

**THE CENTURY  
ILLUSTRATED MONTHLY  
MAGAZINE.**

**May 1888, to October 1888**

**THE CENTURY CO., NEW-YORK.**

**T. FISHER UNWIN, LONDON**

**Vol. XXXVI**

**New Series Vol. XIV.**

Transcribed by Blake Linton Wilfong  
aka The Wondersmith  
for Dream Central Station  
[wondersmith.com/dreams](http://wondersmith.com/dreams)

**DREAMS, NIGHTMARE, AND SOMNAMBULISM.**

SEVERAL men and women, most of whom were intellectual and cultivated, were conversing upon some of the more unusual phases of human nature. Various incidents, some of thrilling interest, had been narrated, when a dream was related of such remarkable detail—with which, as it was alleged, subsequent events corresponded—that it seemed as though “it were not all a dream”; and during the remainder of a long evening similar tales were told, until it appeared that all except two or three dreamed frequently. Finally it was proposed to ascertain the opinions of every one present on the subject.

One plainly said that he did not believe in them at all. When he was suffering from indigestion, or was overtired, or had a great deal on his mind, he dreamed; and when he was well and not overworked, he did not, and “that is all there is in it.” But he added that there was one which he could never quite understand, and gave an account of a dream which his brother had had about the wrecking of a steamer. This caused him not to take passage on it, and the vessel was lost, and every person in the cabin was either seriously injured or drowned. At this a lady said that she had been in the habit of dreaming all her life, and nearly everything good or bad that had happened to her had been foreshadowed in dreams.

It was soon apparent that three out of four did not believe dreams to be supernatural, or preternatural, or that they have any connection with the events by which they are followed; but nearly every one had had a dream or had been the subject of one; or his mother, or grandmother or some other relative or near friend, had in dreams seen things which seemed to have been shadows of coming events.

One person affirmed that he had never dreamed: he was either awake or asleep when he was in bed; and if he were asleep, he knew nothing from the time he closed his

eyes until he awoke.

Some expressed the belief that minds influence each other in dreams, and thus knowledge is communicated which could never have been obtained by natural means. One gentleman thought that in this way the spirits of the dead frequently communicate with the living; and another, a very devout Christian, suggested that in ancient times God spoke to his people in dreams, and warned them; and for his part he could see no good reason why a method which the Deity employed then should not be used now. At all events, he had no sympathy with those who were disposed to speak slightly of dreams, and say that there is nothing in them; he considered it but a symptom of the skeptical spirit that is destroying religion. Whereupon a lady said that this was her opinion too, and, turning to one of those who had stoutly ridiculed dreams, said, "There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

## THE HISTORY AND PHENOMENA OF DREAMS.

IN this paper, by *dreams* is meant the visions which occur in natural sleep; by *nightmare*, a dream unusually intense, involving a terrifying sense of danger and a physical condition to be more fully described; and by *somnambulism*, talking, walking, or performing other actions under the influence of a dream attending natural sleep.

*Dreams* are frequently spoken of, and in almost every possible aspect, by the oldest books of the world. In the Bible, God speaks in a dream to Jacob about the increase of the cattle, and warns Laban not to obstruct Jacob's departure. The dreams of Joseph, unsurpassed even from a literary point of view, and of Pharaoh, with a history of their fulfillment, occupy a large part of the first book. The dream of Solomon and the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, the warning of Joseph to take the young child into Egypt, are parts of the history of the Christian religion. These being attributed to supernatural influence can reflect no light upon ordinary phenomena.

But the Bible itself distinguishes between natural dreams and such as these. It states very clearly the characteristics of dreams. The hypocrite "shall fly away as a dream, and shall not be found: yea, he shall be chased away as a vision of the night." Savid says, "As a dream when one awaketh," the Lord shall despise the image of the proud. Solomon speaks of the character of dreams thus: "For in the multitude of dreams and many words there are also divers vanities"; of their general causes he says, "For a dream cometh through the multitude of business."

