that they also gaze at the blade of a sword.<sup>288</sup>

Wherever the Muslims have wandered in their travels or conquests they have taken with them their characteristic forms of divination. As far afield as the Malay Peninsula Sir F. A. Swettenham met an Arab magician who told him “that after his vigil, fast, and prayer, he would lay in his hand a small piece of paper on which there would be some writing, into this he would pour a little water, and in that extemporised mirror he would see a vision of the whole transaction. He declared that, after gazing intently into this divining-glass, the inquirer first recognised the

<sup>284</sup> *The History and Description of Africa* (John Pory’s trans.), ed. by R. Brown (Hakluyt Soc, 1896, 3 vols.), ii. 457.

<sup>285</sup> F. L. Norden, *Voyage d’Egypte et de Nubie* (new ed., Paris, 1795, 3 vols.), iii. 68.

<sup>286</sup> Sir R. F. Burton, *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387-9n. See also Lafcadio Hearn, *Life and Literature* (New York, 1917), p. 342.

<sup>287</sup> A. J. Butler, *Court Life in Egypt* (London, 1887), pp. 238-9.

<sup>288</sup> E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909), p. 388.

figure of a little old man. That having fully saluted the *Jin*, it was only necessary to ask him to conjure up the scene of the robbery, when all the details would be re-enacted in [78] the liquid glass under the eyes of the gazer, who would there and then describe all that he saw.”<sup>289</sup>

At several places in India (as we shall see) these methods of scrying have been imported by Muslims. The Lubbis in the south of India use *unjun*, or shining globule, placed in the hand of a boy to discover hidden treasure or stolen property.<sup>290</sup> At Sind, in the Bombay presidency, the “Vinyane-warō, or finder of lost goods, rubs some dark substance upon the thumb-nail of a youth not arrived at puberty, or directs him to look at a black spot painted on the bottom of a bright brass pot.”<sup>291</sup> Writing from Calicut, Colonel A. T. Fraser says, “... I may mention that the whole series of these gazing methods are known to the natives as ‘Unjamu.’ The experiments I made with care, and on very numerous occasions, with an illiterate native, who, however, saw much more clearly than he was able to describe, were with a pitchy substance made up with castor oil; a spot — about the size of a wafer — of which on a green leaf stuck against the wall being what the man looked into. That pictures were seen under these circumstances is a thing I found no native acquainted with these matters would dispute. . . .”<sup>292</sup>

In Northern India in order to ascertain where stolen goods or treasure are concealed, or the condition of a patient possessed by the devil, “it is the custom to rub collyrium (anjan) on the palms of the hands of a child or adult, and to make him stare hard at it. In the Punjab charms are written by a sorcerer on a piece of paper, and over it a [79] large drop of ink is poured. . . .”<sup>293</sup> This last procedure has been more fully described: “The Punjab sorcerers

<sup>289</sup> *Malay Sketches* (London, 1895), pp. 202-3; the whole passage is reprinted by W. W. Skeat, *Malay Magic* (London, 1900), pp. 538, *sqq.*

<sup>290</sup> H. C., “Indo-Mahomedan Folk-Lore,” *Notes and Queries* (1867), 3 S. xi. 180.

<sup>291</sup> Sir R. F. Burton, *Sindh* (London, 1851), pp. 180-1.

<sup>292</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1889-90), iv. 149.

<sup>293</sup> Ja’far Sharif, *Islam in India or the Qanun-i-Islâm* (G. A. Herklots), ed. by W. Croke (Oxford, 1921), p. 264.



write some spells on a piece of paper and pour on it a large drop of ink. Flowers are then placed in the hands of a young child, who is told to look into the ink and to say ‘summon the four guardians.’ He is then asked if he sees anything in the ink. He says he sees four persons. He is told then to ask them to clean and carpet the place and to summon the kings. When he appears questions are put to him by the enchanter through the boy, and appropriate answers are returned. No one present sees the spirit or hears their conversations except the child.” On which the editor (W. Crooke) comments, “This is a stock-method among enchanters in various places.”<sup>294</sup>

These examples show what must be a more than accidental similarity, indicating very clearly a common origin. This we find in the method of scrying employed by the Muslims in modern Egypt, principally at Cairo. It is one of the most interesting, and certainly the best and most voluminously documented, of the various modes that are considered in this book. This method is, with slight and unimportant variations, that described in the last example quoted from the Punjab. Perhaps the earliest reference to it as having been seen in its home at Cairo is made by a French traveller writing in the middle of the eighteenth century.<sup>295</sup> In 1814 Captain Walter Croker of H.M.S. *Vanguard* having landed at Alexandria encountered there a magician with whom he had an interview. After various preliminaries the magician folded a piece of paper into a [80] cup-like shape and half-filled it with ink; he then “commanded the boy to fix his gaze steadfastly at the jetty liquid, and cry out when he saw anything. . . . Presently the boy’s cry interrupted the operator. ‘I see,’ he cried, ‘two people with brooms sweeping the street and now there is coming towards them a stranger, mounted on a white steed.’—“ After this the boy saw a vision; for an account of this and for the story of its verification under dramatic circumstances twenty years later and many miles away, the reader must turn to the original narrative.<sup>296</sup>

<sup>294</sup> *North Indian Notes and Queries* (Allahabad, 1891), i. 85, note 564.

<sup>295</sup> B. de Maillet, *Description de l’Egypte* (The Hague, 1740, 2 vols.), ii. 166-8.

<sup>296</sup> J. B. Burke, *Anecdotes of the Aristocracy* (London, 1849, 2 vols.), i. 12.4, *sqq.*

Some years after this, the exact date is not known, a party of travellers and scholars, among whom were the Marquis de Laborde, Lord Prudhoe (afterwards the Duke of Northumberland), and Major Felix,<sup>297</sup> being at Cairo visited a magician, and were met with the usual method of scrying in ink on the palm of a boy's hand. The experiment was strikingly successful, and the Englishmen in the party talked about it on their return to their homes. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of October 1831, Sir Walter Scott made this entry in his *Journal*: "There is a strange story about town of ghost-seeing vouched by Lord Prudhoe, a near relation of the Duke of Northumberland, and whom I know as an honourable man. A colonel described as a cool-headed sensible man of worth and honour, Palgrave, who dined with us yesterday, told twice over the story as vouched by Lord Prudhoe, and Lockhart gave us Colonel [*sic*] Felix's edition, which coincided exactly. . . ." <sup>298</sup> De Laborde himself minutely described the occurrence, and his [81] account agrees in all essentials with those of the Englishmen.<sup>299</sup>

This strange event, the first of its kind to have obtained any publicity, aroused a great deal of interest, more especially after the publication in one of Blackwood's *Noctes Ambrosianæ* of a satire on the affair.<sup>300</sup> This account was promptly condemned by an anonymous writer in *Tait's Edinburgh Magazine*, who proceeds to relate his own experience, which, he says, had taken place in 1822. The magician "fixed upon our little boy of seven years old to be his instrument; and I remember he talked some nonsense about requiring an innocent agent, and how a woman might do as well, if she could plead the innocent presence of the unborn. . . . He placed the little boy before him, and poured ink into the hollow of the boy's hand, and bid him look into it steadily. . . ." The experiment

<sup>297</sup> Captain Orlando Felix retired on half-pay with the rank of Major on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1826.

<sup>298</sup> (Edinburgh, 1890, 2 vols.), ii. 419; cp. ii. 42m.

<sup>299</sup> L. E. S. J. de Laborde, "Magie Orientale," *Revue des deux mondes* (Paris, 1833), iii. 332, *sqq.*, and *Commentaire Géographique sur l'Exode et les Nombres* (Paris and Leipzig, 1841), pp. 22-7.

<sup>300</sup> J. Wilson, *Noctes Ambrosianæ*, ed. by R. S. Mackenzie (New York, 1866, 5 vols.), iv. 368, *sqq.* (August, 1831).

failed, the magician putting this down to the fact that the boy was a Christian.<sup>301</sup>

This relation was followed up by another anonymous writer who, attacking the accuracy of the tale in a “certain northern magazine,” proceeds, after the manner of his kind, to provide an accurate account, his own experience having taken place “a few years ago.” “There happened to be a famous magician, lately arrived from distant parts of Africa, then at hand. . . . This man asked for nothing but an innocent boy under ten years of age, a virgin, or a woman quick with child. . . . The magician then recited divers incantations, drew a circle on the floor, and [82] placed the boy, who was rather frightened, in the middle of the circle . . . The next thing the magician did, was to pour a dark liquid, like ink, into the hollow of the boy’s hand . . then he desired the boy to look into the palm of his hand, and to tell him what he saw. . . .” This experiment was successful.<sup>302</sup> In 1835 Kinglake met such a magician in Egypt, who went through the usual performance, but whose attempts produced no satisfactory results.<sup>303</sup>

Although these various accounts aroused a great deal of discussion on their appearance, the subject was not made notorious until the publication in 1836 of that fine scholar E. A. Lane’s *Account of the Manners and Customs of the Modern Egyptians*. Soon after his first arrival in Egypt Lane was told by Mr Salt, the English Consul-General, of a curious incident which had recently taken place. Mr Salt having suffered from thefts he had called in a magician who put some ink on the hand of a boy not yet arrived at puberty. In this mirror the boy saw the thief, who was then brought before the Consul and confessed. “The above relation,” Lane continues, “made me desirous of witnessing a similar performance during my first visit to this country; but not being acquainted with the name of the magician alluded to, or his place of abode, I was unable to obtain any tidings of him. I learned, however, soon after

<sup>301</sup> “State of Magic in Egypt,” *Tait’s Edinburgh Magazine* (Edinburgh, 1832), i. 30, *sqq.*

<sup>302</sup> C. M. F., “True Stories of Necromancy in Egypt and Turkey,” *The Metropolitan* (London, 1832), iv. 248, *sqq.*

<sup>303</sup> A. W. Kinglake, *Eöthen: or Traces of Travel Brought Home from the East* (London, 1913), pp. 224-8.

my return to England, that he had become known to later travellers in Egypt; was residing in Cairo; and that he was called the sheykh ‘Abd-el-Kádir el-Maghrabee. A few weeks after my second arrival in Egypt, my neighbour ‘Osmán, interpreter of the British consulate, brought him to me. ...” At the first interview nothing was [83] done, but at the next meeting interesting results were obtained. After various burnings of incense the magician drew a magic square in the palm of a boy’s hand in the centre of which he poured a little ink. Then after the traditional dialogue between the magician and the boy, Lane asked that Nelson should be called into the mirror; this the boy did and very accurately described that personage. The experiment was repeated by Lane asking for an acquaintance of his entirely unknown to fame, and was equally successful. Such, considerably abbreviated, is Lane’s account.<sup>304</sup> (Enough descriptions of the actual performance have now been quoted to show the substantial similarity of the various accounts.)

On the appearance of Lane’s book the *Quarterly Review* examined his account of the magician’s performance and declared that the whole thing had been worked by an arrangement of mirrors.<sup>305</sup> We need not linger over this agreeable delusion. In the following year a German scholar who had been a member of Lane’s party on the occasion of his visit to the magician, published his account of it, which agrees with Lane’s.<sup>306</sup> In the same year Lindsay’s *Letters on Egypt* appeared, in one of which, dated the 17<sup>th</sup> of December 1836, he describes his encounter in Cairo with the same magician who had been successful with Lord Prudhoe’s party. The usual ceremony was gone through but only inaccurate results were forthcoming. The author refers to a Miss H----- who had encountered a similar magician.<sup>307</sup> In 1841 Sir Gardner Wilkinson with [84] a large party visited this same ‘Abd-el-Kádir. A boy was called for in the usual way (but the writer notes that the

<sup>304</sup> (Everyman’s Library, London, 1908), pp. 274, *sqq.*

<sup>305</sup> (London, 1837), lix. 195, *sqq.*

<sup>306</sup> G. H. von Schubert, *Reise in das Morgenland* (Erlangen, 1838-9, 3 vols.), ii. 63-6.

<sup>307</sup> A. W. C. Lindsay, Earl of Crawford and of Balcarres, *Letters on Egypt, Edom, and the Holy Land* (5<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1858), pp. 34-5. 375-8.

magician could also operate with a girl under the age of puberty, a black woman of any age, or a pregnant woman), and after the customary dialogue various persons were called for, the experiment ending in failure.<sup>308</sup> In 1844 Lane, with his sister Sophia Poole, Lord Nugent, and Major Grote, revisited the magician and came to the conclusion, unjustifiably we must think, that his previous successes had been the result of collusion.<sup>309</sup>

In 1847 Miss Martineau and her friends encountered the same wonder-worker, and though the results were mostly failures, she thought she had discovered the method by which the visions were obtained, namely, by means of the then fashionable portmanteau mesmerism.<sup>310</sup> Sir Richard Burton had in his possession “a Maghrabi magic formula for inking the hand of a boy, a black slave girl, a virgin, a pregnant woman. . . . The modern Egyptians call it Zarbal-Mandal, and there is scarcely a man in Cairo who does not know something about it. In selecting subjects to hold the ink, they observe the right hand, and reject all who have not what is called in palmistry the ‘linea media naturalis’ straight and deeply cut.”<sup>311</sup> Against this we can put the experience of a later traveller who caused diligent inquiries to be made in Cairo for any magician who could divine by means of the magic mirror, only to [85] obtain the answer that there was no such man in Cairo, and that nobody had ever heard of one living.<sup>312</sup> It would be interesting to know how this writer set about his inquiries.

A German writer describes this same *darb-el-mandel* as being performed in the usual way, but speaks of water instead of ink.<sup>313</sup> Budgett Meakin observed the identical practice among the Moors.<sup>314</sup> The chain of learned and reliable witnesses to the Muslim scrying performances themselves, if not to the honesty of

<sup>308</sup> Sir J. G. Wilkinson, *Modern Egypt and Thebes* (London, 1843, 2 vols.), i. 218, *sqq.*

<sup>309</sup> S. Poole, *The Englishwoman in Egypt* (London, 1844, 2 vols.), ii. 162, *sqq.*; G. N. T. Grenville, Baron Nugent, *Lands Classical and Sacred* (London, 1845, 2 vols.), i. 241, *sqq.*

<sup>310</sup> *Eastern Life Present and Past* (London, 1848, 3 vols.), ii. 137, *sqq.*

<sup>311</sup> *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.),

<sup>312</sup> A. J. Butler, *Court Life in Egypt* (London, 1887), p. 242.

<sup>313</sup> C. B. Klunzinger, *Upper Egypt* (London, 1878), pp. 387-8.

<sup>314</sup> *The Moors* (London, 1902), pp. 357-8.

the performers, is long and unbroken, and the writers I have cited could be added to if it were necessary.<sup>315</sup> But that would be a task of supererogation.

The conversation that takes place between the magician and the scryer, which has been several times touched upon, must be left for solution to a later writer with more precise data about this particular aspect of the matter at his disposal. At present no obvious solution presents itself. This dialogue has been well pictured by Rossetti:

An instant come, in an instant gone,  
No time there was to think thereon.  
The mother held the sphere on her knee:—  
”Lean this way and speak low to me,  
And take no note but of what you see.”

[86] “I see a man with a besom grey  
That sweeps the flying dust away.”  
”Ay, that comes first in the mystic sphere;  
But now that the way is swept and clear,  
Heed well what next you look on there.”<sup>316</sup>

#### § 4 SCRYING IN PERSIA

Scrying in Persia seems to be, and seems always to have been, limited to cylicomancy, that method being indeed sometimes supposed to have originated there.<sup>317</sup> Indeed, it used to be the custom to ascribe all divination vaguely to the Persians; this idea

<sup>315</sup> See e.g., E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l’Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909), pp. 389, *sqq.*; L. Godard, *Description et Histoire du Maroc* (Paris, 1860), p. 240; *Fragment of a Græco-Egyptian Work upon Magic*, ed. by C. W. Goodwin (Cambridge Antiquarian Soc, Cambridge, 1852), pp. 27, *sqq.*; W. Gregory, *Animal Magnetism* (4<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1890), pp. 133-4; C. du Prel, *Studien aus dem Gebiete der Geheimwissenschaften* (Leipzig, 1890-1, 2 vols.), ii. (Experimentalpsychologie und Experimentalmetaphysik), 185; D. S. Margoliouth, “Muslim Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 817; A. de Rochas d’Aiglun, “Les Forces non définies,” *Mémoires de la Soc. des Sciences et Lettres de Loir-et-Cher* (Blois, 1886), xi. 642, *sqq.*; N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905), pp. 95, *sqq.*

<sup>316</sup> Rose Mary, I. xvii-xviii.; see p. 37 above.

