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Astral Intoxication
and
Other Papers

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ASTRAL INTOXICATION.

THERE IS SUCH a thing as being intoxicated in the course of an unwise pursuit of what we erroneously imagine is spirituality. In the Christian Bible it is very wisely directed to "prove all" and to hold only to that which is good; this advice is just as important to the student of occultism who thinks that he has separated himself from those "inferior" people engaged either in following a dogma or in tipping tables for messages from deceased relatives—or enemies—as it is to spiritists who believe in the "summerland" and "returning spirits."

The placid surface of the sea of spirit is the only mirror in which can be caught undisturbed the reflections of spiritual things. When a student starts upon the path and begins to see spots of light flash out now and then, or balls of golden fire roll past him, it does not mean that he is beginning to see the real Self—pure spirit. A moment of deepest peace or wonderful

revealings given to the student, is *not* the awful moment when one is about to see his spiritual guide, much less his own soul. Nor are psychical splashes of blue flame, nor visions of things that afterwards comes to pass, nor sights of small sections of the astral light with its wonderful photographs of past or future, nor the sudden ringing of distant fairy-like bells, any proof that you are cultivating spirituality. These things, and still more curious things, will occur when you have passed a little distance on the way, but they are only the mere outposts of a new land which is itself wholly material, and only one remove from the plane of gross physical consciousness.

The liability to be carried off and intoxicated by these phenomena is to be guarded against. We should watch, note and discriminate in all these cases; place them down for future reference, to be related to some law, or for comparison with other circumstances of a like sort. The power that Nature has of deluding us is endless, and if we stop at these matters she will let us go no further. It is not that

any person or power in nature has declared that if we do so and so we must stop, but when one is carried off by what Böhme calls "God's wonders," the result is an intoxication that produces confusion of the intellect. Were one, for instance, to regard every picture seen in the astral light as a spiritual experience, he might truly after a while brook no contradiction upon the subject, but that would be merely because he was drunk with this kind of wine. While he proceeded with his indulgence and neglected his true progress, which is always dependent upon his purity of motive and conquest of his known or ascertainable defects, nature went on accumulating the store of illusory appearances with which he satiated himself.

It is certain that any student who devotes himself to these astral happenings will see them increase. But were our whole life devoted to and rewarded by an enormous succession of phenomena, it is also equally certain that the casting off of the body would be the end of all that sort of experience, without our having added really any-

thing to our stock of true knowledge.

The astral plane, which is the same as that of our psychic senses, is as full of strange sights and sounds as an untrodden South American forest, and has to be well understood before the student can stay there long without danger. While we can overcome the dangers of a forest by the use of human inventions, whose entire object is the physical destruction of the noxious things encountered there, we have no such aids when treading the astral labyrinth. We may be physically brave and say that no fear can enter into us, but no untrained or merely curious seeker is able to say just what effect will result to his outer senses from the attack or influence encountered by the psychical senses.

And the person who revolves selfishly around himself as a centre is in greater danger of delusion than any one else, for he has not the assistance that comes from being united in thought with all other sincere seekers. One may stand in a dark house where none of the objects can be distinguished and quite plainly see all that is illuminated out-

side; in the same way we can see from out of the blackness of our own house—our hearts—the objects now and then illuminated outside by the astral light; but we gain nothing. We must first dispel the *inner* darkness before trying to see into the darkness without; we must *know ourselves* before knowing things extraneous to ourselves.

This is not the road that seems easiest to students. Most of them find it far pleasanter work, and as they think, faster, to look on all these outside allurements, and to cultivate all psychic senses, to the exclusion of real spiritual work.

The true road is plain and easy to find: it is so easy that very many would-be students miss it because they cannot believe it to be so simple.

“The way lies through the heart;”
Ask there and wander not;
Knock loud, nor hesitate
Because at first the sounds
Reverberating, seem to mock thee.
Nor, when the door swings wide,
Revealing shadows black as night,
Must thou recoil.
Within, the Master’s messengers
Have waited patiently:
That Master is Thyself!

DELUSIONS OF CLAIRVOYANCE.

SOME YEARS ago it was proposed that psychometry should be used in detecting crime and for the exposing of motive in all transactions between man and man. This, the alleged discoverer said, would alter the state of society by compelling people to be honest and by reducing crime. Now for those who do not know, it may be well to say that when you psychometrize you take any object that has been in the immediate vicinity of any person or place of any action, or the writing of another, and by holding it to your forehead or in the hand a picture of the event, the writer, the surroundings, and the history of the object, comes before your mental eye with more or less accuracy. Time and distance are said to make no difference, for the wrapping from a mummy has been psychometrized by one who knew nothing about it, and the mummy with its supposed history accurately described. Letters also have been

similarly treated without reading them, and not only their contents given but also the unexpressed thoughts and the surroundings of the writers. Clairvoyants have also on innumerable occasions given correct descriptions of events and persons they could never have seen or known. But other innumerable times they have failed.

