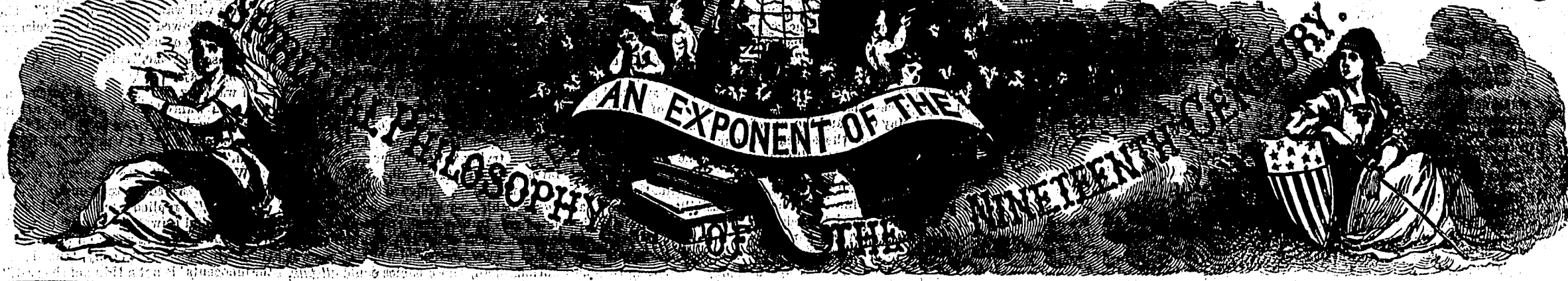


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CONTENTS.

FIRST PAGE.—Our Agents. Original Essay: Why People See Differently. The Magnetic Pole.
SECOND PAGE.—Poetry: Kisses. The Spiritualist's Dream. Spiritual Necessities. Maine Medical Bill. Literary Department: "The Slaughter of the Innocents." Mind-Reading. January Magazines. New Publications.
THIRD PAGE.—Banner Correspondence: Letters from Massachusetts, Connecticut, Oregon, Iowa, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. Poetry: Toby. The Reformer: My Lodger's Legacy, etc.
FOURTH PAGE.—Rev. Dr. Wild of Toronto, Trying to Shut "The Gates Ajar." "Pack" on the Wrong Trail. Disturbed Europe. The Matter in a Nut-Shell. Materializations in New York, etc.
FIFTH PAGE.—All Sorts of Paragraphs. Lake Pleasant. Dr. Fred L. H. White in Philadelphia. Letter from Paris. France. Movements of Medians and Lecturers. New Advertisements, etc.
SIXTH PAGE.—Message Department: Invocation; Questions and Answers; Spirit Messages given through the Mediumship of Miss M. T. Shelmerhorn from Eben B. Phillips, Sarah Poole, Charles Baker, Grace Sharnard, George Butler, Mary Hamilton, Jennette Norton, Ellen Davis, Calvin Hall, Horace White. Verifications of Spirit-Messages. Obituary Notices.
SEVENTH PAGE.—Mediums in Boston. Book and Miscellaneous Advertisements.
EIGHTH PAGE.—Spiritualistic Meetings in Boston. A Remarkable Séance. Cleveland Notes. Providence, R. I., etc.

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Original Essay.

WHY PEOPLE SEE DIFFERENTLY.

Origin of Sects—How to Approximate the Truth.

BY A. E. NEWTON.

Galton, in his "Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development," remarks that color-blindness is nearly twice as prevalent among the Quakers as among the rest of the community. This is shown by statistics collected by the Ophthalmological Society of England. He accounts for this by the fact that "nearly every Quaker is descended on both sides solely from members of a group of men and women who segregated themselves from the rest of the world five or six generations ago; one of their strongest opinions being that the fine arts were worldly snares, and their most conspicuous practice being to dress in drabs.... The existing members of the Society of Friends are a race who probably contained, in the first instance, an unduly large proportion of color-blind men." That is, they were deficient (or partially idiotic) as regards the perception of color.