<sup>317</sup> Cp. L. H. Gray, “Persian Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 820.

seems to have originated with Varro,<sup>318</sup> Strabo says that the Persian diviners habitually used hydromancy and lecanomancy.<sup>319</sup> Purchas makes bolder claims; he writes that the Persians had “their *Lecanomancie*, which was observed in a Bason of water. . . . *Gastromancie* procured answers by pictures, or representations in a glasse-vessel of water. . . . *Catoptromancie* received those resemblances in cleare glasses: *Crystallomancie*, in Crystall. . . . *Onymancie* with Oile and Soote daubed on the Naile of an vndefiled child, and held vp against the Sunne: *Hydromancy* with water. . . *Tibi nomina mille, Mille nocendi artes.*”<sup>320</sup>

The cup-scriving legends in Persia generally centre round some mythological or heroic personage. In the *Sikandar Nama* of Nizam “the royal hero is represented as possessing no fewer than three magic specula of different properties: a mirror of the stars; a mirror of the seasons; and the *Sikandariya* mirror, that gave intelligence of the [87] coming of the Europeans. . . .”<sup>321</sup> But the personage most frequently invoked is Jamshid; several authors seriously relate, says Reinaud, that this king and his successors on the throne of Persia possessed a cup in which was reflected the whole universe;<sup>322</sup> even supernatural things were not excluded from appearance in this wonderful cup.<sup>323</sup> It is to it, of course, that Omar refers:

Iram indeed is gone with all its Rose,  
And Jamshid Sev’n-ring’d Cup where no one knows.<sup>324</sup>

Or, in Whinfield’s fuller version:

<sup>318</sup> In St Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, VII. xxxv.

<sup>319</sup> XVI. li. 39.

<sup>320</sup> S. Purchas, *Pilgrimage, or Relations of the World and the Religions observed in all Ages* (London, 1613), IV. v. 310.

<sup>321</sup> W. A. Clouston, *On the Magical Elements in Chaucer’s Squire’s Tale* (Chaucer Soc, London, 1888-90), p. 307.

<sup>322</sup> J. T. Reinaud, *op. cit.*, ii. 419.

<sup>323</sup> B. d’Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale* (new ed., Paris, 1783, 6 vols.), iii. 23, s.v. “Giam.”

<sup>324</sup> FitzGerald’s version, v.

To find great Jamshid's world-reflecting bowl  
 I compassed sea and land, and viewed the whole;  
 But, when I asked the wary sage, I learned  
 That bowl was my own body, and my soul!<sup>325</sup>

Indeed the Persian poets often speak of this "world-displaying cup."<sup>326</sup>

Another legend of this kind is told in *The Shâhnâma*; Kai Khusrau speaks:

Then will I  
 Call for the cup that mirroreth the world,  
 And stand before God's presence. In that cup  
 I shall behold the seven climes of earth,  
 Both field and fell and all the provinces  
 Will offer reverence to mine ancestors,  
 My chosen, spacious lords, and then shalt know  
 Where thy son is. The cup will show me all.

[88] Kai Khusrau then takes up the cup, and having gazed therein:

He saw the seven climes reflected there,  
 And every act and presage of high heaven,  
 Their fashion, cast, and scope made manifest  
 From Aries to Pisces he beheld  
 All mirrored in it — Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Leo, Sol and  
 Luna, Mercury,  
 And Venus. In that cup the wizard-king  
 Was wont to see futurity. . . .<sup>327</sup>

These miraculous cups are, or were comparatively recently, still being manufactured in Persia.<sup>328</sup> And although there is no record of

<sup>325</sup> Whinfield's version, cclv.

<sup>326</sup> R. A. Nicholson's ed. of FitzGerald's version (London, 1923), p. 120n.

<sup>327</sup> *The Shahnâma of Firdausi*, trans. by A. G. Warner and E. Warner (London, 1905, etc., in progress), iii. 317, 318 (Kai Khusrau, v. 12, 13).

<sup>328</sup> d'Herbelot, *loc. cit.*; at iii. 38-9 the use of a turquoise vase for a similar purpose is spoken of rather vaguely.



their use in modern times, there is no reason for supposing that the use of them has died out. Indeed, among contemporary Zoroastrian priests only the highest rank are allowed to carry at their girdles the bunch of twigs and the cup. The Zoroastrians are also supposed to have used the sapphire for divination.<sup>329</sup>

## § 5 SCRYING IN INDIA

In Vedic India before entering into battle the warriors looked into a vessel full of water; if their reflections appeared in the water all was well, but if not they did not go to battle knowing they would be killed.<sup>330</sup> During this same period it was believed that a maiden who had not yet menstruated was enabled to see the future in a mirror or spoonful of water.<sup>331</sup> Bernier, who travelled in India in the seventeenth century, seems to have found scrying well [89] known.<sup>332</sup> Ja'far Sharif stated that he had heard it generally said "that the Hindu Orders of Jogis and Sanyasis practise these arts, and that in this way they discover hidden treasure."<sup>333</sup>

According to Maury the Muslims of India and the Hindus use lamp-black (unjun) placed on the hand of a child, who sees in it the features of the demon that is afflicting a sufferer.<sup>334</sup> This is a Muslim mode of scrying, and indeed what little scrying is to be found in India seems to have been introduced there by Muslims. Thus in a legend of one of the Muslim emperors of the sixteenth century he is enabled to obtain information from a distance in a magic mirror.<sup>335</sup> A story is told of Tipu Sultan, the Muslim Nawab of Mysore, that at the siege of Seringapatam he retired from the walls during the heat of the conflict to consult his divining cup.<sup>336</sup>

<sup>329</sup> J. Reichelt, *De Amuletis* (Strassburg, 1676), p. 36.

<sup>330</sup> G. M. Balling, "Vedic Divination," *E.R.E.*, iv. 828.

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*, which see for references to Vedic literature.

<sup>332</sup> F. Bernier, *Voyages . . . Contenant la Description des Etats du Grand Mogol, de l'Hindoustan, du Royaume de Kachemire . . .* (Amsterdam, 1699, 2 vols.), ii. 131.

<sup>333</sup> *Islam in India, or the Qanun-i-Islam* (G. A. Herklots), ed. by W. Crooke (London, 1921), p. 264.

<sup>334</sup> L. F. A. Maury, *La Magie et l'Astrologie* (Paris, 1860), p. 433.

<sup>335</sup> Sir E. C. Bailey, *The Local Muhammadan Dynasties of Gujarat* (London, 1886), pp. 323-5.

<sup>336</sup> E. Smedley and others, *The Occult Sciences* (Encyclopædia Metropolitana, London, 1886), pp. 323-5.

## § 6 MONGOLIAN SCRYING

In common with most things divination has been carried in China and its neighbouring countries to a very elaborate pitch, of which we have still a great deal to learn. Scrying is mentioned in *Mandeville's Travels* among the various modes of divination employed at the court of Jenghiz Kahn.<sup>337</sup> Du Halde, who travelled in China early in the eighteenth century, says that the Taoist diviners showed [90] in a cauldron of water the changes taking place in all parts of the Empire.<sup>338</sup> In one of P'u Sung-Ling's folk-stories occurs a mirror which retains the image of any woman who looks into it indelibly fixed and not to be rubbed cut, "but if the same woman looks into it again, dressed in a different dress, or if some other woman chanced to look in, then the former face would gradually fade away."<sup>339</sup>

The people of the Tibetan foothills scry in basins; they burn charms and mix the ashes with the water in the basin. The reader of the spirits' desires then stares into the mixture and "declares he sees and hears wonderful things belonging to another world."<sup>340</sup> In Tibet itself a bowl or pool of water is used,<sup>341</sup> and the implements of the Chinese oracle include the magic mirror of steel in which the future is reflected.<sup>342</sup> This kind of steel mirror is indeed an inseparable attribute of the Shinto religion: in a Shinto temple in Japan such a mirror stands on the altar.<sup>343</sup>

The magic mirror plays an important part in Japanese mythology. When Amaterasu sent her children out to rule the world she gave them a mirror (together with a sword and a globe of crystal) into which they could always look to see their mother's

<sup>337</sup> *Mandeville's Travels*, ed. by P. Hamelius (Early English Text Soc, London, 1919-23, 2 vols.), i. 154 (ch. xxvi.).

<sup>338</sup> J. B. Du Halde, *Description . . . de l'Empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie Chinoise* (The Hague, 1736, 4 vols.), iii. 22.

<sup>339</sup> H. A. Giles, *Strange Stories from a Chinese Studio* (London, 1880, 2 vols.), ii. 32. See also A. Bastian, *Volkerstämme am Brahmaputra* (Berlin, 1883), p. 116.

<sup>340</sup> J. Hutson, *Chinese Life in the Tibetan Foothills* (Shanghai, 1921), p. 122.

<sup>341</sup> L. A. Waddell, "Buddhist Divination," *E.R.E.*, iv. 787.

<sup>342</sup> L. A. Waddell, *loc. cit.*

<sup>343</sup> G. Bousquet, *Le Japon de nos jours* (Paris, 1877, 2 vols.), ii. 72.

face and “in consequence to find the truth.”<sup>344</sup> A similar mirror appears in Japanese folk-tales.<sup>345</sup>

[91] In Siberia the natives look in water poured into a vessel to discover, among other things, what sacrifice the gods require.<sup>346</sup> They seem also to have imported some varieties of scrying from the Saracens to judge from some lecanomantic plates which have been found in use among them.<sup>347</sup> Strahlenberg further reports that they also used mirrors, which they hung on their generals, one before and one behind, which is at least logical and decorative.

In Greenland when a man has not returned from the sea in due time, “they lift up the head of the nearest relation of the missing party with a stick; a tub of water stands under, and in that mirror they behold forsooth the absent man either overset in his kayak, or sitting upright and rowing.”<sup>348</sup>

---

<sup>344</sup> V. Jäkel, “War der magische Spiegel im Besitztum der Vorzeit?” *Internationales Centralblatt für Anthropologie* (Stettin, 1903), v. 363; G. Bousquet, *loc. cit.*

<sup>345</sup> Lafcadio Hearn and others, *Japanese Fairy Tales* (New York, 1918), pp. 54, *sqq.*, 130, *sqq.*

<sup>346</sup> V. M. Mikhailovskii, “Shamanism in Siberia and European Russia,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1895), xxiv. 155; N. Ruichkov, *Tagebuch über seine Reise durch verschiedenen Provinzen des russischen Reichs in den Jahren 1769, 1770, und 1771* (Riga, 1774), p. 92.

<sup>347</sup> P. J. von Strahlenberg, *An Historico-Geographical Description of . . . Russia, Siberia, and Great Tartary* (London, 1738), p. 330 and plate facing p. 326.

<sup>348</sup> D. Cranz, *The History of Greenland* (London, 1767, 2 vols.), i. 214.

## CHAPTER VII

### SCRYING IN OTHER CONTINENTS

#### § 1 SCRYING AMONG THE MALAYANS AND PAPUANS

John Turnbull, in his voyage round the world at the beginning of the nineteenth century, encountered at Tahiti a singular method of detecting a thief, in a case of stolen goods, “by applying to a person possessing the spirit of divination, who, they observe, is always sure to show them the face of the thief reflected from a calabash of clear water.”<sup>349</sup> Another traveller gives a different form of this method. The natives of Tahiti, he says, “had also recourse to several kinds of divination, for discovering perpetrators of acts of injury, especially theft. Among these was a kind of water ordeal. It resembled in a great degree the *wai haruru*<sup>350</sup> of the Hawaiians. When the parties who had been robbed wished to use this method of discovering the thief, they sent for a priest, who, on being informed of the circumstances connected with the theft, offered prayers to his demon. He now directed a hole to be dug in the floor of the house, and filled with water; then, taking a young plantain in his hand, he stood over the hole, and offered prayers to the god, whom he invoked, and who, if propitious, was supposed to conduct the [93] spirit of the thief to the house, and place it over the water.

---

<sup>349</sup> *A Voyage Round the World in the Years 1800, 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1813), p. 343.

<sup>350</sup> In the 1829 ed., ii. 240, “wai harru.”

The image of the spirit, which they imagined resembled the person of the man, was, according to their account, reflected in the water, and being perceived by the priest, he named the individual, or the parties, who had committed the theft, stating that the god had shown him the image in the water.”<sup>351</sup> This account is confirmed by a more modern writer, according to whom the priest causes a hole to be dug in the floor of the house which has been robbed; the hole is then filled with water and the priest, holding in his hand a young banana-tree, looks into it.<sup>352</sup> A form of pegomancy is also practised by the Tahitians.<sup>353</sup>

George Turner has an interesting summary of a tale which is told in Samoa of the water-pool of a certain Sina-sengi, a lady. “She had ‘caught the shadows’ of a variety of scenes, and imprinted them on the *water*. A problem this for the photographers! Night-dances, races, club exercises, battles, public meetings, and some of the employments of daily life, were all there. The pool was covered over, but by the removal of a stone this ‘chamber of imagery’ could be all seen. Everything seemed so real that a man one day was so enraptured with the sight of one of his favourite sports that he jumped in to join a dancing party. But, alas! he bruised his head and broke his arm on the *stones* which he found under the surface, instead of the gambols of living men.”<sup>354</sup>

In Sarawak the manang, or witch-doctor, uses the [94] “Stone of Light,” a piece of crystal quartz, to diagnose a disease submitted to him for cure.<sup>355</sup> He does this by using the crystal as a glass in which to view the condition of the patient.<sup>356</sup>

<sup>351</sup> W. Ellis, *Polynesian Researches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1832-4, 4 vols.), i. 378-9.

<sup>352</sup> A. D. Le Plongeon, “Occultism among the Tahitians,” *The Metaphysical Magazine* (New York, 1896), iv. 279.

<sup>353</sup> C. Hercouet, “Superstitions et Croyances de l’Océanie Centrale,” *Revue des Traditions Populaires* (Paris, 1889), iv. 287.

<sup>354</sup> *Samoa a Hundred Years Ago and Long Before* (London, 1884), pp. 101-2.

<sup>355</sup> J. Perham, “Manangism,” *Journal of the Straits Asiatic Soc.* (1887), no. 19; cited thus by H. L. Roth, *The Natives of Sarawak and British North Borneo* (London, 1896, 2 vols.), i. 273. Cp. E. H. Gomes, *Seventeen Years among the Sea Dyaks of Borneo* (London, 1911), p. 165.

<sup>356</sup> R. Shelford, “On Two Medicine-Baskets from Sarawak,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1903), xxxiii. 76 and plate XVI. i.

The people of the Malay Peninsula have a folk-song in which various animals are introduced as the persons of the drama; in it the crocodile determines whether he can safely attack a man, by scrying in the water of the river.<sup>357</sup> Another folk-song, of the neighbouring Nicobar Islands, introduces a mirror which shows all things when it is unlocked.<sup>358</sup>

In that outpost of the Malay race, Madagascar, the natives use, or used, crystals, topazes, aquamarines, amethysts and opals, to which they gave a comprehensive name, Filah, as speculums for scrying.<sup>359</sup>

The Papuans also reverence pieces of quartz and use them for divination, in common with a few other stones.<sup>360</sup> They also practise other methods of scrying. In British New Guinea if a man suspects his wife of infidelity and she denies the allegation, he takes the leaves of certain plants [95] and squeezes their red juice into a shallow open vessel. "Then in the quiet of his own house the man stares into the pot where he sees the face[s] of his wife and her lover; should his wife still deny the alleged infidelity he may bid her look into the fluid, when it is said she will recognise her own face and that of her lover. When applied to the detection of thieves this method seems to be implicitly believed in; the accuser would not brazen it out and deny that the image seen was true, for 'inside belong him no good, man he savvy.'"<sup>361</sup> In the southern extremity of New Guinea the thief is discovered in a pool of water into which coco-nut oil has been squeezed.<sup>362</sup>

## § 2 SCRYING IN AUSTRALIA

<sup>357</sup> W. S. Skeat and C. O. Blagden, *Pagan Races of the Malay Peninsula* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), ii. 154 and note.

<sup>358</sup> F. A. de Roepstorff, "Tiomberombi: a Nicobar Tale," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* (Bengal, 1884), LIII. i. 24, *sqq.*

<sup>359</sup> E. de Flacourt, *Histoire de la Grande Isle de Madagascar* (Paris, 1661), p. 189.

<sup>360</sup> A. Featherman, *Social History of the Races of Mankind* (London, 1885-91, 7 vols.), Second Division (Papuo- and Malayo-Melanesians), pp. 41, 283.

<sup>361</sup> C. G. Seligmann, *The Melanesians of British New Guinea* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 654-5.

<sup>362</sup> H. V. Newton, *In Far New Guinea* (London, 1914), pp. 89-90.

