

MYSTERIES OF HYPNOTISM

LECTURE ON THE EVOLUTION OF A SIXTH SENSE.

DR. HENRY S. DRAYTON DISCUSSES THE MYSTERIOUS POWER GIVEN TO MANY PERSONS TO SEE VISIONS.

It is doubtful if there has ever been a larger or more interested audience at any meeting of the New-York Society of Anthropology than appeared yesterday in the small hall of Cooper Institute. It had become known that Dr. Henry S. Drayton would speak concerning thought transference and the communication of ideas independent of the senses. The lecturer chose for his subject "The Evolution of a 'Sixth Sense,'" and was followed throughout his discourse with the greatest interest. When Dr. Drayton concluded, many of his hearers contributed experiences of visions particularly those concerning persons.

The extraordinary development of the power of delicate perception, the lecturer said, had been described by Sir William Thomson as the sixth sense, but this classification may be disputed or it might be widened so as to embrace the power, always mysterious, which has been given to many persons to witness visions. There were numerous examples of the special culture of the senses, for instance, that of the worker of textile materials, the beater of metals, the Indian scout who knew the description of the man who stole his deer simply from ordinary evidences which he left behind, of the tea taster, whose delicate sense was so refined that he could distinguish and properly classify 100 varieties of the leaf.

Dr. Drayton instanced the case of deaf, blind, and dumb Laura Bridgman, whose power of touch and ability to absorb intellectual refinement was only through this source. He told of the enormous vibration necessary for a perception of color. It was more than probable, he said, that the time will come when a man's sensuous qualities will become so delicate that he will be able to see and hear better than are his wildest desires at present. Thomson, in defining hypnotism as the sixth sense, at least indicated his appreciation of the importance of this transference of will. The speaker mentioned the recent experiments by a committee of physicians of the University of Paris and declared that they had demonstrated its power, particularly in one phase—that of carrying out the will of the operator by the subject after the trance state had passed. This opened broad possibilities of moral influences which might be exerted for good or evil. He instanced the case of the gendarme who was instructed in his trance to leave the lecture room upon reviving and go into the garden and stab a man with a wooden spatula. The gendarme stabbed a tree in the exact location described, and then manifested all the remorse of a murderer.

Concerning the influence of one mind upon another when the circumstances were equal, the lecturer dwelt at length. "It has been experienced very often by many persons," he went on, "that after intense or particularly serious thought of some friend the door of one's study has opened and the friend actually appeared. Sometimes one has a strong longing for the presence of another person. In a day or so he comes to you and says: 'Did you want me? On such and such a day I thought I heard you call my name.' Two persons may unquestionably, and very often do, place themselves in perfect accord in this way, being able to absorb one another's thought without utterance. The London Society for Psychological Research has experimented with this thought-absorption."

Then Dr. Drayton instanced a case where a series of the most conventional drawings were made in a room apart from the one where the subject (a lady) was sitting. The operator, fixing in his mind the form of one of these drawings, would enter the room, stand behind the subject, and, without any exchange, the latter could within a short time reproduce the form, though she had never seen it. "In India the secret mail," Dr. Drayton went on, "has always been a mystery to Europeans. During the mutiny the sepoys were constantly receiving the most important secrets of the English, with little doubt by means of this transference of ideas. The American Indian, too, has much the same power of making one of his race afar off think as he desires him to do. This power he calls by the general term of medicine."

"Many say that we have the sixth sense in intuition. How many persons have been withheld from journeys which, had they undertaken them, would have meant certain death. How many have preserved other persons' lives by this same strange feeling! Prof. Proctor frequently related an anecdote of Abraham Lincoln's dream just before the assassination. It was at the Cabinet meeting the day before the fatal shot was fired. Lincoln said: 'Gentlemen, something very extraordinary is going to happen, and shortly, too.' He was asked why. 'Don't know,' he replied, 'but I have had the same dream three times, once before Bull Run, once before another disastrous battle, and again last night.' When asked its character he said: 'Well, I am on a great river, and I am in a boat adrift—adrift. But this is not business.' Next night he was shot. One step and we are brought into what may be called the post-mortem stage of human vision. We are continually reading and hearing of the appearance of certain forms—of dying friends and of persons long dead."

Dr. Drayton then spoke of the phenomena related in the book of Dr. Clarke of Boston and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes's indorsement of them, and gave some of the results of the work of the Society for Psychological Research, and then declared: "Modern Spiritualism is a thing of tinsel, deception, and unbelief; but, however this may be, when the London society set about collecting evidences of psychical phenomena it was overwhelmed with the great number of letters. In Johns Hopkins University at Baltimore they consider this matter seriously and study it as a science. They use children as subjects, for they believe that the results from such a source are more likely to be freed from extraneous influences."

Dr. Drayton believed that persons who are inconvertible skeptics in regard to this matter of psychical phenomena should confine themselves to physical research and not interfere with the men who are engaged in the investigation of the mystery which still surrounds hypnotism at its furthest development.