This fact is exceedingly suggestive as to the causes of differences in religious and other opinions among men—the origin of sects and different schools of thought in religion, philosophy, politics, etc. Far less depends on the strength of the proofs or arguments that can be adduced in support of any particular form of faith, than upon the mental constitution or development of faculty in the individual to whom such proofs or arguments are addressed. People cannot see what they have no faculty for seeing. The beauty and value of art, of ornamentation, of music, cannot be apprehended by those who have little or no perception of colors or appreciation of sweet sounds. George Fox was no doubt deficient in color-perception and the musical sense, but largely endowed with mental force, religious fervor, and one kind of spiritual insight; he naturally acted upon others with like deficiencies and gifts, gathered about him a society of that class, and instituted a religious sect in which all artistic taste and musical expression were repudiated as sinful; and these people, being required to marry within their own communion, have transmitted their mental idiosyncrasies and their peculiar beliefs to their children.

So the Wesleys, equally gifted in religious zeal and spiritual sensitiveness of a certain kind, but less deficient in color-sense, and possessing a strong love of music and rhythm, with a tendency to emotional expression, originated the sect of Methodists; and to that sect have naturally gravitated all people of like characteristics—though it is evident the perception of color and sense of beauty, and consequent love of ornamentation, has been on the increase among that people of late years; as evidenced by their having largely discarded the plainness of dress and simplicity of church architecture which formerly characterized the sect.

A somewhat different type of mental constitution, in which excessive veneration, with sternness, or an over-wrought sense of justice tinged with vindictiveness, predominated, no doubt gave rise to Augustinism, Calvinism and Puritanism; another variation resulted in Lutheranism, and so on through the whole catalogue of isms. Hence, any person skilled in reading the external signs of character, as set forth in Phrenology and Physiognomy, can determine, with considerable accuracy to what sect of religion or school of thought any individual coming under observation is likely to belong.

Spiritualists, and their opposites, Materialists, are no exception to this rule. It hardly need be said that they who most readily accept the facts of spirit-existence and intervention are those who, by inheritance or by culture, have attained a good degree of development of the faculty by phrenologists termed "Spirituality," which affords, first, a conception, and, when more fully developed, a perception, of spiritual realities. In proportion as this faculty is lacking in development is the difficulty of believing in a spiritual existence or anything of a spiritual nature. Where it has little or no expansion or activity, it is as impossible for one to correctly conceive of spiritual things, or to find convincing evidence of spiritual existence or agencies, as for the color-blind to distinguish tints and harmony of colors, or the non-musical to appreciate harmony of sounds. Such persons, in fact, may witness the most demonstrative spiritual phenomena, but they have no faculty to perceive the true meaning of these phenomena—a reference to delusion, jugglery or fraud seeming to them the most natural and probable explanation. Such is the usual condition of pronounced Materialists—their spiritual perceptions are unopened; and hence their blindness, or want of perception in this direction, is no disproof of what others perceive. Of course, they are usually unaware of this deficiency in themselves, and wonder at what seems the credulity and delusion of those who see what they cannot see; while, on the other hand, born Spiritualists are often amazed at the apparent stupidity, blindness and wrong-headedness of this class.

The case is similar regarding the faculty of reverence, or "Veneration," as it is named by phrenologists. Those in whom this faculty is wanting, or markedly deficient, can see nothing and nobody in the universe that calls forth, or should call forth, anything like worship or adoration, and they regard all manifestations of devoutness as childish or superstitious. If they confound "to use the word 'God' in any sense, they wish to write it with a little g, and

they know of nothing greater or worthier of respect than big "I." Whereas if the faculty of reverence were evenly developed and properly active, it is plain the same persons would see the whole universe in a quite different light.

Coupled as this lack of veneration often is with deficient "Spirituality" (sometimes mis-called "Marvelousness"), it ordinarily results in utter Atheism and hopeless Materialism—an inability to form a rational conception of either a spiritual state of existence, a spirit-world, or an Infinite and All-Pervasive Spirit-Intelligence, the Life of the Universe. In other words, harsh as the expression may seem, such persons are really idiotic as regards this department of their natures, though they may be intellectual giants, and very capable and worthy people in all other respects.