There is little direct evidence for Sir Richard Burton's statement that the natives of Australia gaze, for divination, "at a kind of shining stone."<sup>363</sup> It is, however, well known that the aborigines have a great respect for pieces of crystal quartz. In South-Western Australia this respect almost amounts to veneration,<sup>364</sup> and in Eastern Australia such crystals are always carried about by the coradjes, or priests, who take care that nobody shall see them unnecessarily, women being altogether excluded from this privilege.<sup>365</sup>

In New South Wales the natives worship crystals, [96] having the same word for agate, chalcedony, and cornelian.<sup>366</sup> In the Euahlayi tribe in north-western New South Wales the pieces of quartz which they revere are about the size and shape of a small lemon. In these stones they see visions of "the past, of what is happening at a distance, and of the future." They believe this is done by a spirit who inhabits the crystal and who goes to obtain the required information and then shows it in the crystal.<sup>367</sup> At West Maitland in New South Wales the natives use a polished ball of stone to scry the result of an expedition.<sup>368</sup>

### § 3 AMERICAN SCRYING

Among the Mayas scrying used to centre round the worship of the god Tezcatlipcca, to whom there was dedicated a temple in Mexico the walls of which were apparently entirely lined with mirrors.<sup>369</sup> Mirrors made of obsidian or pyrites, generally the

<sup>363</sup> *Pilgrimage to Al-Madinah and Meccah* (London, 1906, 2 vols.), i. 387-9n.

<sup>364</sup> G. Grey, *Journals of Discovery in North-West and Western Australia* (London, 1841, 2 vols.), ii. 340. See A. W. Howitt, "On Australian Medicine Men," *Journal of the Anthropological Institute* (London, 1887), xvi. 50.

<sup>365</sup> T. L. Mitchell, *Three Expeditions into the Interior of Eastern Australia* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1839, 2 vols.) ii. 344. Cp. Sir J. G. Frazer, *Totemism and Exogamy* (London, 1910, 4 vols.), i. 412.

<sup>366</sup> L. E. Threlkeld, *An Australian Grammar . . . of the Language as spoken by the Aborigines in . . . New South Wales* (Sydney, 1834), pp. 88-9.

<sup>367</sup> K. L. Parker, *The Euahlayi Tribe* (London, 1905), pp. 25-6; cp. E. Doutté, *Magie et Religion dans l'Afrique du Nord* (Algiers, 1909), p. 387.

<sup>368</sup> In A. Lang, *The Making of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1900), p. 83 and note.

<sup>369</sup> T. Waitz, *Anthropologie der Naturvölker* (Leipzig, 1859-72, 6 vols.), iv. 150.

former, were habitually used for divination. “In Mexico, as in Guatemala, the priest of the Below, the personification of Tezcatlipoca = Shining Mirror, employed an actual mirror made of polished obsidian, as an aid in pronouncing judgment on criminals.”<sup>370</sup> For instance, it is related by Fuentes that on a hill outside the ancient city of Guatemala stood a shining pedestal [97] surrounded by a low wall. When the judges in trying a person were unable to arrive at a decision this stone pedestal, supposed to have been of obsidian, was consulted and obeyed.<sup>371</sup> The Bishop Francis Marroquin having obtained intelligence of this stone, continues Fuentes, he had it cut up and consecrated for use as an altar in the church of Teepan, Guatemala. Stephens visited this church, and although Fuentes says that the stone was of singular beauty, a yard and a half each way, he writes: “The stone was sewed up in a piece of cotton cloth drawn tight, which looked certainly as old as the thirty-five years it had been under the cura’s charge, and probably was the same covering in which it was enveloped when first laid on the top of the altar. . . . This oracular slab is a piece of common slate, 14 inches by 10, and about as thick as those used by boys at school, without characters of any kind upon it.”<sup>372</sup> On which Brinton comments: “I am inclined to believe that the original stone, evidently supposed to be of great value, had been stolen, and this piece of slate substituted.”<sup>373</sup>

One writer, without giving any authority, relates a very curious story, which, he says, is to be found in the Spanish historians. “Some years before the discovery of America by the Spaniards a fowl of extraordinary magnitude was caught on the lake of

<sup>370</sup> Z. Nuttall, *The Fundamental Principles of Old and New World Civilisation* (Archaeological and Ethnological Papers of the Peabody Museum, Harvard, 1901), p. 79.

<sup>371</sup> F. A. de Fuentes y Guzmán, *Historia de Guatemala ó Recordación florida escrita el siglo XVII*, ed. by J. Zaragoza (Madrid, 1882-3, 2 vols.), ii. 133, *sqq.*; cp. O. Stoll, “Die Ethnologie der Indianerstämme von Guatemala,” *Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie* (Leyden, 1889, Supplement), i. 86; L. Spence, “American Divination,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 783; Z. Nuttall, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80; W. H. R. Rivers, *Medicine, Magic, and Religion* (London, 1924), p. 75.

<sup>372</sup> J. L. Stephens, *Incidents of Travel in Central America Chiapas, and Yucatan* (London, 1841, 2 vols.), ii. 149.

<sup>373</sup> D. G. Brinton, *The Annals of the Cakchiquels* (Library of Aboriginal American Literature, Philadelphia, 1885), pp. 25-6.



Mexico. In the crown of its head [98] there was a mirror or plate of glass, in which the Mexicans saw their future invaders, and all the misfortunes that would befall them.”<sup>374</sup> A probably more authentic story is told by Christoval de Molina. He relates that before succeeding to the rulership of the Yncas, Yupanqui went one day to visit his father at Sacsahuana, five leagues from Cuzco. “As he went up to a fountain called Susur-puquio, he saw a piece of crystal fall into it, within which he beheld the figure of an Indian. . . . On seeing this figure the Ynca Yupanqui fled, but the figure of the apparition called him by his name from within the fountain. . . . The apparition then vanished, while the piece of crystal remained. The Ynca took great care of it, and they say he afterwards saw everything he wanted in it.”<sup>375</sup> Water itself was also used for scrying.<sup>376</sup>

To this day the Mayas of Yucatan have the greatest faith in, and give the most implicit obedience, even in matters of life and death, to the zasztun, or divining-stone, possessed by their wizards.<sup>377</sup> There is scarcely a village in Yucatan without such a sanctified piece of crystal or other translucent stone.<sup>378</sup> The crystal is also used by the Indians in Central America generally; they employ a polished sandstone which they consult when they “are dubious as to the future.”<sup>379</sup> A case is on record, says Mr Spence, where a Cherokee kept such a stone in a buckskin case, feeding it by rubbing it over with the blood of a deer; “similar instances might be multiplied.”<sup>380</sup> Among the [99] Apache the medicine-men use pieces of crystal to discover lost property, especially ponies. “Na-a-cha, the medicineman . . . could give no explanation except that by looking into it he could see everything he wanted to see.”<sup>381</sup>

<sup>374</sup> O. G. Ritter, *De Roberti Greeni Fabula: Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay* (Thorn, 1866), p. 28.

<sup>375</sup> *The Fables and Rites of the Yncas*, ed. by C. R. Markham (Hakluyt Soc, London, 1873), p. 12.

<sup>376</sup> Z. Nuttall, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

<sup>377</sup> D. G. Brinton, *op. cit.*, p. 43-5.

<sup>378</sup> *Id.*, *Essays of an Americanist* (Philadelphia, 1890), p. 165.

<sup>379</sup> L. Spence, *op. cit.*, p. 782.

<sup>380</sup> *Loc. cit.*; cp. G. A. Dorsey, “Traditions of the Skidi Pawnee,” *Memoirs of the American Folk-Lore Soc.* (Boston, 1904), p. 351, note 217.

<sup>381</sup> J. G. Bourke, *The Medicine-Men of the Apache* (Ninth Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology, U.S.A., Washington, 1892), p. 461.

#### §4 SCRYING AMONG THE AFRICAN NEGROES

Scrying is practised by a great many of the numerous tribes in Africa. The Zulus revere a kind of Chief's Vessel in which, when it is filled with water, they divine.<sup>382</sup> A correspondent informed Miss Goodrich-Freer that the Matabeles say they are accustomed to look at the shadows in pools of water when in any difficulty.<sup>383</sup> A member of the Kaonde tribe in North Rhodesia when seeking information looks into a pool of river-water and sees therein the "hitherto unrevealed past, or the secrets of the future." The neighbouring Alunda have a similar custom.<sup>384</sup>

Scrying plays the principal part in the initiation ceremony among the natives of Fernand Vaz in French Congo. At the back of the ceremonial hut is a roughly hewn statue under which are placed the bones of a man long since dead; in front of it stands a mirror. Into this mirror the candidate is required to look, and until he can see in it, and accurately describe, the features of the dead man (whom he could not possibly have known), he is not allowed to proceed with the remaining tests awaiting him before initiation.<sup>385</sup>

[100] In the villages of Chiloango, Kabinda, and Umkotschi in the Loanga district of Congo, a mirror has been observed on the breast of the figure in the fetich-house which is to be found in each of these villages (and in most others). The witch-doctors use these mirrors for divination.<sup>386</sup> In the same district the nganga, or priest, has a head-dress made of parrot feathers and mirrors; when there is any difficulty about the succession to the throne of Congo, the priest doffs his head-dress and, looking into one of its mirrors, sees therein the face of the ruler elect. He acts in the same way to discover the cause of a drought.<sup>387</sup>

<sup>382</sup> H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (Natal, 1870; re-issued by the Folk-Lore Soc, London, 1884), pp. 340-7.

<sup>383</sup> "Crystal-Gazing," *The Occult Review* (London, 1910), xi. 270.

<sup>384</sup> F. H. Melland, *In Witch-Bound Africa* (London, 1923), p. 225.

<sup>385</sup> J. Buléon, *Sous le del d'Afrique* (Abbeville, 1896), p. 89.

<sup>386</sup> A. Bastian, *Die deutsche Expedition an der Loanga-Küste* (Jena, 1874-5, 2 vols.), i. 41, 76-7, 205, 243.

<sup>387</sup> R. E. Dennett, in N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905), p. 56.

Among the Mpongwe tribes of Equatorial Africa the mirror is likewise used for scrying.<sup>388</sup> In the northern districts of Equatorial Africa the witch-doctor makes his medical diagnosis by looking at water in a kettle, and is generally successful.<sup>389</sup> In Ashango-Land the procedure is the same, except that the kettle is replaced by a black earthenware vessel, filled with water, into which the doctor looks “intently and mysteriously.”<sup>390</sup>

The Mossi of the French Soudan have a periodical test of purity for certain of their community; the test consists of looking into a jar of water, which gives its verdicts by its reflections.<sup>391</sup> Samuel Burder [101] writes that “*Julius Serenus*<sup>392</sup> tells us that the method of *divining* by the cup” was known to the Abyssinians,<sup>393</sup> but this last term was loosely used by the ancients.

---

<sup>388</sup> W. W. Reade, *Savage Africa* (London, 1863), pp. 252-3.

<sup>389</sup> A. Steinhausen, “Die Religion des Negers,” *Magazin für die neueste Geschichte der evangelischen Missions- und Bibel-Gesellschaften* (Basel, 1856), ii. 138-9.

<sup>390</sup> P. B. Du Chaillu, *A Journey to Ashango-Land* (London, 1867), pp. 173-4.

<sup>391</sup> L. Tauxier, *Le Noir du Soudan* (Paris, 1912), pp. 570, 572.

<sup>392</sup> I can trace no such person; there was a Julius Severus who was Governor of Bithynia under Hadrian, but he has left no writings; see Dion Cassius, LXIX. xiii-xiv.

<sup>393</sup> *Oriental Customs* (6<sup>th</sup> ed., London, 1822, 2 vols.), i. 61.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PROCEDURE OF SCRYING AND THE GENESIS OF VISIONS

#### § 1 EXPERIMENT AND FRAUD

There can be no great harm beyond the waste of time in scrying as an amusement or pastime, but that is an aspect of the subject with which I am not here concerned. If the scryer and his friends intend their experiences to be of experimental value they should write down during, or at worst immediately after, the sitting all the particulars of whatever of a pertinent character that occurred, whether the scry was successful or not. To this account should be added a description of the conditions under which the experiment was held, the time of starting, the length and vividness of the visions, the testimonies and verifications of those present or concerned, and all other details that complete the case, and the whole should then be sent from time to time to some recognised centre such as the Society for Psychical Research or to some appropriate individual.

Valuable results can sometimes be obtained by resort to professional scryers, but if this is done additional precautions should be taken. The majority of professional mediums are fraudulent mediums, but fraud in scrying not being difficult, precautions against deception are equally easy. One method of

fraudulent scrying that has been [103] observed consists in a false medium handing the inquirer a globe contained in a black box which is to be held in the hand and looked into. After a moment or two the visitor sees a face in the glass, and then has of course no difficulty in discovering a likeness to someone or other dear to him. This is effected by placing a small photograph at the bottom of the box under the sphere; the refractions of light in the translucent globe cause the picture to appear vague and indefinite in its outlines. Add to this a touch of self-suggestion and the trick is done.<sup>394</sup> Another mode of deception, and though one restricted to prosperous circles a not less dangerous one, is by the creation of atmosphere. “The inquirer, in a darkened room, surrounded by all those objects which act powerfully on a lively fancy, in perfect silence, except for the strains of a solemn music from time to time, and steeped in balsamic and narcotic odours, is shown the mirror, on which he is told to look earnestly, and he will see the absent friend or lover, and how they are occupied. He does so at first, and after a time sees a cloud on the mirror, which clears up, and exhibits the image on which the thoughts are bent. . . .”<sup>395</sup>

There are several other deceptions of a more direct and practical kind, but a little common sense is all that is required to avoid them. As a general rule persons who claim to be able to show the inquirer himself visions in the speculum should be avoided. Persons who do not make this claim but who ask questions about date of birth and so forth should be very carefully answered or, better, requested not to ask them. Such persons by long practice attain a remarkable skill in obtaining knowledge of the [104] inquirer’s habits and disposition by means of seemingly innocuous questions. Again, generally speaking, a genuine scryer is one who makes no claims to supernatural powers and who sets about the job of looking into the speculum without any air of mystery and without preliminary requests addressed to the inquirer.

<sup>394</sup> F. Podmore, *Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1902, 2 vols.), ii. 249-50.

<sup>395</sup> W. Gregory, *Animal Magnetism* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1896), p. 136.

## § 2 THE PROCEDURE OF SCRYING

Andrew Lang has thus described the procedure to be adopted in scrying: “It is best to go, alone, into a room, sit down with the back to the light, place the ball, at a just focus, in the lap on a dark dress, or a dark piece of cloth, try to exclude reflections, think of anything you please, and stare for say, five minutes, at the ball.”<sup>396</sup> Barbarous punctuation apart, this statement requires much qualification, for there is not agreement among scryers about a single one of the points touched upon. Very few scryers exercise their faculty alone, and if they did they would not only largely cut themselves off from one of the most fruitful sources of visions, telepathy, but their experiences would be scientifically useless, since even if it were thus possible to take notes, it would be impossible to accept as conclusive the testimony of a single person and that the person principally engaged in the matter. It may, however, be useful to scry in solitude while practising or developing the faculty.<sup>397</sup>

The question of light is a difficult one, about which it is impossible to lay down rules, for, as we shall see later, the very reflections in the speculum that enable some scryers [105] to see the visions are the chief obstacles to others. Myers writes: “Let the observer gaze, steadily but not fatiguingly, into some speculum, or other depth, so arranged as to return as little reflection as possible. A good example of what is meant will be a glass ball enclosed in a black shawl, or placed in the back part of a half-opened drawer; so arranged, in short, that the observer can gaze into it with as little distraction as may be from the reflection of his own face or of surrounding objects.”<sup>398</sup> Another authority recommends that when looked into the ball “should be sheltered from reflection, as it should be of a uniform tint, without any brilliant points. To obtain this result, it may be enclosed in a piece of dark foulard or velvet,

<sup>396</sup> “Magic Mirrors and Crystal Gazing,” *Monthly Review* (London, 1901), v. 127.

<sup>397</sup> Cp. F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality* (London, 1903, 2 vols.), i. 237.

<sup>398</sup> Cp. F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality* (London, 1903, 3 vols.), i. 237.

or held in the hollow of the hand, or even at the finger-tips. . . .”<sup>399</sup> Mrs Verrall records having tried scrying under “varying conditions of light, with the conclusion that a dim light is the most likely to result in the seeing of a picture. I have sometimes seen pictures in quite bright light, but never in absolute darkness.”<sup>400</sup> This indeed seems to be the general opinion,<sup>401</sup> but a few scryers like to look into the speculum in the dark. One writes: “We took the crystal into a somewhat dark room and placed it upon the sofa, and I placed my eyes close to the crystal ball, with a dark cloth over my head so that external objects could not be reflected in the crystal.”<sup>402</sup> And Miss A. says, “I either take the crystal into a dark corner of the room, or wrap [106] it up in black with only a little bit uncovered, or if it is small I hold it inside my hand. . . . I can see equally well in the dark.”<sup>403</sup> As Mrs Verrall says that she could sometimes scry in a bright light, it is interesting to note that the Freiin von Vay could only obtain results when seated under an artificial light, never in daylight.<sup>404</sup> Some scryers like to have the light behind their crystals, and one known to me places the crystal in broad daylight on a table without any protection at all.