Cicero says that men of greatest wisdom among the Romans did not think it beneath them to heed the warnings of important dreams, and affirms that in his time the senate ordered Lucius Junius to erect a tempt to Juno Sospita, in compliance with a dream seen by Cecilia. Scipio's dream, philosophical, imaginative, grand, published in the works of Cicero, called the most beautiful thing of the kind ever written, has from its origin until now been the subject of discussion as to whether it was composed by Cicero for a purpose or is the veritable account of a dream.

Almost all the great characters described by Herodotus believed that dreams were of supernatural origin. Kings resigned their scepters; Cambyses assassinated his brother; priests attained great power as commanders; cities which had been destroyed were restored by men who changed their plans and performed those acts because warned, as they supposed, in dreams; and with the invasion of Greece by Xerxes such night

visions had much to do. Plato and Socrates believed in dreams, and even Aristotle admitted that they might have a supernatural origin.

There are persons who affirm that they have never dreamed. It is obvious that all to which they can testify is that they have never remembered a dream. Their evidence is therefore untrustworthy as to the fact of dreaming; for it is known that the recollections of dreams, as a general rule, are very imperfect. Countless details have fled away; the scenes have been inextricably interwoven with each other. A dreamer may be confident that he has dreamed hundreds of dreams, during any given night, and yet not be able to recall with distinctness more than one or two. Besides, observation of some persons who declare that they never dream has demonstrated the contrary; for not only have they moved in ways which indicated that they were dreaming, but talked, and even responded to questions.

Upon only one phase of the subject is there substantial agreement among investigators, and that is upon the general characteristics of dreams. Time and space are annihilated, and all true estimates confounded. As a rule, to which there are occasional exceptions, nothing appears strange, and the impressions which would be made by similar events in the waking state are not made; or, if at all, so slightly as not to produce their customary effects. Identity being often lost, no surprise is produced by a change of sex, age, name, country, or occupation. A young lady dreamed of seeing herself in her coffin, of listening to the observations of the mourners, and was not astonished to find herself dead, nor, that being dead, she could hear. She was not even surprised when the funeral services closed without the coffin lid being shut down; nor when, in a very short time, she dreamed of being alive and engaged in her usual pursuits.

But the moment we pass beyond general statements of this character, opinions of the most incongruous and even contradictory are held, and strenuously advocated by representative writers in every profession.\*

[\*Those who desire to see the opinions of leading writers, ancient and modern, down to the year 1865, and have not time to consult them in their own works, may find in Seafield's "Literature and Curiosities of Dreams" a very extensive collection. This work has been criticised within a year or so as containing a large amount of valuable but *undigested* information. The criticism is not just, for it does not profess to have digested, but to present all for the digestion of others. The author expressly declares that he has "foregone such chances of greater credit and importance, as would have been open to him if he had seemed to claim the whole as original, by incorporating the several theories and anecdotes with textual commentary of his own."

More recent investigations of great presumptive importance have introduced an immense amount of new matter into the literature and considerable into the "curiosities" of dreams, or at least of dream investigations. I have found that some of the passages quoted by Seafield, read in their original setting, or compared with all the authors have said, require important modifications, if taken as expressions of mature opinion.]

*Nightmare* is something so terrible that its very name attributes its origin to the devil. The meaning of "mare" is an incubus, as of a spirit which torments persons in sleep. In nightmare the mind is conscious of an impossibility of motion, speech, or respiration, with a dreadful sense of pressure across the chest, and an awful vision of impending danger. The victim sometimes realizes his peril, gathers all his forces, struggles vainly, and endeavors to shout for help. At last, by a desperate effort, he succeeds in screaming. If then some friendly touch or voice awaken him, the vision flees, and he is left stertorously breathing, perspiring, and more tired than if he had broken stone or

worked in a tread-mill for as many hours as the nightmare lasted minutes. If he be not aroused, he may be awakened by his own screams; otherwise the incubus may not depart for a considerable period, which, though short in actual time, seems like ages to him.