All this suggests some important practical considerations. One is a lesson of charity and tolerance toward those who think and believe differently from ourselves. We should philosophically consider the causes of such differences. It may be neither personal merit, nor blamable fault, that persons believe, or disbelieve, as they do. It may be the result of an organization conferred upon them by heredity, without will or choice of their own, and of whose influence on their beliefs or perceptions they perhaps have no knowledge or suspicion. Nevertheless, their particular views may result from personal defects, which it is desirable and necessary to overcome, if they would become well-rounded men and women, and thus be able to see things truly and rightly. But we do not blame or denounce a color-blind man because he sees no beauty in the rainbow, or in a flower-garden, or a picture-gallery, nor because he cannot rightly interpret a danger-signal at a railroad switch. We pity him for his great misfortune. Yet common sense would teach us not to employ such persons as a teacher of art, or as engineer of an express-train. Nor is it any more safe to follow, as guides in philosophy or religion, persons who are lacking in either reverence or spirituality, however brilliant their intellectual attainments or acute their wit.

On the other hand, where this deficiency is a result of the neglect of personal culture or exercise on the individual's part, it may be to some extent a blamable fault. Especially where one is aware of the defect, and yet sets himself as a teacher and guide for others, he makes a mistake that is hardly excusable. In the case of the ex-clergyman referred to in a previous article, who urged his lack of veneration as a justification of his scoffs; (see BANNER OF LIGHT, Dec. 28th), his early career showed that he had been natively gifted with at least a fair share of reverence; but neglect of its exercise, with excessive application to intellectual and scientific pursuits, had doubtless caused the reverential faculty to fall into semi-idlecy. Being himself aware of this lack, he ought never to have presented himself to the public as a teacher on religious subjects, or offered his distorted and defective conceptions as a guide to others—any more than one who knows himself to be color-blind should seek the position of pilot or railroad engineer. Still less are persons who are defective in these respects justified in denouncing as victims of delusion or superstition those who claim to see what they do not see.

Another lesson is that we should all be careful not to make our own defects, or possible overpluses, a rule of absolute truth or duty. A blind man who should insist that there is no such thing as light or color because he does not see it, or a deaf man who should deny the existence of sound or of music because he has not heard it, would be no more absurd than is the born Materialist (such are some of our devotees of modern science) who denies the existence of spirits because he has never seen, heard, or felt them. Equally absurd, on the other hand, is it for any religious enthusiast, or philosophical theorist, or inspirational Spiritualist even, to set up his own particular views of truth or of the universe as a finality to which all must accede or be denounced. Every one of us sees, as it were, through glasses more or less colored and distorted—that is, through his own many-sided faculties in states of greater or less development from heredity or culture—some, perhaps, in excessive activity, others possibly in great deficiency. Hence our conceptions of the universe, of truth, and of duty are correspondingly warped, partial and distorted. How deplorably to found a religious sect, like the Quakers, upon obvious defects of the eye and ear, and then propagate those defects to coming generations, as essential features of true religion! And yet more deplorable is it to base a school of thought or so-called philosophy on the still greater defect of the lack of spiritual perception, and then claim this lack as essential to true science, scotching every exercise of such perception as credulity and superstition!

A third lesson is the desirableness of becoming acquainted with our own individual deficiencies and surpluses, that we may allow for their influence in making up our own conclusions, and if possible find a standard by which we may correct our aberrations, and approximate to true and just views. This is not likely to be done until we can lay aside all self-conceit and pride of personal opinion, and become humble and teachable, desirous of the truth for its own sake. This is the child-like spirit without which we cannot enter the kingdom of truth and harmony, which is heaven.

But is there, or can there be, any standard in this matter for our guidance? Not an infallible one, perhaps; but one which may enable us by due inquiry to approximate the truth on all important practical questions. Where can that standard be found? The general answer is, in the mean between two extremes. Extremes are

always unsafe. Contrast the two extremes of view on any question, and seek the golden mean between them, and this will ordinarily approximate the truth. Or, to give this answer a more concrete expression—carefully note the views of the best balanced and best-informed minds within your knowledge—those who are neither extremely radical nor extremely conservative, but moderately progressive—who are neither over-religious nor contemptuous, but rationally reverent in thought—those who are neither extremely credulous and visionary, nor extremely skeptical and hard-headed, but who are hospitable to new thought and open to evidence—those who are all-sided in their interests and sympathies, and not devoted to any one angle of truth or hobby of any kind. The views of such persons will be more likely to reflect the approximate truth than will those of any extremist, and by comparison of one's self and one's own modes of thought with such, one may be able to detect his own excesses and defects, and calculate his probable aberrations from the golden mean of truth.