There is more agreement about the distance at which the speculum should be held from the eyes. With the exception of the scryer quoted who held the crystal close to the eyes, it is agreed that the distance should be within the range of normal reading vision.<sup>405</sup> A valuable method of helping crystal vision without eye-strain is to look into and beyond the crystal, not at its surface.<sup>406</sup> How to gaze at the speculum is another much debated point, though the recommendation to look steadily without exertion or concentration cannot be bettered. As regards the length of time for

<sup>399</sup> J. Maxwell, *Metapsychical Phenomena* (London, 1905), p. 185.

<sup>400</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 473.

<sup>401</sup> Cp. A. Goodrich-Freer, *Essays in Psychological Research* (London, 1899), p. 107; P. Janet, *Néuroses et idées fixes* (Paris, 1898, 3 vols.), i. 411.

<sup>402</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1891—2), v. 7; cp. A. Lang, Introduction to N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905), p. xvi.

<sup>403</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, *op. cit.*, viii. 500.

<sup>404</sup> *Visionen im Wasserglase* (Budapest, 1877), p. 4.

<sup>405</sup> Cp. A. Lang, “Crystal-Gazing,” *E.R.E.*, iv. 351; J. Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>406</sup> J. Maxwell, *loc. cit.*; R. Shirley, “The Art of Crystal Gazing,” *Occult Review* (London, 1914), xix. 126.

which to look Lang is not so sound: his five minutes being certainly insufficient to discover whether any visions are likely to be forthcoming. Myers recommends that the scryer should look for ten minutes at a time,<sup>407</sup> while another writer advocates fifteen to twenty minutes;<sup>408</sup> but this again is a matter about which it is impossible to make rules, since the length of time different [107] persons can look at one object without strain varies. This indeed forms in itself the rule — that the gaze should not be prolonged when the eyes begin to feel fatigued. The state of mind of the scryer when looking into the speculum should be perfectly normal, without strain or concentration, without any attempt to make the mind a blank.

### § 3 THE GENESIS OF VISIONS

We now come to the beginning of the visions themselves. Most scryers discover their possession of the faculty accidentally. “In the course of my conversation with the percipient, Mrs D-----, regarding her various experiences, she happened to mention that, when a child, if she happened to look at the surface of a lake or body of water reflecting sunlight, she often saw the most beautiful scenes not in any way representing the objects about her . . . she both resented such experiments and utterly disbelieved that anything would result from them. She therefore felt very greatly surprised when distinct visions were produced by the crystal.”<sup>409</sup> Miss Goodrich-Freer discovered that she was able to see visions in the speculum when she was given, as a child, a glass ball in exchange for another object. She was told that she would see soldiers in the crystal, which she did.<sup>410</sup>

There is almost universal agreement except in matters of detail about the changes that seem to take place in the crystal before the

<sup>407</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality* (London, 1903, 2 vols.), i. 237.

<sup>408</sup> *Annals of Psychical Science* (London, 1905), i. 258.

<sup>409</sup> J. H. Hyslop, “Some Experiments in Crystal-Vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1896-7), xii. 259.

<sup>410</sup> *Essays in Psychical Research* (London, 1899), p. 105.



visions appear. Sometimes the ball seems to disappear altogether; Miss Angus writes, "... so far as I can judge, the moment the *vision* comes the *ball* seems to disappear, so it is difficult for me to say if my [108] pictures are actually seen in the crystal."<sup>411</sup> Another scryer stated that the speculum disappeared and she saw before her the scene she described.<sup>412</sup> Mrs Verrall says that her visions are not limited by the size of the crystal.<sup>413</sup> Maxwell writes: "Most people see the image in the crystal, but believe they see it life-size. The dimension of the crystal has no influence on the apparent dimension of the image. . . ."<sup>414</sup> On the other hand, Miss Goodrich-Freer's pictures always seemed to fit into the crystal, or to be seen within the bounds of any larger speculum."<sup>415</sup> It is also interesting to note at this point that scryers can sometimes look away from the speculum and still find the picture there when they look back, though Miss A. found that if she moved the crystal she shook the pictures out of it.<sup>416</sup> "Another fact of considerable interest in the case is that sometimes the vision appears on the surface of the crystal and sometimes at the centre of it, and gradually develops into clearness. And again, it will sometimes originate in this way at the centre and be transferred to the surface."<sup>417</sup>

More generally, however, than these phenomena the scryer sees "a kind of mist or a milky obscurity cover the ball, which then seems to become clear and black. . . ."<sup>418</sup> [109] Sir Walter Scott calls it a shifting of light and darkness.<sup>419</sup> Adelma von Vay says that when she looked into her glass of water she used first to see little cloudlets, points, spots, then it seemed to billow, until images were formed.<sup>420</sup> Maxwell calls this appearance an opalescent, milky tint,

<sup>411</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1897-8), viii. 223-4; cp. A. Lang, "Crystal-Gazing," *E.R.E.*, iv. 351.

<sup>412</sup> M. Prince, "An Experimental Study of Vision," *Brain* (London, 1898), xxi. 533.

<sup>413</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, "The Subliminal Consciousness," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 476.

<sup>414</sup> J. Maxwell, *op. cit.*, p. 195; cp. F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality*, i. 239. Cp. E. Osty, *Supernormal Faculties in Man* (London, 1923), p. 141.

<sup>415</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, "The Subliminal Consciousness," viii. 487.

<sup>416</sup> In *ibid.*, viii. 500.

<sup>417</sup> J. H. Hyslop, *op. cit.*, xii. 259. Cp. E. S. Bagger, *Psycho-Graphology* (London, 1924), pp. 26, 123.

<sup>418</sup> A. Lang, "Crystal-Gazing," *E.R.E.*, iv. 351.

<sup>419</sup> *Aunt Margaret's Mirror*, in *Prose Works* (Paris, 1834, 8 vols.), viii. 904.

<sup>420</sup> *Studien über die Geisterwelt* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Leipzig, 1874), p. 85.

and adds, “I know a sensitive — an intelligent and well-educated lady — who compares this impression to that produced on the eye by rising mists and fleeting clouds. For her, the milky tint in the crystal is in movement. It breaks away like a cloud or mist, to disclose the hallucinatory image completely formed. To another sensitive the cloud appears first of all immobile, and then becomes condensed into grey forms, which gradually become coloured and mobile. . . .”<sup>421</sup>

Another student, after a series of scientific experiments with scryers, wrote: “Usually some interval elapses before any effect is produced. In a few cases a phantasm was seen upon the first glance into the medium; more commonly one must wait from five seconds to five minutes. In one case the image appeared after a lapse of twenty minutes. The first symptoms of a response on the part of the central visual mechanism to the exciting stimulus are frequently found in the appearance of visual sensations of a rather indeterminate character. The medium becomes opaque, being apparently filled with smoky or milky masses; sometimes small masses of white, like minute clouds, drift rapidly through it. At other times these prodromal phenomena take the form of flushes of colour — red, blue, or yellow. More seldom yet, the medium seems to become brilliantly illuminated just before the phantasm [110] emerges. The cloud-masses take definite shape and then become coloured, or the vague blur or spot becomes a nucleus upon which the image develops. One of my subjects, a young girl who visualised well, described it in naive fashion: ‘You see,’ said she, ‘the grey spot seems to sink down to the bottom of the glass and turns and whirls about slowly; then, of course, it has to become something.’”<sup>422</sup>

Each of the phenomena described in this interesting account is well authenticated. A fourteenth-century Arabic writer says:

<sup>421</sup> J. Maxwell, *Metapsychical Phenomena* (London, 1905), p. 194.

<sup>422</sup> 29. W. R. Newbold, “Experimental Induction of Automatic Processes,” *The Psychological Review* (New York, 1895), ii. 350. See also F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality*, i. 237; W. T. Stead, *Real Ghost Stories* (London, 1897), p. 66, and “The Mystery of the Crystal,” *Borderland* (London, 1894), i. 114; G. A. T., “A Record of Experiences,” *Proc. Amer. S.P.R.* (New York, 1907), i. 360; “The Case of Miss Nancy Sinclair,” *Journ. S.P.R.* (1921-2), xx. 317; P. Janet, *op. cit.*, i. 411-2.

“Those who gaze at diaphanous bodies, such as mirrors, basins filled with water, and liquids . . . belong to the category of diviners. But, because of the radical imperfection of their nature, they occupy an inferior grade in that category. To remove the veil of the senses, the genuine diviner does not employ great efforts; as for the others they try to achieve their ends in seeking to concentrate in a single sense all their perceptions. As sight is the noblest sense, they give it preference, and fixing their gaze on an object with a level surface, they regard it with attention until they perceive the thing that they wish to announce. Some people believe that the image so perceived appears on the surface of the mirror, but they are mistaken. The diviner looks fixedly at the surface until it disappears and a fog-like curtain interposes itself between his eyes and the mirror. On this curtain the shapes that he desires to see form [111] themselves. . . .”<sup>423</sup> This early account has been reaffirmed by practically every scryer since.

As for the prodromal colours spoken of, Joire says, “If the experiment is to give any result, he [the scryer] will first see the mirror assume a different tinge. It then seems to become turgid, forming red or blue clouds, which whirl like smoke, and, finally, pictures are formed.”<sup>424</sup> Sometimes a light appears in the crystal instead of clouds or colours. An example of the accuracy of Dee’s assistant and scryer, Kelly, may well be cited here: “E. K. In the midst of the Stone seemeth to stand, a little round thing like a spark of fire, and it increaseth, and seemeth to be as bigge as a Globe of 20 inches Diameter, or thereabout.”<sup>425</sup> One of the earliest of modern writers on scrying has it that before visions in the crystal appear it is said to “become exceedingly bright, as if it were illuminated by an effulgence pervading its interior, in the midst of which the vision appears.”<sup>426</sup> Mayo claims that highly sensitive

<sup>423</sup> ‘Abd al-Rahman ibn Muhammad ibn Khaldún, “Prolégomènes Historiques,” *Notices et Extraits des Manuscrits de la Bibliothèque Impériale* (Paris, 1787, etc., in progress), xix. 221.

<sup>424</sup> *Psychical and Supernormal Phenomena* (London, 1916), p. 157.

<sup>425</sup> J. Dee, *A True and Faithful Relation of What passed for many Yeers Between Dr John Dee . . . and Some Spirits*, ed. by Meric Casaubon (London, 1659), p. 445 (2<sup>nd</sup> pagination).

<sup>426</sup> “Gamma,” “On the Ancient Magic Crystal, and its probable Connexion with Mesmerism,” *The Zoist* (London, 1849), vii. 69.

subjects see flames issuing from the poles of magnets and crystals.<sup>427</sup> Lang records that an acquaintance of his tried to look into the ball in darkness. “He said that it seemed to become of a fiery quality, glowing bright, but in these conditions he saw no pictures in the glow.”<sup>428</sup> Miss A. described her experience as follows: “After a minute or two I seem to [112] see a very bright light in it, which disappears after a few seconds, and then the surface appears cloudy and thick. This mist clears away. . . . They only last for a few seconds or sometimes minutes, and between each new picture I see the same light and mist.”<sup>429</sup> Miss Coad, another scryer, writes, “I was looking into the ball by firelight hoping to see a favourite collie dog that had died a year previously. The ball turned all black at first, then a light spot appeared in the centre and gradually spread all over the ball. In the centre of this was a true portrait of the dog, — perfectly life-like.”<sup>430</sup>

But this fiery part of the subject cannot be concluded better than with the following quotation: “I soon see a pale golden fire, seemingly uniting, frequently cut with flashes of electric or magnetic light. In the soft, pale, golden light there appears a spot of deep yellow gold moving about, sometimes in a circle. After watching it for some time it resolves itself into something like an eye, with a dark, deep blue pupil; then with a ring of gold around the eye centre; then into a ring of lighter blue, resembling an eye. I first saw this object two or three weeks after purchasing the mirror. The first object I saw at all was in the evening, when I was sitting with back towards the bright lamplight. I had sat about twenty minutes, impatient and discouraged at seeing nothing but a black mirror, when suddenly the appearance described above showed itself near the left-hand lower corner of the disc, slowly passing upwards two-thirds of the way towards the right-hand upper corner, when it suddenly disappeared. Its size is that of a silver

---

<sup>427</sup> H. Mayo, *Letters on the Truths contained in Popular Superstitions* (Frankfort o.M., 1849), p. 58.

<sup>428</sup> Introduction to N. W. Thomas, *op. cit.*, p. xvi.

<sup>429</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii. 500.

<sup>430</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1901-2), x. 135.

dime.”<sup>431</sup> The [113] writer goes on to speak of seeing magnificent supernal realities.

The pictures in the speculum sometimes pass continuously like a cinematographic film; sometimes one picture succeeds another as with a magic lantern; sometimes unrelated pictures appear after intervals. A single picture lasts sometimes only a moment, sometimes longer. One writer records a picture which remained in the speculum for twenty minutes.<sup>432</sup>

#### § 4 EFFECT OF SCRYING ON THE HEALTH

It has been said that scrying is likely to have detrimental effects on the health of the scryer. Dismissing Dr Janet’s thoroughly exploded idea that all scryers are neurotics,<sup>433</sup> it remains true that some scryers have complained of indisposition during or after scrying. One scryer “felt so great an oppression of giddiness and alarm that he immediately replaced the crystal, and it was a considerable time before he could throw off the unpleasant sensation it had produced.”<sup>434</sup> One writer is of the opinion that the “influence of the experiments is likely to be bad on the mental or bodily health.”<sup>435</sup> Another scryer discontinued the practice of scrying on account of its being accompanied by a painful sensation of pressure on the forehead.<sup>436</sup>

Against these isolated instances must be placed the categorical assertions of the most experienced scryers and [114] experimenters. Mr Podmore writes that there is nothing in the experience of the many persons who have tried crystal-gazing at the instance of the

<sup>431</sup> Randolph, *Seership*, p. 74; thus cited and quoted by N. W. Thomas, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-6.

<sup>432</sup> P. Joire, *op. cit.*, p. 165.

<sup>433</sup> As expounded in *Névroses et idées fixes* (Paris, 1898, 2 vols.), ii. 410, *sqq.*, and exploded by A. Lang, *The Making of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1900), Appendix C.

<sup>434</sup> F. Hockley, “On the Ancient Magic Crystal, and its Connexion with Mesmerism,” *The Zoist* (London, 1849), vii. 265.

<sup>435</sup> F. A. Floyer, *Journ. S.P.R.* (1889-90), iv. 83-4.

<sup>436</sup> D. Rogers, in A. Goodrich-Freer, “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 520*n*.

Society for Psychical Research to indicate risk of injury to health.<sup>437</sup> Myers says that the hallucinations induced by the speculum “appear to be absolutely harmless. I at least know of no kind of injury resulting from them. . . .”<sup>438</sup> Some students do not even experiment with their scryers when these feel indisposed;<sup>439</sup> indeed, in the case of one scryer her power entirely left her when she was ill.<sup>440</sup> For my own part I can only say that I have personally known and questioned some ten or twelve men and women of all degrees who scryed, not one of whom ever made any suggestion that scrying disturbed the health.

But more important than these expressions of opinion are the statements of scryers themselves: three of the most successful of these have made such statements. Miss Goodrich-Freer says, “In view of certain statements which are current as to the physical conditions of crystal-gazing, I wish to say, as emphatically as possible, that in my own case these experiments are neither the cause nor the effect of any morbid condition. I can say positively, from frequent experience, that to attempt experiments when mind and body are not entirely at ease is absolutely waste of time. ... I can with equal certainty disclaim, for myself, the allegation that success in inducing hallucinations [115] of this kind is due in any way to an *état maladif*. The four years during which I have carried on experiments in crystal-gazing have been among the healthiest of my life.”<sup>441</sup> One could hardly be more precise; Mrs Verrall says, “... my health is usually good, and was good during the time of my experiments in crystal-gazing — I felt no fatigue, nor any evil or unpleasant result from the experiment.”<sup>442</sup> And, which is perhaps most conclusive of all, Miss A. writes, “I do not know if my health

---

<sup>437</sup> *Apparitions and Thought-Transference* (Contemporary Science Series, new ed., London, 1915), p. 191n. See also *id.*, *Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1902, 2 vols.), ii. 327; N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1903), p. 159.

<sup>438</sup> *Human Personality*, i. 239.

<sup>439</sup> P. Joire, “Some Cases of Crystal Vision,” *Annals of Psychical Science* (London, 1908), vii. 524.

<sup>440</sup> F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii. 472-3.

<sup>441</sup> F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii. 484.