A young man under the writer's care was subject to attacks so harrowing that it was excruciating to be in the room with him during the paroxysm. Sometimes after he was awakened the terrifying vision would not wholly fade away for three-quarters of an hour or more, during which his shrieks and groans and appeals to God and the unutterable expression of agony upon his face were terrible. In the city of Philadelphia, but a few months since, a lad, having been exceptionally healthy from birth, was attacked with nightmare when fourteen years old. After a few attacks his father slept with him for the purpose of awakening him if there should be occasion. One night the father was startled by the voice of his boy calling in terrified tones, "Pop! Pop! I am afraid!" He felt the hand of his son nervously clutching his wrist. Then the boy fainted, and died instantly. The post-mortem examination showed a large clot of blood about the heart, caused by paralysis due to fear. There is reason to believe that such instances are numerous enough to make nightmare worthy of serious medical investigation.

In nightmare, as A. Briere de Boismont shows, the incubus takes different forms. Sometimes the subject fancies he flies in the air. He gives the case of a distinguished writer, whom he had seen in that state, uttering inarticulate sounds—his hair bristling, his countenance full of terror. At such times he would exclaim, "How surprising! I fly like the wind! I pass over mountains and precipices!" For several seconds after awaking he still imagined himself floating in the air. Others skim over the ground, pursued or threatened by dangers.

In childhood and youth, according to the same author, the individual is upon the edge of precipices, about to fall. In later years, robbers are breaking into the house, or the victim supposes himself condemned to death. Occasionally cats, or some other animals or monsters, place themselves upon the stomach. "The weight of this imaginary being stifles, while it freezes the blood with horror." While not every case of nightmare is attended with motion or sound, the reader will observe that nightmare passes into somnambulism when the victim shrieks or leaps from his bed, or makes any motion.

*Somnambulism*, in its simplest form, is seen when persons talk in their sleep. They are plainly asleep and dreaming; yet the connection, ordinarily broken, between the physical organs and the images passing through the mind is retained or resumed, in whole or in part. It is very common for children to talk more or less in their sleep; also many persons who do not usually do so are liable to mutter if they have overeaten, or are feverish or otherwise ill. Slight movements are very frequent. Many who do not fancy that they have ever exhibited the germs of somnambulism groan, cry out, whisper, move the hand, or foot, or head, plainly in connection with ideas passing through the mind. From these incipient manifestations of no importance somnambulism reaches frightful intensity and almost inconceivable complications.

Somnambulists in this country have recently perpetrated murders, have even killed their own children; they have carried furniture out of houses, wound up clocks, ignited conflagrations. A carpenter not long since arose in the night, went into his shop, and began to file a saw; but the noise of the operation awoke him. The extraordinary feats of somnambulists in ascending to the roofs of houses, threading dangerous places, and

doing many other things which they could not have done while awake have often been described, and in many cases made the subject of close investigation. Formerly it was believed by many that if they were not awakened they would in process of time return to their beds, and that there would not be any danger of serious accident happening to them. This has long been proved false. Many have fallen out of windows and been killed; and though some have skirted the brink of danger safely, the number of accidents to sleeping persons is great.

Essays have been written by somnambulists. A young lady, troubled and anxious about a prize for which she was to compete, involving the writing of an essay, arose from her bed in sleep and wrote a paper upon a subject upon which she had not intended to write when awake; and this essay secured for her the prize. The same person, later in life, while asleep selected an obnoxious paper from among several documents, put it in a cup, and set fire to it. She was entirely unaware of the transaction in the morning.

Intellectual work has sometimes been done in ordinary dreams not attended by somnambulism. The composition of the "Kubla Khan" by Coleridge while asleep and of the "Devil's Sonata," by Tartini, are paralleled in a small way frequently. Public speakers often dream out discourses; and there is a clergyman now residing in the western part of New York State who, many years ago, dreamed that he preached a powerful sermon upon a certain topic, and delivered that identical discourse the following Sunday with great effect. But such compositions are not somnambulistic unless accompanied by some outward motion at the time.