Or, there may be yet a still more tangible standard of approximate accuracy. It is strongly claimed by adepts in Phrenology or Craniology, and in Physiognomy also, that all activities of the human mind or phases of character write themselves indelibly upon the cranium and the lineaments of the face and body, so that experts can read them with more or less accuracy from surface indications. Further, it is claimed that a well-balanced character, evenly developed in all its parts, is attended and indicated by an evenly-developed and symmetrical-shaped head, oval in its general contour—any overplus or deficiency in any faculty showing itself as more or less of a physical deformity—a "bump" or a depression. If this be so—and ordinary observation seems to confirm it—then there exists a visible and tangible standard of well-balanced development, which all may learn to read and to compare themselves and others by. I say, common observation seems to confirm this, for few persons can have failed to notice that large intellectual abilities are attended by a large development of the frontal region of the head, and vice versa; and that an irregular, unsymmetrical formation of the cranium accompanies an angular and crochety character.

If, then, it be in any measure true that our characters, with their excesses and defects, are traced in detail upon the surfaces of our heads, our faces and our physical forms, we have but to learn how to decipher this tracing in order to have an exact measure of ourselves, and thus be able to calculate how far our conclusions are liable to be deflected from the golden mean. Or, if we have not learned to do this with accuracy for ourselves, we may call upon those who, as practical phrenologists or physiognomists, have become qualified as experts in this direction to do it for us. A little careful investigation will show whether they can do this accurately.

Should any reader doubt the accuracy and trustworthiness of Phrenology as a means of reading character and pointing out defects, perhaps the following testimony may be of value: Some months since SPIRIT JOHN PIENPONT, now understood to be manager of the Banner of Light Free Circles, and known to have been an enthusiastic advocate of Phrenology when in this life, was asked if he still continued to regard its doctrines as correct; when he gave the following answer (see BANNER OF LIGHT OF Dec. 12th, 1885): "Yes; it is true that John Pierpont, in spirit-life, regards the doctrines of Phrenology as advocated by Gall and Spurzheim to be substantially correct. What investigation I have given to this vast theme, from my spiritual home, only confirms me in the opinions concerning its truth and its importance to mankind which I elaborated at times when in the mortal form." And he added that his further researches had led to some modifications or rather an enlargement of that science, which should be given to mortals "when students of mental science have become sufficiently receptive to understand and appropriate the new ideas," etc.

But if the reader still has no faith in this external method of character-reading, there remains yet another, in which most intelligent Spiritualists have some degree of confidence. That is Psychometry, as exercised by either expert psychometrists in the body, or by spirits through well-trained mediums.

This remarkable power of penetrating and delineating character and capabilities has thus far been practised mostly from curiosity, or for merely testing its reality, rather than for the purpose of seriously ascertaining one's own deficiencies or redundancies, with a view to correction of errors in opinion or in habit. Consequently its value in this direction is little known. When it shall be earnestly sought and honestly applied for these ends, no doubt there will be found, or be raised up, instruments or experts capable of employing it with skill and fidelity, and thus it will become an instrumentality of incalculable utility to such as are earnestly desirous of self-improvement.

Such a recognition of our own imperfections or possibilities of mistake, and need of the help of others in discovering and correcting them, may be very humiliating to our pride and self-conceit; nevertheless it is essential to our individual progress toward the absolute truth and toward symmetry and beauty of character. Yet, in availing ourselves of it, we should be careful to avoid the opposite danger of falling into an indolent and slavish dependence on others—of giving up our minds and consciences into the keeping of others—but should vigorously endeavor to develop our own powers of perception and judg-

ment on all sides, that we may be competent for self-direction.

"Be thyself!" "Imitate no one!" are injunctions that have been often vociferated in our ears by a class of modern individualists. While there is a limited sphere wherein this may be good advice, yet, if pressed to the full, its tendency is to increase and intensify any wrong-headedness or perversity which may have been entailed upon us through heredity, however harmful to others or uncomfortable to ourselves. A far better precept is, "Know thyself!" and, having discovered defects, or deviations from the highest standard, seek to overcome them. Imitate that which is good and noble wherever seen, and live for the good of all.