Without doubt if the city government, or any body of people owning property that can be stolen, had in their employment a man or woman who could declare beyond possibility of ever failing where any stolen article was, and who stole it, and could in advance indicate a purpose on the part of another to steal, to trick, to lie, or otherwise do evil, one of two things would happen. Either criminals or intending offenders would abide elsewhere, or some means of getting rid of the clear-seer would be put into effect. Looking at the alluring possibilities of clairvoyance so far as it is understood, many persons have sighed for its power for several different reasons. Some would use it for the purposes described, but many another has

thought of it merely as a new means for furthering personal ends.

Its delusions are so manifold that, although mystical and psychical subjects have obtained in the public mind a new standing, clairvoyance will not be other than a curiosity for some time, and when its phenomena and laws are well understood no reliance greater than now will be placed upon it. And even when individual clairvoyants of wonderful power are known, they will not be accessible for such uses, because, having reached their power by special training, the laws of their school will prohibit the exercise of the faculty at the bidding of selfish interest, whether on the one side or the other.

If it were not always a matter of doubt and difficulty, natural clear-seers would have long ago demonstrated the unerring range of their vision by discovering criminals still uncaught, by pointing out where stolen property could be recovered, by putting a finger on a moral plague-spot which is known to exist but cannot be located. Yet this they have not done, and careful Theosophists are confirmed in the old

teaching that the field of clairvoyance is full of delusions. Coming evil could in the same way be averted, since present error is the prelude and cause of future painful results.

The prime cause for delusion is that the thought of anything makes around the thinker an image of the thing thought about. And all images in this thought-field are alike, since we remember an object by our thought-image of it, and not by carrying the object in our heads. Hence the picture in our aura of what we have seen in the hands of another is of the same sort—for untrained seers—as our ideas on the subject of events in which we have not participated. So a clairvoyant may, and in fact does, mistake these thought-pictures one for the other, thus reducing the chances of certainty. If an anxious mother imagines her child in danger and with vivid thought pictures the details of a railway accident, the picture the seer may see will be of something that never happened and is only the product of emotion or imagination.

Mistakes in identity come next.

These are more easily made in the astral plane—which is the means for clairvoyance—than even upon the visible one, and will arise from numerous causes. So numerous and complex are these, that to fully explain them would not only be hopeless but tedious. For instance, the person, say at a distance, to whom the clairvoyant eye is directed may look entirely different from reality, whether as to clothing or physiognomy. He may, in the depths of winter, appear clad in spring clothing, and your clairvoyant report that, adding probably that it symbolises something next spring. But, in fact, the spring clothing was due to his thoughts about a well-worn comfortable suit of this sort throwing a glamor of the clothing before the vision of the seer. Some cases exactly like this I have known and verified. Or the lover, dwelling on the form and features of his beloved, or the criminal upon the one he has wronged, will work a protean change and destroy identification.

Another source of error will be found in the unwitting transfer to the clairvoyant of your own thoughts,

much altered either for better or worse. Or even the thoughts of some one else whom you have just met or heard from. For if you consult the seer on some line of thought, having just read the ideas on the same subject of another who thinks very strongly and very clearly, and whose character is overmastering, the clairvoyant will ten to one feel the influence of the other and give you his ideas.

Reversion of image is the last I will refer to. It has been taught always in the unpopular school of Theosophy that the astral light reverses the images, just as science knows the image on the retina is not upright. Not only have the Cabalists said this, but also the Eastern schools, and those who now have studied these doctrines along theosophical lines have discovered it to be a fact. So the untrained clairvoyant may see a number or amount backwards, or an object upside down in whole or in part. The reliance we can place on the observations of untrained people in ordinary life the scientific schools and courts of law have long ago discovered; but seekers

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after the marvellous carelessly accept the observations of those who must be equally untrained in the field of clairvoyance. Of course there are many genuine cases of good clear-seeing, but the mass are not to be relied on. The cultivation of psychic senses is more difficult than any physical gymnastics, and the number of really trained clairvoyants in the Western world may be described by a nought written to the left.

SHALL WE TEACH CLAIRVOYANCE?

A NOTE OF WARNING.

MY ATTENTION has been arrested by the address delivered in the Adyar course by Dr. Daly and reported in the September *Theosophist*. It is entitled "Clairvoyance."

Coming out in the Adyar course, it has a certain flavor of authority which will appeal to many members of the Society and may cause them to adopt the suggestions for practice given in the latter part of the address. Yet at the same time it is very true that the

Theosophical Society is not responsible for the utterances of members in their private capacity.

The fact that clairvoyance is a power sought after by many persons cannot be disputed, but the questions, Is it well to try to develop clairvoyance? and, Shall we teach it? have not yet been definitely decided. Hence I may be permitted to give my views upon them.