<sup>442</sup> In *ibid.*, viii. 478.

affects the crystal-seeing; I am so seldom ill that I have not tried.<sup>443</sup>

---

<sup>443</sup> In *ibid.*, viii. 499.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE MECHANISM OF SCRYING

#### § 1 NORMAL

We have now to consider the mechanism by which the visions in the scryer's consciousness or subconsciousness are externalised into the speculum. The divergence of opinion on this point is remarkable. "One has a notion that the born scryer is a pallid, anæmic girl, with large, mysterious eyes, hollow cheeks, untidy hair, and a strong aversion to exercise in the open air. But the scryers whom I know are healthy, jolly people, young, middle-aged, or more than middle-aged." So writes Lang, and again, for he was a great believer in sport as a hall-mark of character and respectability, "In my own experience the subjects have been healthy British subjects, often vigorous athletes, sportsmen and sportswomen, golfers, tennis players, bicyclists, and salmon fishers. . . . Hypnotism is not the explanation. I never studied a crystal-gazer who was not wide awake and in the full possession of all of his or her normal faculties."<sup>444</sup> Myers, though more tolerant, was almost as emphatic. At one place he writes: "I know [117] of no real reason whatever for supposing that the power of seeing these visions is commoner in hysterical than in normal patients. . . ."<sup>445</sup>

<sup>444</sup> "Magic Mirrors and Crystal Gazing," *Monthly Review* (London, 1901), v. 119, 122; see also the same writer in *Journ. S.P.R.* (1897-8), viii. 201; and in any of his other writings on the subject.

<sup>445</sup> "Dr Morton Prince's 'Experimental Study of Vision,'" *Proc. S.P.R.* (1898-9), xiv. 371.



Before this he had written, “It is natural at first to suppose that the crystal-seers are slightly self-hypnotised by the steady gaze; and in some instances this is probably the fact. But in some of the best-marked cases of crystal-visions which I have seen there is no indication whatever of modification of the normal waking state. Crystal-vision in my view is not a branch of hypnotism. . . .”<sup>446</sup> An early writer is quite definite that when seeing visions the scryer remained “in a perfectly normal condition.”<sup>447</sup> Richet is of the opinion that crystal-vision does not produce hypnosis,<sup>448</sup> and Podmore declares that these visions take place outside of the hypnotic trance.<sup>449</sup> Miss A. says, “... I am in a perfectly normal condition when I look; not sleepy, nor in a trance, nor unconscious of my surroundings.”<sup>450</sup> I have myself never observed in watching a scryer during his visions anything more than the ordinary abstractedness of a person watching something with care so as not to overlook any detail. Morton Prince puts it in this way: “To me, as I observed her, she appeared like one who, at the theatre, was completely absorbed by the play, and in that sense was unconscious of her surroundings, but not at all in a trance state.”<sup>451</sup>

[118]

## § 2 SEMI-HYPNOTIC AND HYPNOTIC

There is an equally formidable array of authorities who consider that crystal-vision takes place only in a hypnotic condition, and there is indeed a good deal to be said on behalf of that position. Podmore himself, in an earlier work than that last quoted, was inclined to think that scrying visions are due to self-suggestion plus induced hypnosis,<sup>452</sup> and elsewhere he wrote that the images in the speculum were seen by the scryer in a “state of

<sup>446</sup> “The Subliminal Consciousness,” vii. 319; cp. *Human Personality*, i. 238.

<sup>447</sup> *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 286.

<sup>448</sup> *Traité de Métapsychique* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, 1923), p. 259.

<sup>449</sup> *The Naturalisation of the Supernatural* (London, 1908), p. 62.

<sup>450</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii. 500.

<sup>451</sup> “An Experimental Study of Vision,” *Brain* (London, 1898), xxi. 533.

<sup>452</sup> *Apparitions and Thought-Transference* (Contemporary Science Series, London, 1894), pp. 190-1.

ecstasy or reverie” induced by the speculum.<sup>453</sup> Dr Janet, who, as has been seen, considers that all scryers are neurotics, thinks that visions are seen in the crystal by such persons as are predisposed to dreaming, while in a state of semi-hypnosis.<sup>454</sup> Sir Oliver Lodge says that a slight amount of self-hypnosis is probable in scrying.<sup>455</sup> Sir William Barrett, in discussing Miss Goodrich-Freer’s experiences, “... ventured to think . . . that crystal-gazing was one form of incipient self-induced hypnotism.”<sup>456</sup> But he is not always so clear, for a good many years later he compared scrying hallucinations to those “in dream pictures or in hypnotic trance. . . . Thus the crystal-gazer, if evidence be worth anything, is not infrequently clairvoyant without being entranced.”<sup>457</sup>

All the writers cited so far believe that scrying visions are obtained in a state of incipient or semi-hypnosis. Other writers, however, lean towards belief in complete hypnosis or in some kindred state. Thus one writer has it that “the indispensable condition for the bringing up of [119] unknown notions into the consciousness appears to be a state of sudden sleep, which in its mildest form is only a distraction, but which can pass imperceptibly into a more or less profound state akin to hypnosis.”<sup>458</sup> Another writer, apparently describing an Eastern ceremony, says, “On a table covered with a white cloth is placed an ordinary bottle filled with water, behind which burns a small lamp; someone then sits down on a chair at several paces distance, and directs his eyes on the luminous point; at the end of a few minutes a heaviness is felt in the eyelids, little by little they lower themselves, and a sleep arrives, during which the beating of the heart accelerates . . . the person is plunged in a state of complete anesthesia.”<sup>459</sup> The writer quoting this passage describes this

<sup>453</sup> *Modern Spiritualism* (London, 1912, 2 vols.), ii, 294—5.

<sup>454</sup> *Néuroses et idées fixes* (Paris, 1898, 2 vols.), i, 420—1.

<sup>455</sup> *The Survival of Man* (London, 1909), p. 92.

<sup>456</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1889-90), iv, 83.

<sup>457</sup> *Psychical Research* (Home University Library, London, 1911), p. 141.

<sup>458</sup> A. Lehmann, *Aberglaube und Zauberei von den ältesten Zeiten an bis in die Gegenwart* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Stuttgart, 1908), pp. 537-8.

<sup>459</sup> Dr Miguérez, in L. Godard, *Description et Histoire du Maroc* (Paris, 1860), p. 240.

performance as a method of producing artificial catalepsy. An early anonymous writer said, “It is only after gazing until the stage of hypnosis in which hallucinations can be produced is reached that visions occur.”<sup>460</sup> Hyslop found that one of the ladies with whom he experimented “experienced a strong tendency to go into a sleep or trance when she looked into the crystal.”<sup>461</sup>

### § 3 POINTS DE REPÈRE

Another theory is that the reflections and the points of light in the crystal serve to fix the attention of the scryer and to act as starting-point for the pictures. “Miss Angus” describes thus the genesis of her visions: “After [120] focussing my eye for some time on a particular spot of light in the ball, my mind becomes aware that it may expect to see a vision. . . .”<sup>462</sup> Mrs Verrall, one of the best scryers who experimented for the Society for Psychical Research, attributes almost the entirety of her visions in the speculum to these *points de repère*.<sup>463</sup>

But these scryers are almost isolated cases; practically all other scryers and students are agreed that *points de repère* are a negligible factor in the visions. Mr Kunz, the American authority on precious stones, has, however, exaggerated this theory rather fantastically. He writes, “The points of light reflected from the polished surface (*points de repère*) serve to attract the attention of the gazer until, gradually, the optic nerve becomes so fatigued that it finally ceases to transmit to the sensorium the impressions made from without and begins to respond to the reflex actions proceeding from the brain of the gazer. In this way the impression received from within is apparently projected and seems to come from without. It is easy to understand that the results must vary

<sup>460</sup> *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 286.

<sup>461</sup> *Enigmas of Psychical Research* (London, 1906), p. 56. See also A. Moll, *Hypnotism* (London, 1909), p. 1; E. Bälz, “Die sogenannten magischen Spiegel und ihr Gebrauch,” *Archiv für die Anthropologie* (Braunschweig, 1904), II. i. 45.

<sup>462</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1897-8), viii. 223-4.

<sup>463</sup> See e.g., *Proc. S.P.R.* (1889-90), vi. 485; (1892), viii. 473.

according to the idiosyncrasies of the various scryers: for everything depends on the sensitiveness of the optic nerve. In many cases the effect of prolonged gazing upon the brilliant surface will simply produce a loss of sight; the optic nerve will be temporarily paralysed and will as little respond to stimulation from within as from without; in other cases, however, the nerve will only be deadened as regards external impressions, while retaining sufficient activity to react against a stimulus from the brain centres.”<sup>464</sup> Well, no doubt this means something.

[121] *Points de repère* can be used in two ways. Anybody can take a shiny object and so manipulate it that cloudy images seem to appear in it, much in the same way as they do under parallel circumstances in the pattern of a wall-paper or on a ceiling. This is not scrying, for actual pictures do not appear. The other way is to use the *points de repère* to fix the attention and to induce a hypnoid condition, this being purely a psychic state, having nothing to do, except in the most indirect way, with the optic nerve.

#### § 4 CONCLUSION

As can readily be seen, the question is not whether scrying is possible in a hypnotic condition, which is undeniable,<sup>465</sup> but whether scrying is only possible in such a condition. The answer to this question and the solution of the apparently contradictory opinions which have been cited are in reality easy. Andrew Lang never encountered a case of hypnotic crystal vision because he did not experiment with such people as were of a nature likely to be easily thrown into a hypnotic condition to a visible extent. Dr Janet only met with neurotic scryers because his experience was limited to hospital neurotics. (Vision by means of *points de repère* can be left on one side for purposes of synthesis, for, even if these play an

<sup>464</sup> G. F. Kunz, *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones* (Philadelphia, 1913), pp. 176-7.

<sup>465</sup> See e.g., *Journ. S.P.R.* (1907-8), xiii. 298, *sqq.*, 333, *sqq.*, xiv. 151, *sqq.*, 321, *sqq.*; M. Perty, *Die mystischen Erscheinungen der menschlichen Natur* (Leipzig, 1861).

important part in scrying, they would come under the general heading of hypnotic visions. And it must be remembered that most scryers make great efforts to exclude reflections.) The truth is, as a person of wider experience and knowledge can readily perceive, that the speculum serves the double purpose of “bringing the mind into the ‘hypnoid’ semi-conscious [122] condition, closely similar to the condition preceding or following sleep,” and of providing “a clear field for the hallucinatory visual images.”<sup>466</sup> For obviously all the different degrees of consciousness from absolute normality to profound hypnosis are suitable for crystal visions according to the constitution and disposition of the scryer. To this general rule may be added another to the effect that, sufficiently frequently to justify us in calling the condition an average law, the scryer when seeing visions is in a slightly hypnotic state suitable for sensory hallucinations and induced by the crystal itself or by the *points de repère* in it, or by both.

---

<sup>466</sup> A. G. Tansley, *The New Psychology* (7<sup>th</sup> impression, London, 1923), pp. 153-4, after H. Silberer, “Lekanomantische Versuche,” and “Zur Charakteristik des Ickanomantischen Schauens,” *Zentralblatt für Psychoanalyse* (1912), i-ii., which I have not been able to see. Cp. W. S. Walsh, *The Psychology of Dreams* (London, 1920), pp. 178-90. See also H. Carrington and W. H. Bates, “Recent Researches in Crystal Vision and Crystal Gazing,” in H. Carrington, *Modern Psychological Phenomena* (London, 1919), pp. 275, *sqq.*

## CHAPTER X

### MISCELLANEOUS PHENOMENA OF SCRYING

#### § 1 COLLECTIVE SCRYING

Before considering the rationale of scrying it is necessary to pass briefly in review certain miscellaneous phenomena of great interest and importance. It is natural in the present fragmentary state of our knowledge concerning the rationale of psychic processes that we should be unable to fit into any given scheme all the phenomena that have been observed. This holds good of scrying, nor indeed would I care to include in any section of my own classification certain of these phenomena.

What is perhaps the most interesting of these miscellaneous phenomena can be best described as collective scrying, coming under the general head of simultaneous hallucination. In such a case two or more persons simultaneously see approximately the same vision in the speculum. The qualification is necessary, for in none of the best-attested and detailed instances of such visions did the scryers see precisely the same vision. This forms the most puzzling of the various aspects of this puzzling matter.

One case of such collective vision took place in connection with the famous medium Home (almost the only [124] medium who never cheated), and is separately recorded by two eye-witnesses. The Master of Lindsay says, "Another time ... I saw a crystal ball,

placed on Mr Home's head, emit flashes of coloured light, following the order of the spectrum. The crystal was spherical, so that it could not have given prismatic colours. After this it changed, and we all saw a view of the sea, as if we were looking down at it from the top of a high cliff. It seemed to be the evening as the sun was setting like a globe of fire, lighting up a broad path over the little waves. The moon was faintly visible in the north, and as the sun set her power increased. We saw also a few stars; and suddenly the whole thing vanished, like shutting the slide of a magic lantern; and the crystal was dead. This whole appearance lasted about ten minutes, and pleased us very much, both on account of the curious nature of the vision, if it may be called such, and from the really beautiful effects of light, etc., that we had seen. There were two candles and a bright fire burning in the room."<sup>467</sup>

Another eye-witness, J. Hawkins Simpson, describes the vision as "a large landscape view, as carried in my brain, was made perfectly visible in the spherical crystal to everyone in a dark [?] room, although the individuals composing the party occupied opposite places to each other, and no one, except Mr Home, who held the crystal, was within three feet of the crystal. . . ."<sup>468</sup>

Another instance is provided by Miss Goodrich-Freer and a friend, who, having visited the Tudor Exhibition,<sup>469</sup> looked into a crystal supposed to be Dr Dee's which was exhibited there, and saw in it an interesting scene. "We [125] had at home a certain keyed instrument, called by courtesy 'musical,' of the type special to blind beggars. In consequence of some earlier investigations into its internal economy it was now voiceless, and was practically utilised as a table to hold books. In the crystal we both saw the following scene: C. and H. were joint-owners of this instrument, and we saw them sitting at opposite sides of the fireplace in the room where it was kept, but while I, in my picture, so to speak, faced the right, my friend faced the left. Neither of us knew that H.

<sup>467</sup> In London Dialectical Society, *Report on Spiritualism* (London, 1871), pp. 206-7.

<sup>468</sup> In I. W. Heysinger, *Spirit and Matter before the Bar of Modern Science* (London, 1910), pp. 250-1.

<sup>469</sup> See p. 23 above.

was in the house, nor likely to be, as he was living some few miles distant from home, nor were we prepared for what followed. Both C. and H. rose and went to the instrument, which was open, and H. sat down and began to play ! On our return home we discovered that H. had, in fact, come in, that he had mended the organ, and that he was exhibiting his success to C. by playing upon it at that very hour.”<sup>470</sup>

Another example is related by Mrs B. H. Grieve: “On 24<sup>th</sup> June C. and myself were reading anatomy together. C. took the crystal ball and I looked over her shoulder — both of us wondering whether we should see the same thing. At the same moment the ball darkened, a white cloud came over the whole, and three pyramids appeared, a large one in front, the other two behind. Then a train of camels, some with riders, others being led, passed from left to right and disappeared behind the large pyramid. The vision lasted about one minute and vanished simultaneously for both of us. We each wrote down as the things appeared, so as to be accurate.” This account is verified by Miss Catherine Coad (the C. of the story) and testified to by Andrew Lang.<sup>471</sup>

[126] The last example of these collective visions to be quoted is the more interesting as one of the persons who saw the image did so almost against her will, and as the two persons who had the collective visions employed each his own speculum. Andrew Lang had been discussing scrying with some friends and had been rather emphatic in his assertions.” My tone irritated the ladies, and as I believed in ‘scrying,’ *they* declared that ‘scrys’ were ‘only reflections in the glass.’ I then encouraged an experiment. I would bring two glass balls, and introduce Mr Balfour. I brought in Mr Balfour, and one of the ladies ‘scryed’ with her back to the window. Mr Balfour was stationed at the other end of the room, beside the door. Both scryers indicated that they had ‘seen.’ I took Mr Balfour out of the room, along a passage, beyond earshot. He had seen an old woman, seated at a table. We returned to the

<sup>470</sup> *Essays in Psychological Research* (London, 1899), pp. 127-8.

