Phantasmium.

A NEW AND STARTLING USE OF THE SPECTROSCOPE.

HAGERSTOWN, Md., July 16, 1873.—Doctor Ambrose Pennywick, a Baltimore chemist, well known for his beautiful studies of the spectroscope, an instrument which he has made a specialty for some years, has been spending the summer in this beautiful country, in order at once to continue his experiments in quiet and to recuperate his health, which has been injured by exhaustive application. He has a cottage on the edge of the town, near the cemetery, and brought here his most delicate test instruments, wishing, if possible, to perfect the analysis he has undertaken of the supposed new metal, helium, which Mr. Lockyer detected in the solar spectrum.

Since he came here he has been much interested in the case of Miss Rachel Lindquist, a Swedish lady, far gone in a consumption, who has for some years been a music teacher here, and is a particular favorite with our citizens, by reason of her gentle manners and her remarkable talent for music. This young lady, of a morbidly nervous temperament—she is the frailest, most spiritual-looking being imaginable, apparently only a soul lightly imprisoned in an almost transparent case—has, ever since her health began to decline, been subject to distressing spectral illusions, as the doctors called them. She is familiarly known, as "the ghost-seer," and the illusions are so painful in their character that she does not dare to go near a graveyard at night, for the sights she beholds in those localities always throw her into a nervous fever, from which it takes her several days to recover.

Miss Lindquist, who is a very modest, retiring person, has been so much pestered in regard to this matter by a small, but by no means choice tribe of "Spiritualists" of this region, that she is very reluctant to speak of her visions even to her medical advisers. Dr. Pennywick, however, has a way of winning the confidence of every one by honestly deserving it. He showed Miss Rachael that his interest in her was a human and kindly, not merely a scientific interest, and he was able to give her some palliatives that sensibly diminished her sufferings. Hence, when he heard of those illusions and questioned her about them, she readily told him all that she had seen, and described the visions to him as accurately as she could. These visions were not illusions, she said, for they did not visit her in her privacy, nor could she call them before her by an exercise of the will or an indulgence of the imagination. They were luminous appearances which she only saw as emanations over graves; they were more visible in dark nights, and more distinct over recent graves. These emissions of light had no motion from place to place; the focus of each emanation was the grave from which it streamed up; the emanations, however, were always in motion, flickering, quivering, pulsing, waning; now flaming up some yards in height, then shrinking down again to a mere dim, luminous hemisphere. The motions she described as most resembling those of certain brilliant appearances of the Aurora Borealis, which she had witnessed. The light of the apparitions was white, semi-transparent, but not flame-like; rather it resembled filmy, thin, grayish clouds, which, somehow, had a sort of cold, self-radiance. She was always afraid to go near one of these apparitions, which never approached her, but when she had done so, on two or three occasions, she had been conscious of a change—a sort of depressing atmosphere that chilled her to the heart.

Dr. Pennywick listened to her very attentively, and questioned her closely. "My dear," said he, "either, in the morbidly excited state of your system you are victimized by impressions to which more healthy persons are impervious, or else, your sensibilities being refined by disease, you see what is denied to the average eye. But, if you see an actual object, and that object is a luminous one, I may not be able to see it, but my little instrument here will enable me to measure and to test it; and I'll make the experiment. Come with me and point me out one of those graves that has its lumen, that I may bring the spectroscope to bear upon it for the good of science."

In this way was the first step initiated towards what may turn out to be one of the greatest discoveries of modern science. Dr. Pennycuick argued that the spectroscope must tell him *something* in regard to a luminosity, no matter of what sort. He is fully advanced in the modern theories, and he is well acquainted with the, as yet, unbridged problems of animal magnetism. Reichenbach's idea of *odyle* and the *odic force* occurred to him at once, and he conceived that Reichenbach's experiments, if they had been conducted in a more genuinely scientific spirit, and with more suitable instruments, might have resulted very differently. Spirits Dr. Pennywick did not believe in, any more than he believed that light and heat could be evolved from the sun without the operation of force. Upon this basis, therefore, he has attempted to bring spectres within the ken of the spectroscope.

This is not the place, nor am I at liberty to give the process resorted to by Dr. Pennycuick. He is only upon the threshold of his discoveries, and he has barely permitted me, after much solicitation, to give in general terms some of the results to which he has so far attained with a remarkable degree of certainty. These results may be briefly summarized as follows:

1. What are called apparitions are but conditions of the force, which has been called animal magnetism.

2. These conditions seem to be subject to the influences of changes (molecular or other) in a subtile ether, which seems to be continually effluent from the bodies of men, and some other animals, and also plants. It is likewise present (statically) in certain minerals, and in fluids at certain degrees of cohesion.

3. Some of these conditions of this ether (which Dr. Pennycuick has provisionally named *lumen*) are capable of being detected by a particular adaptation of the spectroscope which Dr. Pennycuick has invented.

4. He has by this means discovered that the *lumen*, is an ethereal substance or gas, produced by the volatilization of a new metal.

5. This metal, known to be such by its characteristic lines in the spectroscope, is volatilized at an inconceivably low temperature. He calls it *Phantasmium*.

6. Its ethereality and tenuity are so great that it is apparently, as much more imponderable than hydrogen, as hydrogen is more imponderable than lead.

7. It is consequently agitated by influences inconceivably more subtle than those which influence other substances.

8. Consequently, the greater part of its operations are entirely out of the range of human perception or instrumental tests, as instruments now are. Certain peculiarly organized temperaments, however, are vaguely conscious of their action upon it and its reciprocal action within them; and, moreover, certain other of its conditions are cumulative enough to impress themselves perceptibly upon delicate test instruments in a constant manner.

9. Dr. Pennycuick is inclined to believe that nearly all the phenomena of what is called sympathetic nervous action are to be traced to the varying conditions of this ethereal *lumen*.

10. He thinks it probable that its dynamic influences are the foundation of nearly everything in the human race which is vaguely grouped under the head of idiosyncrasy. To trace up and classify these dynamic influences will, therefore, be one of the most important objects of the students of the future.

These dynamic conditions, he thinks, can be regularly *induced*, and, when that is successfully performed, everything like peculiarity of temperament, and consequently, which is now known as sufferingev erything and pain, can be made to disappear from the inheritances of the human race.

If I had time and were permitted, I would tell you instances of this dynamic induction performed by Dr. Pennycuick that make the most wonderful experiments of the pseudo-psychologists seem tame and trivial. He has already disposed of the spiritualists, by showing his ability to reproduce all their phenomena without the aid of spirits. But it would require a volume to give details of this remarkable discovery, and this volume Dr. Pennycuick will himself write when his experiments have sufficiently advanced.

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