At the outset I desire to declare my personal attitude on these questions and my beliefs as to facts. In using the term "clairvoyance" I intend to include in it all clear perception on that plane.

1. I have for many years been convinced by proofs furnished by others and from personal experience that clairvoyance is a power belonging to man's inner nature; and also that it is possessed by the animal kingdom.

2. This faculty is either inherited or educed by practice.

3. Those who have it by birth are generally physically diseased or nervously deranged. The cases where clairvoyance is shown by a perfectly healthy and well-balanced person are rare.

4. The records of spiritualism for over forty years in America conclusively prove that clairvoyance cannot be safely sought after by persons who have no competent guide ; that its pursuit has done harm ; and that almost every medium to whom one puts the question "Am I able to develop clairvoyance?" will reply "Yes."

5. There are no competent guides in this pursuit to be found here or in Europe who are willing to teach one how to acquire it without danger.

6. The qualifications such a guide should possess render the finding of one difficult if not impossible. They are: the power to look within and see clearly the whole inner nature of the student; a complete knowledge of all the planes upon which clairvoyance acts, including knowledge of the source, the meaning, and the effect of all that is perceived by the clairvoyant; and last, but not least, the ability to stop at will the exercise of the power. Evidently these requirements call for an adept.

Who are the teachers of clairvoyance, and those who advise that it be practiced? In the main, the first are

mediums, and any investigator knows how little they know. Every one of them differs from every other in his powers. The majority have only one sort of clairvoyance; here and there are some who combine, at most, three classes of the faculty. Not a single one is able to mentally see behind the image or idea perceived, and cannot say in a given case whether the image seen is the object itself or the result of a thought from another mind. For in these planes of perception the thoughts of men become as objective as material objects are to our human eyes. It is true that a clairvoyant can tell you that what is being thus perceived is not apprehended by the physical eye, but beyond that he cannot go. Of this I have had hundreds of examples. In ninety-nine out of a hundred instances the seer mistook the thought from another mind for a clairvoyant perception of a living person or physical object.

The seers of whom I speak see always according to their inner tendency, which is governed by subtle laws of heredity which are wholly unknown

to scientific men and much more to mediums and seers. One will reach only the symbolic plane; another that which is known to occultists as the positive side of sound; another to the negative or positive aspects of the epidermis and its emanations; and so on through innumerable layer after layer of clairvoyance and octave after octave of vibrations. They all know but the little they have experienced, and for any other person to seek to develop the power is dangerous. The philosophy of it all, the laws that cause the image to appear and disappear, are *terra incognita*.

The occult septenary scheme in nature with all its modifications produces multiple effects, and no mere clairvoyant is able to see the truth that underlies the simplest instance of clairvoyant perception. If a man moves from one chair to another, immediately hundreds of possibilities arise for the clairvoyant eye, and he alone who is a highly trained and philosophical seer—an adept, in short—can combine them all so as to arrive at true clear-perception. In the simple act described

almost all the centres of force in the moving being go into operation, and each one produces its own peculiar effect in the astral light. At once the motion made and thoughts aroused elicit their own sound, color, motion in ether, amount of etheric light, symbolic picture, disturbance of elemental forces, and so on through the great catalogue. Did one but wink his eye, the same effects follow in due order. And the seer can perceive but that which attunes itself to his own development and personal peculiarities, all limited in force and degree.

What, may I ask, do clairvoyants know of the law of prevention or encrustation which is acting always with many people? Nothing, absolutely nothing. How do they explain those cases where, try as they will, they cannot see anything whatever regarding certain things? Judging from human nature and the sordidness of many schools of clairvoyance, are we not safe in affirming that if there were any real or reliable clairvoyance about us now-a-days among those who offer to teach it or take pay for it, long ago

fortunes would have been made by them, banks despoiled, lost articles found, and friends more often reunited? Admitting that there have been sporadic instances of success on these lines, does not the exception prove that true clairvoyance is not understood or likely to be?

But what shall theosophists do? Stop all attempts at clairvoyance. And why? Because it leads them slowly but surely—almost beyond recall—into an interior and exterior passive state where the will is gradually overpowered and they are at last in the power of the demons who lurk around the threshold of our consciousness. Above all, follow no advice to “sit for development.” Madness lies that way. The feathery touches which come upon the skin while trying these experiments are said by mediums to be the gentle touches of “the spirits.” But they are not. They are caused by the ethereal fluids from within us making their way out through the skin and thus producing the illusion of a touch. When enough has gone out, then the victim is getting gradually negative, the future

prey for spooks and will-o'-the-wisp images.

“But *what*,” they say, “shall we pursue and study?” Study the philosophy of life, leave the decorations that line the road of spiritual development for future lives, and—practice altruism.