<sup>471</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1901-3), x, 135; cp. *Proc. S.P.R.* (1907-9), xxi, 467.



drawing-room, and asked the lady what *she* had seen. She also had seen an old woman, but standing up. There was no old woman in the room to be reflected, and the reflections of the two opposite ends of the room were not likely to coincide in being construable into an old woman. . . .”<sup>472</sup>

## § 2 SCRYING AND AUTOMATIC WRITING

Other unclassifiable cases of scrying are those in which the scryer at the same time sees visions in the crystal and writes automatically, the visions and scripts being mutually related and sometimes mutually explanatory. The scryer Adelma von Vay does not furnish a perfect example of this phenomenon, for in her case the automatic writing [127] followed the vision, explaining the symbols in the latter — a pretty play of the subconscious.<sup>473</sup> Here is an instance given by Mrs Verrall: “... I had been trying to obtain automatic writing while looking in the crystal. I was also wondering who had put a pair of lost scissors in a very conspicuous place, where I had just found them. I saw a name written, and found that my right hand had written the same name: it was a name likely to occur to me.”<sup>474</sup>

## §3 SCRYING AND HALLUCINATORY AUDITION

Simultaneous hallucination of vision and another sense has been recorded principally in relation with audition. Sometimes this occurs when the scryer simply imagines he hears a voice, that is to say, the auditory hallucination is sometimes spontaneous. Thus Mrs Thompson wrote to Myers, in a letter dated the 8<sup>th</sup> of November 1898: “About 11.15 this morning I heard a little voice

<sup>472</sup> *Introduction* to N. W. Thomas, *Crystal Gazing* (London, 1905), p. xxxiii. See also A. Lang, “Crystal-Gazing,” *E.R.E.*, v. 353; *Journ. S.P.R.* (1905-6), xii. 17, *sqq.*; *Proc. S.P.R.* (1907-9), xxi. 463, *sqq.*

<sup>473</sup> *Visionen im Wasserglase* (Budapest, 1877), *passim*; see p. 157 below.

<sup>474</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii. 475. See also P. Janet, *Néuroses et idées fixes* (Paris, 1898, 2 vols.), ii. 340.

tell me to look in the crystal. I say a little voice, but I could better describe it as a very weak adult voice, which was quite strange to me; and as I was very busy sewing, I must say I rather resented the suggestion of spending my time crystal-gazing. The voice insisted — at least, I may say, commanded me. It said: ‘Put away that work and take for my friend a message.’ I did so, and taking up the crystal I saw perfectly the following . . .”<sup>475</sup> With the vision we are not here concerned.

[128] A parallel phenomenon is a case in which the hallucinatory audition was experimental. It is related by Mrs Salis and dated the 10th of March 1918: “My friend, Miss Taylor, who has been able for some years to see visions in the crystal, which are often veridical. She always regretted not being able to hear what the ‘vision people’ were saying, and I decided to try an experiment suggested by a French writer and induce clairaudience by using a shell. I first induced a slight hypnotic trance and suggested verbally that she would be able to hear. I then woke her and told her to look in the crystal. The first vision that appeared was the sitting-room in the house of Mr T. B., a friend of hers who[m] I have never seen. He was there with his brother and sister-in-law, and the room was minutely described. It was evening, and the gas lighted, and she saw the door open and a man came in. At this moment I said, ‘Place the shell to your ear.’ She did so, and to her delight she heard the newcomer exclaim, ‘There is good news tonight, we have taken another village.’ They then proceeded to talk about Mr T. B. being called up and what arrangements he would make. Afterwards a maid came in with a tray of sandwiches and whisky and soda, and the vision then faded. Four days afterwards, Miss Taylor went to see the B.’s, and said, ‘I can tell you what you were doing on Saturday evening,’ and to their great astonishment did so, every detail being correct. I may add that the expression ‘we have taken another village’ appeared as a headline in the evening paper, but neither Miss Taylor nor I had seen it. I have

<sup>475</sup> In J. G. Piddington, “On the Phenomena displayed in Mrs Thompson’s Trance,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1903-4), xviii. 113. See also P. Joire, *Psychical and Supernormal Phenomena* (London, 1916), p. 157.

never seen the B.'s nor the house in question. This occurred in the early spring of 1917." The scryer testifies to the accuracy of this statement, but Mr and Mrs B. have refused to do so.<sup>476</sup> [129]

#### § 4 SCRYING AND HALLUCINATORY TASTE

There is nothing to be added here to what has been said above about these dual phenomena. So far as I know only one case of tasting an object seen in the crystal is on record. In this case the scryer seemed to taste a biscuit which a person in the crystal was eating. Even this instance, however, is not perfectly clear.<sup>477</sup>

#### § 5 SCRYING AND RAPS

Here is a case of raps occurring in connection with scrying and other phenomena; the whole forms a very complicated affair. I transcribe it literally from Myers: "The next case which I shall give is a curious one as involving (1) raps, (2) a crystal-vision, (3) an apparition seen by two persons, viz., Miss A. herself and Mr Harry de Windt, well known as a traveller in Russia. Unfortunately no notes were taken, but I heard of the incident a few weeks afterwards from Lady Brooke, Mr C. D., Miss A., and Mrs A. (all present at the time), and a letter from Mr de Windt confirms two of the main points. In September 1892, on the occasion of the first meeting of Mr de Windt and Miss A., the latter wrote the word Doi-showalinsky, which at first was thought to be a sentence, but turned out to be a name well known to Mr de Windt. On the same day a face appeared near Mr C. D. which was clearly seen by Miss A. and Mr de Windt, and recognised by the latter, as stated in a letter to me, dated 5<sup>th</sup> October 1892: 'I can only tell you that I distinctly saw the face of an exile I am acquainted with, one Dombrowski, who is (or was) located at Tomsk, in Western

<sup>476</sup> *Journ. S.P.R.* (1917-8), xviii. 191-2.

<sup>477</sup> "The Case of Miss Nancy Sinclair," *Journ. S.P.R.* (1922-3), xx. 317.

Siberia. A message [130] was also sent me' [from a Russian source; but Mr de Windt explains the inexpediency of printing further particulars of this]. Miss A., on being afterwards shown a photograph of Dombrowski (not, however mixed with other photographs as it should have been), recognised it, but said the face as seen by her looked older and more worn; in which Mr de Windt concurred. It is not known whether Dombrowski is dead or alive. On the same day Miss A., looking into the crystal, saw a small man with bright red hair and red face, a big stick, a long petticoat, and a fur cap, walking in front of a little hut. Mr de Windt recognised the figure as resembling a hillman set to watch an isolated prisoner. These stunted hillmen dye their hair with red clay. A few days later (September 15<sup>th</sup>, 1892) a message was given by raps to Lady Brooke (the Ranée): 'Tell your brother (Mr de Windt) that Shiskine is the man to help him.' Neither Miss A. nor Mr de Windt had ever consciously heard of Shiskine, but in the *St James's Gazette* of September 24<sup>th</sup> they observed that M. Shiskine had received a certain high appointment, which explained the message. His appointment had also been mentioned in *The Times* of August 31<sup>st</sup>.<sup>478</sup>

## § 6 SCRYING AND HAUNTINGS

In the last-quoted experience occurs an apparition as part of the complete case. This leads us to another set of phenomena in which scrying occurs in connection with apparitions or hauntings. Unfortunately both the important stories in which occur such phenomena are far too [131] long to quote. It will have to be sufficient to note that in one of them a girl sees in a glass of water the person who is supposed to have bewitched a house,<sup>479</sup> while in

<sup>478</sup> "The Subliminal Consciousness," ix. 82-3. See also G. A. T., "A Record of Experiences," *Proc. Amer. S.P.R.* (1907), i. 254, *sqq.*; H. Lambert, "A Record of Experiments," *ibid.* (1908), ii. 323, 423-6.

<sup>479</sup> J. Grasset, "The History of a Haunted House," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1904), xviii. 474; an abbreviated trans. from *Le Spiritisme devant la Science* (new ed., Montpellier and Paris, 1904), pp. 11-69, which was reprinted from *Leçons de clinique médicale* (4<sup>th</sup> series, Montpellier and Paris, 1903), pp. 379-414.

the other a girl sees in a crystal the woman who is haunting the place.<sup>480</sup>

## § 7 SCRYING AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY

Another, and not the least interesting of these rare phenomena, is the case of a girl with four personalities. One of the personalities scrys and sees certain visions; the subject is then hypnotised into one or other of the remaining personalities, and can thus sometimes explain or throw light on the vision. The various interactions of these personalities form a very remarkable series of phenomena which are very difficult to understand and systematise.<sup>481</sup>

## § 8 SCRYING AND EXPERIMENTS WITH MAGNIFYING GLASSES

A further group of phenomena is formed of those observed in experiment with magnifying glasses and similar mediums. Mr W. A. Dixey, a well-known optician of New Bond Street, carried out a series of such experiments with Miss Goodrich-Freer. The purpose of these tests was to try the effect of different kinds of lenses on her crystal visions, "the conditions being so arranged that she [\[132\]](#) did not know the normal effects of the lenses on real objects. In five out of eight experiments the crystal pictures enlarged in appearance in the same way that real objects would have done on applying the lenses, but in the other three the changes that followed in the pictures on applying the lenses were not those that would have been produced in real objects. Mr Dixey . . . repeated these experiments, under as nearly as possible the same conditions, with Mrs Verrall, who found, on applying the lenses, that her crystal

<sup>480</sup> Miss Fletcher, *Journ. S.P.R.* (1907-8), xiii. 52, *sqq.*

<sup>481</sup> M. Prince, "An Experimental Study of Vision," *Brain* (London, 1898), xxi. 528, *sqq.*; *cp. id.*, "The Development and Genealogy of the Misses Beauchamp," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1900-1), xv. 466, *sqq.*

pictures either disappeared or remained unaffected, except in one case, where a temporary enlargement of the picture — which was not the normal effect of the lens — took place.”<sup>482</sup> Miss Goodrich-Freer also experimented on her own account, and writes, “I have used the magnifying-glass eleven times and it has always appeared to magnify. ... I have three times used a bogus-glass of similar size and appearance, and that glass did not magnify.”<sup>483</sup> In other experiments the magnifying glass similarly enlarged the pictures in the speculum.<sup>484</sup>

## § 9 COLOUR IN SCRYING VISIONS

It has been stated that the colours which occur in scrying visions and in the preliminary appearances in the crystal, conform to certain optic laws. These colours are frequently complementary, and present also other interesting and difficult phenomena. These are too complex for superficial review, and, as they do not vitally affect the [133] problem of scrying, they must be left for discussion in another place.<sup>485</sup>

## § 10 THE NUMBER OF NORMAL SCRYERS

It is impossible to determine without very extensive experiments what proportion of normal persons can scry. Myers places the figure at one in twenty,<sup>486</sup> but this certainly appears to be an overestimate, though Lang somewhere gives a similar figure. Newbold, experimenting in a girls' school, tried 86 persons and obtained results in 22 cases. Twenty of these were young girls. But these figures show nothing, as they were not only obtained from

<sup>482</sup> “Report on the Census of Hallucinations,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1894), x, 108; cp. *Journ. S.P.R.* (1889-90), iv, 84; Miss A., in F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” viii, 500.

<sup>483</sup> In *ibid.*, viii, 486.

<sup>484</sup> London Dialectical Society, *op. cit.*, pp. 186-7.

<sup>485</sup> For references and a summary of some points see “Report on the Census of Hallucinations,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1894), x, 144, *sqq.*

<sup>486</sup> *Human Personality*, i, 237.

experiments with a limited class of persons, but also from selected persons in that limited class.<sup>487</sup>

## § 11 CONCLUSION

Our ignorance about all these phenomena that have been touched upon still so far overbalances our knowledge that it would be absurd to attempt any explanation of them or any correlation of these occurrences to those of which we know a little more. Scrying experiments in the future should be directed principally along the lines indicated, for until these outstanding points are at any rate susceptible of reasonable explanation, it will be impossible to proceed to the classification and synthesis which are so necessary in the whole class of these psychical phenomena.

---

<sup>487</sup> W. R. Newbold, "Experimental Induction of Automatic Processes," *The Psychological Review* (New York, 1895), ii. 350.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE RATIONALE OF SCRYING

#### § 1 SUGGESTION

We have now to consider the various manners in which pictures or ideas which are exteriorised into the speculum get into the consciousness or subconsciousness of the scryer preparatory to being exteriorised. It is possible to cause a scryer to see visions in the speculum which have been dictated by an onlooker. Someone may say to the scryer, "Look into the speculum and you will see a tree." And when the scryer looks he will in fact see a tree. It is similarly possible for a scryer to determine himself what he shall see in the speculum when he gazes into it. Thus Miss Goodrich-Freer could deliberately and intentionally call into the crystal the creations of her own fancy.<sup>488</sup> Similar results can be produced by post-hypnotic suggestion and by any of the numerous methods of employing suggestion in its various forms, whether of hetero- or of autosuggestion. Of all these phenomena numerous instances can be found in many records of crystal visions.<sup>489</sup> But these [135] cases do not directly affect the question of scrying, for in them it is not the speculum that plays the principal part in producing the vision, but the suggestion, and the same results can be obtained without a speculum with any person susceptible to the force of suggestion.

<sup>488</sup> "Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1889), v. 511.

<sup>489</sup> See e.g., *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 286; Mrs H. Sidgwick and A. Johnson, "Experiences in Thought-Transference," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 571; C. T. Green, "Case of Cure by Suggestion," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1895), xi. 23.



It is unfortunately necessary to note that this power of suggestion is a very dangerous one when practised by unsuitable persons; I need not labour the point. Another form of this danger is sufficiently illustrated by the following extract from a newspaper: “A suggestion that crystal-gazing had led to a woman’s death was made at the inquest at Cardiff yesterday. Mrs Violet Horatia Martin, twenty-five, the wife of a postman, committed suicide by inhaling gas. To the coroner yesterday her step-father said that she had been very excitable for two years, and used to go to see fortune-tellers frequently. Last week, after a visit to a fortune-teller, she said: ‘When she asked me to look in the crystal I saw myself seated in a chair deliberately committing suicide with gas.’ Mrs Martin further said that the woman told her not to say what she saw in the crystal. The coroner told the jury they had to decide whether they believed this fortune-teller told Mrs Martin the things that they had heard, or whether Mrs Martin, in her highly nervous state, imagined that she saw herself being poisoned by gas. The jury found that the poor woman was suffering from delusions, and committed suicide whilst of unsound mind.”<sup>490</sup>

## § 2 SUBCONSCIOUS KNOWLEDGE

Recent psychological investigations have shown that nothing once entered in the sensorial tracts of the brain is [136] ever erased. Obviously, therefore, there are more things in our subconsciousness than we know, for the things we are aware of knowing are much fewer than the things we have read or seen or otherwise contacted at one time or another. These things in our subconsciousness have got there in different ways. We may once have known a thing and forgotten it, or in other words, it may once have been present in our consciousness and have now sunk back into our subconsciousness; or we may never have known the thing, that is, we may have observed it without knowing that we had done

---

<sup>490</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1909.

so, and have thus allowed it to go direct to our subconsciousness. Anything in this subconsciousness may be brought up by means of a proper stimulus, in the present case a speculum, and may make its appearance haphazard, in a fragmentary, dreamlike, meaningless manner; or it may appear direct, simply reproducing the image or showing the idea, if such it is, in a pictorial manner; or it may be symbolised.

The following is an example of meaningless recrudescence of impressions. Its close resemblance to a common type of nightmare will be noticed, as well as its general resemblance to a dream. Maxwell was experimenting with a scryer, who, looking into the speculum, perceived “a railway-station, and saw portmanteaux in the luggage-room. He then plunged right into the dream, and imagined he was going to take down his own portmanteau; he entered the luggage-room, took his trunk and opened it. It contained a particularly horrible dead body, which leaped out of the portmanteau, and bitterly complained of being disturbed. It threw itself upon the sensitive, who immediately fled, pursued by the dead body. After a desperate chase, the sensitive darted into a road which crossed a park. This park, in reality is situated at more [\[137\]](#) than six hundred miles from the railway-station where he believed he saw the portmanteaux; this distance had disappeared in the vision. The dead body took a corresponding road; the two roads met on a hill, where the persecutor made a dead set at the sensitive; the latter fell, and the dead body stopped and bent down to strike him. The visionary gave him a kick in the stomach, and stretched him at full length on the ground. The hallucination then ceased abruptly, and the sensitive found himself back in his room, in front of the crystal. The vision was so intense that he was still upset with fright and breathless from running.”<sup>491</sup>

This experience recorded by Miss Goodrich-Freer is an excellent illustration of a simple recrudescence of a definite memory. “I had been occupied with accounts; I opened a drawer to take out my banking-book. My hand came into contact with the

---

<sup>491</sup> J. Maxwell, *Metapsychical Phenomena* (London, 1905), pp. 195-6.

crystal, and I welcomed the suggestion of a change of occupation. However, figures were still uppermost, and the crystal had nothing more attractive to show me than the combination 7694. Dismissing this as probably the number of the cab I had driven in that day, or a chance grouping of the figures with which I had been occupied, I laid aside the crystal and took up my banking-book, which I had certainly not seen for some months, and found, to my surprise, that the number on the cover was 7694.”<sup>492</sup>

The following two cases are examples of things perceived by the subconsciousness only and exteriorised into the speculum. In the first case a thing not consciously seen but preserved in the subconsciousness is conveyed to the [138] consciousness by the indirect route of the speculum. “I saw in the crystal a young girl, an intimate friend, waving to me from her carriage. I observed that her hair, which had hung down her back when I last saw her, was now put in young-lady fashion. Most certainly I had not consciously seen the carriage, the look of which I knew very well. But next day I called on my friend; was reproached by her for not observing her as she passed; and perceived that she had altered her hair in the way which the crystal had shown.”<sup>493</sup>

The second instance is a particularly interesting one, for here the subconsciousness observed something that the consciousness was unable to observe, something, that is to say, beyond the range of one of the senses, in this case of the sense of hearing. “In August, 1891, we went for a few weeks to a small country place; where we had taken a house for the autumn, and which I had never visited before, except once for a single day. One day a kindly neighbour called to offer us the use of his garden during his own absence from home. As he left the house he looked up in passing the window, and said something, of which neither I nor a girl who was staying with me could catch a single word. The same evening I saw in the crystal a picture of some extraordinarily tall and bushy sweet-peas trained over wire-fencing — a picture to which I could

<sup>492</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 507.