### SEARCHING FOR ANALOGIES

THREE different views of dreams are possible, and all have been held and strenuously advocated. The first is that the soul is never entirely inactive, and that dream images proceed all the time through the mind when in sleep. Richard Baxter held this view and attempted to prove it by saying, "I never awaked, since I had the use of memory, but I found myself coming out a dream. And I suppose they that think they dream not, think so because they forget their dreams." Bishop Newton says that the deepest sleep which possesses the body cannot affect the soul, and attempts to prove it by showing that the impressions are often stronger and the images more lively when we are asleep than when awake. Dr. Watts held the same view, and devoted a great deal of attention to it in his philosophical essays. Sir William Hamilton was inclined to the same belief, because, having had himself waked up on many occasions, he always found that he was engaged in dreaming.

Baxter's theory is an assumption of which no adequate proof can be offered; and Sir William Hamilton's test is inadequate, because an instant of time, even the minute fraction that elapses between the time that a man's name is called or his body touched for the purpose of awaking him and the resumption of consciousness, may be long enough for a dream of the most elaborate character. Sir Henry Holland fell asleep while a friend was reading to him. He heard the first part of a sentence, was awake in the beginning of the next sentence, and during that time had had a dream which would take him a quarter of an hour to write down.

Lord Brougham and others have maintained that we never dream except in a state

of transition from sleeping to waking. Sir Benjamin Brodie, in speaking of this, says, "There is no sufficient proof of this being so; and we have a proof to the contrary in the fact that nothing is more common than for persons to moan, and even talk, in their sleep without awaking from it."

The third theory is that in perfect sleep there is little or no dreaming. This is supported by various considerations. The natural presumption is that the object of sleep is to give rest, and that perfect sleep would imply the cessation of brain action; and it is found that "the more continuous and uninterrupted is our dreaming, the less refreshing is our sleep." Recent experiments of great interest appear to confirm this view. The effect of stimuli, whether of sound, touch, smell, sight, or hearing, in modifying the dreams without awaking the sleeper—or in awaking him—all point in the same direction; and though there is always some sense of time when awaking, which proves that the mind has to some extent been occupied, in the soundest sleep, it is so slight as to seem as if the person had just laid down, though many hours may have passed. Whereas, just in proportion as the dreams are remembered, or as the fact of dreams are remembered, or as the fact of dreaming can be shown by any method, is the sense of time the longer. I do not speak of the heavy, dull sleep which, without apparent dreams, results from plethora, or sometimes accompanies an overloaded stomach, or is the result of overexhaustion, or occasionally supervenes after protracted vigils, but of the very sound sleep enjoyed by the working classes when in health, or by vigorous children.

The most interesting question is, Can a theory of dreams be constructed which will explain them upon natural principles, without either the assumption of materialism, or an idealism akin to superstition? It is to be understood that no phenomena can be explained at the last analysis; but a theory which will, without violence, show the facts to be in harmony with natural laws, or bring them within the range of things natural, so that they are seen to belong to a general class, and to be subject to the relation of antecedents and consequents, is an explanation. For example, electricity defies final analysis; but its modes of action are known, and even the greatest of mysteries, the form of induction which now surprises the world in the recently invented process of telegraphing from moving trains, is as susceptible of this kind of explanation as the action of steam in propelling a train or a steamship.

We begin with analogies, and find these in the effect of drugs, such as opium, alcohol, nitrous-oxide gas, hasheesh, etc. De Quincey describes all the experiences of dreams, both before and after he entered into a state of sleep, as resulting from the use of opium; and the peculiar sleep produced by that drug is attended by dreams marked by all the characteristics of those which occur in natural sleep. The effect of alcohol in setting up a dream state in the mind while the senses are not locked in sleep is, unfortunately, too well known. When a certain point is reached in intoxication the will is weakened, the automatic machinery takes control, the judgment is dethroned, and images—some grotesque and others terrible—having the power of exciting the corresponding emotions hurry through the mind until frenzy is reached, subsequent to which a heavy stupor ends the scene. When the drunken man becomes sober, his recollections of what he has done are as vague and uncertain as those of dreamers; and a similar inability to measure the flight of time, to perceive the incongruity of images, the moral character of actions, and the value and force of words, characterizes