Fortunately, though our characters may be written, or rather write themselves, on the bony surface of our craniums, they are not therefore fixed and unchangeable. The activity and the volume of the brain in its different parts or organs may be increased or lessened by appropriate exercise, as may that of any muscle of the body; and the skull will gradually yield in some degree to correspond, especially in early life; while increased or lessened activity in any part may be readily detected by increased or lessened temperature of the surface. The writer once saw the skull of a Hindu woman in which the parts directly overlying the alleged organs of veneration had been worn away on the under side to extreme thinness, evidently owing to great activity of those portions of the brain from some cause, late in life. This fact indicates that even the hardened skull of an adult is no insuperable obstacle to an increase of brain in any part, and thus to a modification of character.

But, of course, the most favorable time for changes and improvements—for overcoming undesirable hereditary tendencies and remedying defects—is in early life, when the cranium is measurably plastic and easily molded. Hence the importance of a judicious and all-sided culture in childhood and youth which shall secure a proper balance and due exercise of all the faculties—in place of the fragmentary methods of education now largely in vogue, which aim to train a few of the faculties only (mainly the memorizing and the imitative), leaving the rest to develop at random, or to fall into disuse and partial idleness. Not intellectual culture alone, but also moral, social, religious and spiritual, with physical and manual training as well, should be provided for every child. Our public school system, as well as family training, needs, and is susceptible of a vast improvement in this direction, for the best welfare of all. Manual or industrial education in our common schools, developing the constructive and origination faculties in useful directions, will be a great help toward securing a proper balance, since it will turn into higher channels that surplus of youthful vim which now largely expends itself in rough sports and brutal contests, tending to excessive combativeness, destructiveness, and other undesirable qualities. The moral, social, even the religious (and to some extent the spiritual) faculties may be well developed by appropriate means, and without the incubation of sectarian or questionable dogmas—thus producing that all-sided unfoldment which is essential to a well-balanced character and the just perception of truth. But this opens too large a subject to be further considered here.

The Magnetic Pole.

DESCRIPTION OF THE HOME OF THE AURORA BOREALIS.

For the same latitude, the United States is better situated than other lands to view the aurora borealis when it breaks forth, says a writer in the Youth's Companion. At Pekin, in China, a display of the northern lights has never been seen. The aurora borealis has a sort of pole of its own, or what we call the magnetic pole, a description of which you can look up in your cyclopaedia, which tell you that the needle of the compass here refuses to work, and that the magnetic needle, working in a vertical plane (or dip needle), stands straight up and down.

Now this magnetic pole is just north of the United States, and some fourteen hundred miles nearer to us than the geographical pole, or earth's axis, so this ready explanation we see more frequent displays of the northern lights than our opposite neighbors, who must be some fourteen hundred to fifteen hundred miles nearer the polar regions to see them as well as we do. But this magnetic pole is travelling slowly westward around the other pole, going around the earth on its parallel of latitude every one thousand or two thousand years, and the time will come in the far future that the Chinese at Pekin will have as frequent displays of the aurora borealis as we do now, and we will then have none.

The rate at which the magnetic pole travels has been given various values by different scientists. There seems to be a general movement westward around the world of all magnetic forces which the pole is only accompanying with all the rest.

When the mariner's compass was first discovered, or brought from China many hundreds of years ago, the needle pointed nearly north in England, and the magnetic pole was probably about Spitzbergen, or between that country and Greenland. Now the place where the needle points true north is in the United States, having crossed the Atlantic, and in Great Britain the magnetic needle points nearly northwest. And so the auroral displays, which are celestial manifestations of magnetic force, are also slowly travelling around the world every one thousand or two thousand years, giving each northern country a series of most beautiful effects.

An observer must get a few hundred miles away from the magnetic pole to see the greatest number of aurora borealis, and the finest displays of them.

Young man, a diamond pin looks real nice and glitters brightly, but when four dollars a week supports a man and pin both, one or the other is not genuine.

Post-Mortem Conversions is the title of a pamphlet of over a hundred pages, the contents of which purport to be the letters written through a mortal's hand by spirits who, in mortal, were officers at Harvard College, with comments by Allen Freeman & Henry Woodcock, of the Boston Herald, and phrasing the names of Abraham Lincoln, a literary producer, it might be said that "for those who had no sense of things, it will be a lesson about the things that are in the air." Boston, a. s. 1864.

On the seventh page of the present issue will be found an announcement made by Mr. L. W. Tuok, M. D., to which attention is hereby called.

EXAMINATIONS BY LOCK OF HAIR BY J. W.