<sup>493</sup> A. Goodrich-Freer, in F. W. H. Myers, “The Subliminal Consciousness,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 489.

assign no meaning. The next day we met our friend's housekeeper, who referred to the invitation, and added, 'Mr P. says he hoped you heard his warning not to lose yourself among the sweet-peas!' On visiting the garden, I found the fencing covered exactly as the crystal had shown, the sweet-peas, of which Mr P. was justly proud, having been arranged to intercept a view of the railway."<sup>494</sup>

[139] This next example is not so clear; it seems to be a case of recrudescence memory, but without more details it would be impossible to declare it so with any certainty. It is related by the mother of Miss A.: "In October, 1886, my daughter saw in the stone in her bracelet a scene which considerably impressed me, as it was one which I at once identified, while I was absolutely sure that I had never mentioned it to her or to any of my children. She saw a man in a barge-like boat with a very large gun fixed on it, the object of which she could not understand. The man was alone and lying in the bottom of the boat, and this also puzzled her. Waves seemed to get up, and the man worked extremely hard, as though trying to get to shore. Then she saw him throw himself motionless on to the low beach, as if dead. Now this plainly refers to a sad crisis in my brother's life. He went out duck-shooting on a Norfolk Broad, with an opening on to the sea. A storm got up and he was all but blown out to sea. He was a very strong man, and by great exertion he got to land. Then he threw himself down absolutely spent. . . ."<sup>495</sup>

The following example is a good specimen of symbolisation of a recrudescence memory produced by association of ideas, the whole process taking place quite subconsciously. It also contains such an experiment with a magnifying glass as I have touched upon above, and is also chosen from the records of Miss Goodrich-Freer: "... I happened to want the date of Ptolemy Philadelphus, which I could not recall, though feeling sure that I knew it, and that I associated it with some event of importance. When looking into the crystal some hours later, I found a picture [140] of an old man

<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, viii. 490.

<sup>495</sup> A. Goodrich-Freer, in F. W. H. Myers, "The Subliminal Consciousness," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 514.

with long white hair and beard, dressed like a Lyceum Shylock, and busy writing in a large book with tarnished clasps. I wondered much who he was and what he could possibly be doing, and thought it a good opportunity of carrying out a suggestion which had been made to me, of examining objects in the crystal with a magnifying glass. The glass revealed to me that my old gentleman was writing in Greek, though the lines faded away as I looked, all but the last characters he had traced, the Latin numerals LXX. Then it flashed into my mind that he was one of the Jewish elders at work on the Septuagint, and that its date, 277 B.C., would do equally well for Ptolemy Philadelphus! It may be worth while to add, though the fact was not in my conscious memory at the moment, that I had once learnt a chronology on a mnemonic system which substituted letters for figures, and that the *memoria technica* for this date was ‘Now Jewish Elders indite a Greek copy.’<sup>496</sup>

A more complicated example of symbolisation, and possibly an even better one, is the following, which has additional elements that are not easy to disentangle for lack of detail. Miss Goodrich-Freer writes: “One day I had been seeking a medical prescription which I failed to find among my papers. After looking in many places, likely and unlikely, I concluded it had been accidentally destroyed, and dismissed the matter from my thoughts. Some hours later, without having consciously thought of my search meanwhile, I was occupied with the crystal, which, after presenting me with one or two other pictures, suddenly showed me a paper which by its colour and general appearance I recognised as the one in question. [141] On further inspection, however, I observed, without being able to read the words, that the prescription was in the handwriting, not of my doctor, but of my friend E. . . . I resolved to follow this indication in the only way which occurred to me, and finally found my lost prescription accidentally folded within one of E.’s letters, where it had remained, I have reason to believe, for more than four years. I may add that E. is a very frequent

<sup>496</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 513.

correspondent; that this particular letter had been preserved quite by accident, and that there was no possible connection of ideas, either of time or place, between the two documents.”<sup>497</sup>

### § 3 TELEPATHY

No intelligent and impartial person in possession of the facts relating to telepathy can to-day deny the possibility of communicating an idea or image from the consciousness of one person to that of another without the normal intermediary of the sensorial channels. What the crystal helps to effect in the case of telepathy is the exteriorisation of “pictures which are . . . due to stimuli which come from minds external to the scryer’s own.”<sup>498</sup> The only writer on the subject who has denied the possibility of such telepathic scrying is Adelma von Vay. Her words are, “A bystander’s desire to see a given picture never has any influence on me. . . .”<sup>499</sup> Nevertheless she records several experiences in which the visions were obviously due to that very phenomenon. As, for instance, when a visitor [142] having come from a distance to consult her, she obtained a series of pictures connected with him and of which he was thinking.<sup>500</sup> As the Freiin strongly upheld the theory of spirit-guidance, naturally incompatible with telepathy, her attitude can be understood.

From the point of view of the scryer telepathy can be of two kinds, experimental and spontaneous. In the former case the scry is deliberate, the scryer and another person having arranged to test the possibility of transmitting an idea telepathically to the scryer. Each of the two examples here given present in addition to the main point illustrated, other interesting phenomena.

In the first one the person stated to have been thought of was not seen in the crystal, but instead that person’s mother appeared.

<sup>497</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 509-

<sup>498</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality* (London, 1903), i. 239. For a collection and examination of telepathic scrys, see Mrs H. Sidgwick, “Phantasms of the Living,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1923-3), xxxiii. 32, *sqq.*

<sup>499</sup> *Visionen im Wasserglase* (Budapest, 1877), p. 4.

<sup>500</sup> *Visionen in Wasserglase* (Budapest, 1877), pp. 54-5, No. LXX., 16<sup>th</sup> of December 1874.

The thought transmitted was not therefore actually the one intended to be communicated but a fugitive thought which passed across the communicator's mind. The example, then, is not a perfect one so far as experimental telepathy is concerned. The story is related by "Miss Angus": "A lady one day asked me to scry out a friend of whom she would think. Almost immediately I exclaimed, 'Here is an old, old lady looking at me with a triumphant smile on her face. She has a prominent nose and a nut-cracker chin. Her face is very much wrinkled, especially at the side of her eyes, as if she were always smiling. She is wearing a little white shawl with a black edge. But . . . she can't be old as her hair is quite brown! although her face looks so very, very old.' The picture then vanished, and the lady said that I had accurately described her friend's mother instead of himself; that it was a family joke that the mother must dye her hair, it was [143] so brown, and she was eighty-two years old. The lady asked me if the vision were distinct enough for me to recognise a likeness in the son's photograph; next day she laid several photographs before me, and in a moment without the slightest hesitation I picked him out from his wonderful likeness to my vision!"<sup>501</sup>

The second example of experimental telepathy, also from the experiences of "Miss Angus," is partly an instance of deliberate telepathy, with possible elements of cryptesthesia, although these unknown elements may be due to spontaneous telepathy between the lady seen in the vision and the scryer. The incident is told by Andrew Lang: "A gentleman had recently come from England to the Scottish town where Miss Angus lives. He dined with her family, and about 10.15 to 10.30 p.m. she proposed to look into the glass for a scene or person of whom he was to think. He called up a mental picture of a ball at which he had recently been, and of a young lady to whom he had there been introduced. The lady's face, however, he could not clearly visualise, and Miss Angus reported nothing but a view of an empty ballroom, with a polished floor and wax lights. The gentleman made another effort, and remembered

<sup>501</sup> In A. Lang, *The Making of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1900), p. 89.

his partner with some distinctness. Miss Angus then described another room, not a ballroom, comfortably furnished, in which a girl with brown hair drawn back from her forehead, and attired in a high-necked white blouse, was reading, or writing letters, under a bright light in an unshaded glass globe. The description of the features, figure, and height tallied with Mr-----'s recollection; but he had never seen this Geraldine of an hour except in ball dress. He and Miss Angus noted the [144] time by their watches (it was 10.30), and Mr—said that on the first opportunity he would ask the young lady how she had been dressed and how employed at that hour on December 21 [1897]. On December 22 he met her at another dance, and her reply corroborated the crystal picture. She had been writing letters, in a high-necked white blouse, under an incandescent gas-lamp with an unshaded glass globe. She was entirely unknown to Miss Angus, and had only been seen once by Mr-----. Mr----- and the lady of the crystal picture corroborated all this in writing.”<sup>502</sup>

The second kind of telepathy of which we have spoken, spontaneous, or unconscious, telepathy, explains itself. It can occur either in connection with a person present or absent, the latter having possibly taken place in the latter part of the above example. The following instance is one that occurred to myself. At an exhibition of drawings in the Leicester Galleries I met a friend whom I had not seen for several years. During conversation at his flat I learned that he was able to “see things” in the crystal; begging him to look for me I cleared my mind as well as I could of any intention to communicate telepathically, and to prevent the haphazard crowding of ideas I fixed my attention on some trivial matter. In a few moments my friend announced that he saw me walking arm-in-arm with a tall dark-bearded man. As it happened the previous day at the other side of London such a man had been suddenly taken ill in front of me, and I had taken his arm (a pose I do not as a rule affect) to assist him for some distance, which I did the more readily as he was obviously a foreigner. He was and is a

<sup>502</sup> In A. Lang, *The Making of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1900), p. 95.



total stranger to me and the incident had certainly not been in my conscious mind during the scry. [145] Therefore either my friend is endowed with retrocognitive cryptesthesia or the vision was a case of spontaneous telepathy: the latter assumption is obviously preferable.<sup>503</sup> It should be noted that in this case the spontaneity of which I speak applies only to the stranger and to the actual event, for I had asked my friend to look into the crystal for me, and the fact that a vision of myself ensued would have to be classified, had not other details been seen, as a case of experimental telepathy.

The following case is equally imperfect as an instance of spontaneous telepathy, for perhaps it should more properly be considered as cryptesthetic; but when there is a choice of interpretations I always prefer the more conservative. Miss A. writes, "Some time ago I was looking in my crystal and saw Lady Radnor sitting in a room I had never seen, in a big red chair; and a lady in a black dress and white cap whom I had never seen came in and put her hand upon Lady R.'s shoulder. It was about 7.30, I think. I immediately wrote to Lady R. to ask her to write down what she was doing at 7.30, as I had seen her in the crystal. Shortly afterwards I saw Lady R. and she said she had done as I asked her, and told me to tell her what I saw. It was quite right; she had been sitting in a red armchair, and Lady Jane E., dressed as I described her, had come in and put her hand on her shoulder. Afterwards, when I met Lady Jane E., I recognised her, without knowing who she was, as the lady I had seen. Also, when I went to the house I recognised the chair." This story is separately testified to by Lord and Lady Radnor.<sup>504</sup>

[146] A similar experience is related by Lang: "My friend Mr Lesley is known to the world as a man of business, a golfer, and a composer. . . . One day Mr Lesley and I had been talking about a lady, unknown to him, but known to me, though I had never seen her house. Mr Lesley began to look into a glass water-jug, and

<sup>503</sup> Unfortunately my friend will not permit me to publish his name and other details; this relation cannot, therefore, be admitted to the canon of evidential cases.

<sup>504</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, "The Subliminal Consciousness," *Proc. S.P.R.* (1892), viii. 501-2.

described what he saw, the interior of the hall of a house, with a good deal of detail. Neither of us recognised the house. I happened later to tell this to the lady of whom we had been talking; she said, ‘Why, that is my house,’ and, on visiting it, I found that in all respects it answered to Mr Lesley’s description. It may be a common type of hall, but I do not remember having seen one like it elsewhere, nor did Mr Lesley know any such place.”<sup>505</sup>

The following example is of the same kind, taking place between places at a greater distance from each other. It is told by Mrs Verrall: “I was in my room in the afternoon [of the 29<sup>th</sup> of July 1890], thinking about a paper I had just read in the *Proceedings* [of the Society for Psychical Research] and of a friend with whom I had talked of the matter in question, when ‘as I turned to the glass I had a sudden impression of Mr Y., in Swiss mountaineering costume, light dittos and hat, sitting astride on an arête, face downwards, with a stick or ice-axe across the figure.’ . . . When I saw him in November I told him what I had seen, and he then said that he had actually been outside of an arête for a moment on the day before, July 28<sup>th</sup>.”<sup>506</sup>

The next instance may have been the result of subconscious observation plus semi-spontaneous telepathy. It is from the records of Miss Goodrich-Freer: “On the [147] evening of Saturday, July 28, 1888, the crystal presented me with a picture of a medieval saint, carrying a rabbit. This I recognised as representing a stained-glass window at a church in the neighbourhood, which I visit perhaps two or three times in a year, always sitting within view of this window. As I had not been there for many months, nor consciously pictured the spot since my last visit, I was puzzled to account for the vision. Early next morning, on waking I observed on my table a letter, which had probably lain there unnoticed the previous evening and which I found contained a request that I would, if

<sup>505</sup> “Reflections on Mrs Piper’s Telepathy,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1900-1), xv. 49.

<sup>506</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, *op. cit.*, viii. 481; Mrs Verrall is partly quoting from her own contemporary notes.

possible, attend the early service at the church in question that morning.”<sup>507</sup>

The last example to be quoted of this very interesting and suggestive phenomenon is not only an instance of spontaneous telepathy, but of telepathy taking place against the will, for it will be noted that Miss Freer determined to see a certain picture while another in fact appeared. “On Monday evening, February 11<sup>th</sup>, I took up the crystal, with the deliberate intention of seeing in it a figure, which happened to occupy my thoughts at the moment, but I found the field preoccupied by a small bunch of daffodils, — a prim little posey, not larger than might be formed by two or three fine heads. This presented itself in various positions, in spite of my hurry to be rid of it, for I rashly concluded my vision to be a consequence of my having the day before seen, on a friend’s dinner-table, the first daffodils of the season. The resemblance was not complete, for those I had seen were loosely arranged and intermixed with fern and ivy, whereas my crystal vision had no foliage, and was a compact little bunch. It was not until Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup>, that I received, as a wholly unexpected ‘Valentine,’ a [148] painting, on a blue-satin ground, of a bunch of daffodils, corresponding exactly with my crystal picture, and learnt that the artist had spent some hours on Monday previous to my vision, in making studies of the flowers in various positions.”<sup>508</sup>

It will be noted that no distinction has been made between visions telepathically obtained of events taking place contemporaneously with the vision and of events taking place before the vision, such as that last cited. Such a distinction, of course, exists, but its discussion belongs more properly to a consideration of telepathy itself than here.

---

<sup>507</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 515-6.

<sup>508</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 516.

## § 4 CRYPTESTHESIA

I use M. Richet's more correct word cryptesthesia in preference to clairvoyance to indicate the faculty of acquiring knowledge of ideas or images otherwise than by the normal intermediary of the sensorial channels or than by telepathy. It is a moot point whether it is possible so to obtain knowledge by scrying (or, for that matter, whether any such faculty exists). Without deciding one way or another it may be said that there are cases on record which seems to be most easily explicable by the theory of cryptesthesia. The leading authorities are of this opinion.<sup>509</sup>

Such cryptesthesia can be of two kinds, visions of the past and of the future. In the first case, to be beyond question cryptesthetic a vision would have to be one of something unknown to any living person. For otherwise it could be urged that if some living person knew the thing [149] seen it could have been transmitted telepathically. Needless to say, no perfect example of such a vision exists, but several visions are on record in which were re-enacted historical scenes of the past of which the scryer had no knowledge, and some of which could only be verified after laborious research.<sup>510</sup> I am myself of the opinion that some of these visions are cryptesthetic, but would hesitate to affirm them such.