this state which attends dreaming. Ether, and chloroform, and nitrous-oxide gas, when the amount administered is not sufficient to produce unconsciousness, cause similar effects. The writer, being compelled to undergo a surgical operation at a time when he was greatly absorbed in the then impending civil war, by the advice of physicians took ether, the effect of which was to lead to a harangue upon abolitionism, in which some profane language was used. As the effect deepened, though it was at no time sufficient to produce absolute unconsciousness, the scene changed, and devotional hymns were sung, and a solemn farewell taken of the physicians and surgeon, who were warned to prepare to die. Of all this the remembrance was analogous to that of dreams.

The influence of hasheesh has received much attention, and has been outlined in scientific works and literary compositions. The most striking account of its effects is that of M. Théophile Gautier, originally published in "La Presse" and quoted in many works. Under the influence of hasheesh his eyelashes seemed to lengthen indefinitely, twisting themselves like golden threads around little ivory wheels. Millions of butterflies, whose wings rustled like fans, flew about in the midst of a confused kind of light. More than five hundred clocks chimed the hour with their flute-like voices. Goat-suckers, storks, striped geese, unicorns, griffins, nightmares, all the menagerie of monstrous dreams, trotted, jumped, flew, or glided through the room. According to his calculation this state, of which the above quotations give but a feeble representation, must have lasted three hundred years; for the sensations succeeded each other so numerous and powerfully that the real appreciation of time was impossible. When the attack was over, he found that it had occupied about a quarter of an hour.

These drugs operate only upon the circulation, the nervous system, and the brain. They are physical agents, and yet they produce phenomena analogous to those of dreams, with the exception that they do not in every case divorce the motor and sensory nerves from the sensorium as perfectly as in ordinary dreaming sleep.

*Delirium* is analogous in most respects to the conditions produced by these drugs. Its stages are often very similar to those of intoxication; so that it requires a skilled physician to determine whether the patient is under the influence of delirium, insanity, or intoxication. Delirium results from a change in the circulation, or a defective condition of the blood; and in most instances there is no difficulty, when the disease is understood, of assigning the exact approximate cause of the delirium. The analogy between delirium and dreams and the partial recollection or complete forgetfulness of what was thought, felt, said, or done in the delirium and similar recollection or forgetfulness of dream images is well known by all who have experienced both, or closely observed them. And the analogy between delirium and intoxication loses nothing in value from the fact that the drug is administered. Disease in the human system can engender intoxicating poisons as well as others.

*Revery* is a natural condition, so common to children that they are hardly able to distinguish between the reports from the external world and the images presented by their imagination. But revery is a common experience of the human race in all stages of development. It differs from abstraction in the fact that the latter is the intense pursuit of a train of reasoning or observation, which absorbs the mind to such an extent that there is no attention left for the reports of the senses. Hence the abstracted man neither looks nor listens, and a noise or an impulse, far greater than would suffice to awaken the same man if asleep, may be insufficient to divert him from the train of thought which he

pursues. Revery is literally day-dreaming. It is not reasoning. The image-making faculty is set free and it runs on. The judgment is scarcely attentive, hardly conscious, and the tear may come into the eye, or the smile to the lip, so that in a crowded street-car, or even in an assembly, attention may be attracted to the person who is wholly unconscious of the same. A person may imagine himself other than he is, and derive great pleasure from the change, and pass an hour, a morning, or a day unconsciously. In revery persons frequently become practical somnambulists; that is, they speak words which others hear that they would not have uttered on any account, strike blows, move articles, gesticulate, and do many other things, sometimes with the effect of immediately recalling them to a knowledge of the situation, when they, as well as others, are amused, but often without being aware that they are noticed. In extreme cases the only distinctions between revery and dreaming sleep are regular breathing and the suspension of the senses which accompany the latter.