We are thus left with precognitive visions. If it were possible to see in the speculum a scene that was to take place in reality in the future, no explanation short of the possession by the scryer of some cryptesthetic faculty would fit the circumstances. The reader is here reminded that the word cryptesthesia is a name given, as its etymology indicates, to an unknown sensibility or faculty; that a faculty the mechanism of which is unknown may exist, such powers being not unknown in the history of science; and that a faculty of this kind may be unknown yet not superphysical. It is for

---

<sup>509</sup> See e.g., J. H. Hyslop, *Enigmas of Psychical Research* (London, 1906), pp. 50, *sqq.*; C. Richet, *Traité de Métapsychique* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Paris, 1923), pp. 256, *sqq.*; Sir W. F. Barrett, *Psychical Research Home University Library* (London, 1921), p. 141.

<sup>510</sup> See e.g., F. W. H. Myers, *Human Personality* (London, 1903, 2 vols.), i. 592, *sqq.*; A. Lang, *The Making of Religion* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., London, 1900), pp. 97-8.

the reader to determine whether the following examples do indeed involve the postulation of an unknown faculty.

The first instance to be quoted is related by Sir Joseph Barnby, the well-known composer. He had been invited to Longford Castle by Lord and Lady Radnor to the wedding of their daughter, which took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August 1889. Staying also at the Castle was Miss A., some of whose scrying experiences have already been quoted. On one of the days Sir Joseph stayed at Longford she looked into the crystal and described in Sir Joseph's words, "a room which appeared to her to be a bedroom. [150] She appeared to be seeing the room from just outside the open door, for she said: 'If there be a bed in the room it must be behind the door on the left'; in any case it was a long one and the end of it was occupied by a large window which formed the entire end of the room. She added: 'There is a lady in the room, drying her hands on a towel.' She described the lady as tall, dark, slightly foreign in appearance and with rather 'an air' about her. This described with such astonishing accuracy my wife, and the room she was then occupying in a hotel in Eastbourne, that I was impelled to ask for further particulars as to dress, etc. She stated that the dress was of serge, with a good deal of braid on the bodice and a strip of braid down one side of the skirt. This threw me off the scent, as before I had started for Longford my wife had expressed her regret that she had not a serge dress with her. My astonishment, therefore, was great on returning to Eastbourne to find my wife wearing a serge dress exactly answering to the description given above. The sequel comes sixteen months later on, when my wife and I attended a performance of the Magpie Minstrels (a society of musical amateurs) at Princes' Hall, Piccadilly. We arrived early, and after placing my wife in a seat I moved about the room speaking to friends here and there. In the course of ten minutes or so, Lady Radnor and Miss A. entered the room. During the greetings which ensued, Miss A. called my attention to a standing figure, saying: 'You will remember my seeing a lady in her bedroom while looking in the crystal; *that* is the lady I saw.' *That was my wife.*"

This account of Sir Joseph Barnby's is corroborated by Lady Barnby, who writes, "This account about me and my dress is remarkable, as being out of the general course of things in this way: I had been remarking to Sir Joseph that it [151] was a mistake to come to the seaside without a serge dress, that being a material particularly suited for wear at the seaside, but I added: 'I do not think there is much use in ordering one now, as Madame D. will be gone for her holidays, it being August.' Sir Joseph left the next day for Longford, and I wrote to Madame D., telling her to make me this gown. She got the letter *Tuesday* [13<sup>th</sup> of August 1889], and in the marvellously short time by *Saturday*, I received my gown. Then again, it is not usual in a hotel to have one's bedroom door open when one is occupying the room, but the reason for it on this occasion was the fact that I was to meet Sir Joseph on his return from Longford [20<sup>th</sup> of August] (as a surprise in this new serge gown) and having no clock in my bedroom, which was at the end of the corridor, with my daughter's room at an angle to ours, where she slept with her maid, I — thinking I was somewhat late for meeting the train — opened the door to call the maid to tell me the time as I washed my hands standing at the washhand-stand in a line with the open door. I do not suppose I have ever done such a thing at a hotel before or since." The dates given were confirmed from Lady Barnby's diary, and the facts are testified by several persons.<sup>511</sup> This case, then, is one in which the sayer saw a scene in the presence of Sir Joseph Barnby which was not actually performed until at least half a day later, when he was almost arrived at Eastbourne from Longford, near Salisbury.

Of the whole series of her visions in the crystal or other speculum Miss Goodrich-Freer claims only two as possibly clairvoyant. Here is one of these visions: "In January last I saw in the crystal the figure of a man crouching at a small window, and looking into the room from outside. I [152] could not see his features, which appeared to be muffled, but the crystal was particularly dark that evening, and the picture being an unpleasant

<sup>511</sup> In F. W. H. Myers, *op. cit.*, i. 591-2.

one, I did not persevere. I concluded the visions to be a result of a discussion in my presence of the many stories of burglary with which the newspapers had lately abounded, and reflected with a passing satisfaction that the only windows in the house divided into four panes, as were those of the crystal-picture, were in the front attic and almost inaccessible. Three days later a fire broke out in that very room, which had to be entered from outside through the window, the face of the fireman being covered with a net cloth, as a protection from the smoke which rendered access through the door impossible.”<sup>512</sup>

I also quote the other of the two visions referred to: “I was visiting friends in the country, and was about to leave their house on a certain morning. ‘I wonder what you will do after I’m gone,’ I was saying. For answer, one of them pulled towards me a piece of light polished mahogany furniture brilliantly polished, and said, ‘Here is a crystal — look.’ ‘This is the picnic you said you were all going to at Pin Mill, I suppose,’ I said presently, as a picture appeared. ‘What and where is Pin Mill? There is no sign of a mill — it is just a grassy bank with some thorn-bushes beyond. Why do you and K. get up and go away? G. and S. stay together and G. looks as if her back hurt her. The nurse is there too, with the boy.’ ‘I don’t know in the least what Pin Mill is, but any way, the nurse and child won’t be there,’ said my friend. A day or two later she wrote: ‘You were almost right about Pin Mill — there is no mill in sight. We sat on a bank, K. had croup [153] and I had to take her for a walk, G. and S. were left together. G. had strained her back and was in some pain, and the nurse and boy were there. There were no thorn-trees, but there were elders and blackberry bushes grown up high, which at a little distance looked like thorns.’”<sup>513</sup>

The following instance is related by Mrs A. W. Bickford-Smith and is, the precognition apart, of a frequently occurring type: it would be an interesting line of research to discover why so many visions, in the speculum and otherwise, are of corpses. “The

<sup>512</sup> “Recent Experiments in Crystal-vision,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 517-8.

<sup>513</sup> *Essays in Psychical Research* (London, 1899), pp. 129-30.

‘crystal’ was about the size of a billiard ball, and looked like a ball of well-used glass, not cut very brilliant.<sup>514</sup> After looking into it for a few minutes it seemed to expand, and I saw the interior of a church I knew well. A coffin stood in the aisle, having no lid on it. I distinctly saw the face of the corpse. It was that of an old friend of my father’s, who was then in good health. As the church faded from my view, I seemed to see many tilings passing by, but cannot recall them distinctly, for I felt rather glad to get rid of the crystal. In a few days I stood by the death-bed of the gentleman, Mrs J. and I being the only two people in the room when he died. His death was the cause of a great change in our lives.”<sup>515</sup>

The next example, given by Maxwell, is of a less conclusive character, but seems good enough to be admitted as evidential. Maxwell writes that the vision was related to him eight days before the event took place and that he had himself told it to several persons in the meanwhile. [154] “A sensitive perceived in a crystal the following scene: A large steamer, flying a flag of three horizontal bands, black, white, and red, and bearing the name *Leutschland*, navigating in mid-ocean; the boat was surrounded by smoke; a great number of sailors, passengers, and men in uniform rushed to the upper deck, and the sensitive saw the vessel founder. Eight days afterwards, the newspapers announced the accident to the *Deutschland*, whose boiler had burst, obliging the boat to stand to.”<sup>516</sup> The ship did not actually founder, but the difference between *Leutschland* and *Deutschland* can be ignored. It is not likely that the boat was surrounded by smoke, but the steam from the burst boiler would answer for this, even if the scryer, for people are notoriously loose in their speech about this, did not mean steam when he said smoke.

The last instance to be adduced here is the most remarkable of all crystal visions authoritatively recorded. The story is very long and complicated and loses much in summary, as well in

<sup>514</sup> The narrator adds that the appearance of the crystal could perhaps be better described as “glass that had been breathed on.”

<sup>515</sup> In Mrs H. Sidgwick, “On the Evidence for Premonitions,” *Proc. S.P.R.* (1888-9), v. 298.

<sup>516</sup> J. Maxwell, *Metapsychical Phenomena* (London, 1905), p. 185.



conviction-carrying detail as in literary grace. Dr Edmund Waller being unable to sleep one night thought of looking into the crystal that his father had recently acquired. In it he saw the image of a lady, an old friend of whom he had been very fond and who had since married. The husband of this lady had gone to Africa and had asked Waller to look after his wife during his absence. The wife, however, had later gone to America with her mother, where Waller still thought her. On the evening of the day after that on which he had seen the first vision in the crystal, he saw the silhouette of his friend side by side with that of a man, the latter being less distinct, and both being surrounded with trees and people. He closed his eyes for a second, [155] opened them again, and looked again into the crystal. This time he distinctly saw Mme. D., the lady in question, and the man who was with her — a man whom he had never seen — as well as the paddock of the racecourse at Longschamps, as if during a meeting. The next Sunday, which was the day of the next meeting, Waller gave up some important engagements and went to Longschamps; there he saw the two people whom he had foreseen in the crystal. After this he obtained a series of visions in the crystal of the wife, the husband, the stranger, and others, all connected with the drama of which he was thus the spectator. The lady later departed for the Riviera, and seven days afterwards Waller saw in the glass the details of a scene in which she took part at a certain restaurant in Paris which he recognised. The husband came home at that time and Waller told him of his vision; after much anger and discussion they both went, four days later, to the restaurant. The lady was there with her lover and a scene ensued that eventually led to a divorce. When Waller last heard of her she was in an asylum.<sup>517</sup> For the evidential details and contemporary notes the reader must turn to the original narrative, but even from the bare outline I have given it is impossible to take away anything but a sense of the presence of some unknown faculty (if even this be not bathos).

---

<sup>517</sup> E. Waller, "The History of a Crystal Vision," *The Annals of Psychological Science* (London, 1915), ii. 175, *sqq.*

I have given a number of cases of scrying visions that do not seem to be explicable otherwise than by assuming the existence of some cryptesthesia or unknown sensibility. In the present state of our knowledge no one has the right to make any bolder or more positive statement than this, and still less justification [156] is there for any attempt to dogmatise about the problematical faculty itself. Each student can only experiment and add his own opinion to the bulk, which, when large enough, forms the accepted scientific opinion of the day. I therefore content myself with saying that the evidence above quoted, which is only a small fragment of the whole, has been sufficient to convince me, much against my desire and inclination, of the existence of some unknown faculty which enables a person who possesses it to obtain knowledge otherwise than by the normal intermediary of the sensorial channels or than by telepathy.

## § 5 SPIRIT-GUIDANCE

The Freiin von Vay, as has already been seen, claims in her writings that her scrying visions were given to her by spirit-guides, or, as she puts it, that her spirit-guide revealed to her in 1867 that she had the gift of seeing spirits in a glass of water without entering into a somnambular state.<sup>518</sup> Adelma von Vay was, however, an unscientific observer, incapable, as we have seen in regard to her opinions about telepathy, of understanding the rationale of her visions. There is nothing in any of the visions recorded by her to cause us to believe that they in any way come outside of the categories detailed above. It is not sufficient to give, as she does, a detailed account of the vision in the speculum and to supplement this with an explanation of the vision given through herself by means of automatic writing, claiming this also to be spirit-given. We have seen that this duality of automatism is not unusual. As an example of this scryer's method her first recorded

---

<sup>518</sup> *Studien über die Geisterwelt* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Leipzig, 1874), p. 85.

experience is literally translated: “*Vision by the medium in the glass of [157] water*: I see the Professor W. L.; he has a black spot on his forehead. Two wonderful forms: the one is glorious, crowned with flowers; the other is veiled and sad and points upwards. An angel carries a naked child. A clown, who makes all kinds of grimaces. Now a magnificent comet dives in. Christ stands there, wrapped in the radiance. *Explanation of the pictures by the spirits through automatic writing*: Professor W. L. has an affliction in the head, he will question you. Ceres is a spirit of bliss, who gives strength. The veiled spirit is suffering and supplicates God for help; it is one of the millions of spirits disembodied to-day, you saw it on its journey in the spirit world. The angel brings a young spirit to be embodied in P., hither from M. The clown is an evil spirit, who wants to disturb you. (Here followed a small disturbance in the writing caused by an evil spirit.) You will see a comet in the year 1864 [*sic*]; to conclude, you saw for your encouragement and consolation the picture of Jesus, who calls you to journey forth on this road confidently and unflinchingly. *Fulfilment of the picture by events*: Professor W. L., who at the time was quite healthy, got in the year 1871 first severe headaches, then troubled eyesight; as the doctors could not make out his complaint, he came as a last resource to me; my leader explained his complaint to be an incurable headache. The embodiment in P., an acquaintance of mine, actually took place at this time. The comet requires no explanation, since everyone saw it in 1874; it remains marvellous that I foresaw it before the astronomers had any idea of it.”<sup>519</sup>

The spiritualistic theory was also held by Mrs de Morgan, an early writer on the subject, whose views, which show [158] accurate observation so far as facts are concerned, I need do no more than quote: “The crystal, which is a clear spherical or egg-shaped piece of glass or rock crystal, seems to produce on the eye of the seer an effect exactly like what would ensue under the fingers of a powerful mesmeriser. The person who looks at it often becomes

<sup>519</sup> *Visionen im Wasserglase* (Budapest, 1877), p. 7, No. I, 9<sup>th</sup> of November 1869.

sleepy. Sometimes the eyes close. At other times tears flow. . . . Then a cloudiness or mist comes over the sight; and lastly, where before that glass with its reflections of surrounding objects had been clearly seen, a perfect black, opaque sphere appears to the gazer — I have known cases in which the seer has looked off, talked about subjects in the room, and even left the room, and then returning to the crystal, has exclaimed, ‘Here it is, all just as I left it.’ The only difference noticed has been some change in the position or appearance of the ‘people in the crystal.’ As an explanation of crystal-seeing, a spiritual drawing was once made representing a spirit directing on the crystal a stream of influence, the rays of which seemed to be refracted, and then to converge again on the side of the glass sphere before they met the eyes of the seer.”<sup>520</sup>

Another early student of scrying who held this theory was a Mr F. Hockley, who appears to have been a very intelligent and well-informed person. While giving evidence before the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, he said (the story about Sir Richard Burton has been relegated to this place because of the remarkable sentiment contained in the last sentence of my quotation): “The person who has the power of seeing, notices first a kind of mist in the centre of the crystal. . . . A crystal, if properly used, should be dedicated to a spirit. Some time ago I [159] was introduced to Lieutenant Burton by Earl Stanhope, and he wished me to get him a crystal, with a spirit attached. I also gave him a black mirror as well, and he used that in the same manner as you would a crystal. You invoke the person whom you wish to appear, and the seer looks in and describes all, and puts questions and receives answers. Lieutenant Burton was greatly pleased and went away. One day my seeress called him into the mirror. She plainly recognised him, although dressed as an Arab and sunburnt, and described what he was doing. He was quarrelling with a party of Bedouins in Arabia, and speaking energetically to them in Arabic. An old man at last pulled out his dagger and the Lieutenant his

<sup>520</sup> C. D. [*i.e.*, Mrs S. E. de Morgan], *From Matter to Spirit* (London, 1863), pp. 109-110.

revolver, when up rode a horseman and separated them. A long time afterwards Lieutenant Burton came to me, and I told him what she had seen, and read the particulars. He assured me it was correct in every particular and attached his name to the account I had written down at the time, to certify that it was true. These books are locked up and nobody can see them. . . .”<sup>521</sup>

The extracts I have given from writers on the spiritualistic interpretation of scrying present their views in the most favourable aspect possible. It will be noticed that no evidence is offered for spirit-guidance, only expressions of opinion. Nor indeed, in my opinion, does any such evidence exist in any record of scrying visions known to me, nor any incident in any scrying vision that requires a spiritualistic interpretation. There being thus no evidence, it would be unprofitable to discuss so controversial a question *in vacuo*. [160]

## § 6 THE DEFINITION OF SCRYING

We may now conclude this study of scrying by giving the definition that can be deduced from the facts available: Scrying is a method of bringing into the consciousness of the scryer by means of a speculum through one or more of his senses the content of his subconsciousness, of rendering him more susceptible to the reception of telepathically transmitted concepts, and of bringing into operation a latent and unknown faculty of perception.

---

<sup>521</sup> London Dialectical Society, *Report on Spiritualism* (London, 1871), pp. 184-5. See also F. Hockley, “On the Ancient Magic Crystal, and its Connexion with Mesmerism,” *The Zoist* (London, 1849), pp. 251, *sqq.*; *Borderland* (London, 1897), iv. 319.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHICAL INDEX**