*The passage from revery into dreaming sleep* is to be scrutinized, as the line of demarcation is less than the diameter of a hair. When persons lie down to sleep, their thoughts take on the dream character before they can sleep. "Look," says Sir Henry Holland, "to the passage from waking to sleeping, and see with what rapidity and facility these states often alternate with each other." Abstract reason gives place to images that begin to move at random before the mind's eye; if they are identified and considered, wakefulness continues. But at last they become vague, the attention relaxes, and we sleep. It is possible to realize that one is sleeping, and to make an effort to awake and seize the mental train. But the would-be sleeper resumes the favorable position, the head drops, the senses lose their sensibility, and he who spent the last hour of the evening in revery in a darkened room has undergone but a very slight change when he passes into sleep. The images still run on while the body reposes, until, according to his temperament and habits, the brain becomes calm, and the soporific influence penetrates, we cannot tell how far, into the higher regions of the sensorium.

If we consider the passing *from the dream state into the waking state*, several analogies are to be noted. Sometimes an amusing sense of the last dream occupies the attention deliciously for a few moments. Again, it is not uncommon to pass out of a dream into a perception of the hour of the night and of the situation, retract into the dream, and sleep and take up the thread where it was left at the moment of consciousness. But more frequently the dream, if resumed, will be modified by physical conditions. At other times a painful consciousness of a fearful dream remains.

From these analogies the conclusion is reasonable that dreaming is a phenomenon of the mind, dependent upon changes in the circulation of the blood, and in the condition of the brain and the nervous system, whereby the higher powers of the mind, including the judgment, the conscience, and the will, are prevented from exercising their usual jurisdiction, the senses from reporting the events of the external world, by which to a great extent time is measured and space relations determined, while the image-making faculty and the animal instincts are to a less degree affected; and that the images constructed in dreams are the working up of the capital stock, the raw material of sensations, experiences, and ideas stored in the mind.

MORE DIRECT EVIDENCE

OF the truth of this view I will submit further evidence.

*First.* There is no proof that babes dream at all. The interpretation of the smile of the infant of a few months, which in former times led fond mothers to suppose that “an angel spoke to it,” is now of “spirit” in the original sense of the word, which connects it with internal gaseous phenomena. Aristotle says, “Man sleeps the most of all animals. Infants and young children do not dream at all, but dreaming begins in most at four or five years old.”

Pliny, however, does not agree with Aristotle in this, and gives two proofs that infants dream. First, they will instantly awake with every symptom of alarm; secondly, while asleep they will imitate the action of sucking. Neither of these is of any value as proof. As to the first, an internal pain, to which infants appear to be much subject, will awaken them; and as they are incapable of being frightened by any external object until they are some months old, the symptom is not of alarm, but of pain. The imitation while asleep of the action of sucking is instinctive, and an infant will do so when awake, and when there is obviously not the slightest connection between the state of mind and the action. The condition of the babe in sleep is precisely such as might be expected from its destitution of recorded situations.

*Second.* Animals dream. Aristotle’s history of animals declares that horses, oxen, sheep, goats, dogs, and all viviparous quadrupeds dream. Dogs show this by barking in their sleep. He says further that he is not quite certain from his observations whether animals that lay eggs, instead of producing their young alive, dream; but it is certain that they sleep. Pliny, in his natural history, specifies the same animals. Buffon describes the dreams of animals. Macnish calls attention to the fact that horses neigh and rear in their sleep, and affirms that cows and sheep, especially at the period of rearing their young, dream. Scott, in the “Lay of the Last Minstrel,” says:

The stag-hounds, weary with the chase,  
Lay stretched upon the rushy floor,  
And urged in dreams the forest race  
From Teviot-stone to Eskdale Moor.

Tennyson also speaks of dogs that hunt in dreams. Darwin, in the “Descent of Man,” Vol. I., p. 44, says that “dogs, cats, horses, and probably all the higher animals, even birds, as is stated on good authority (Dr. Jerdon, ‘Birds of India’), have vivid dreams, and this is shown by their movements and voice.” George John Romanes, in his “Mental Evolution in Animals,” says that the fact that dogs dream is proverbial, and quotes Seneca and Lucretius, and furnishes proof from Dr. Lauder Lindsay, an eminent authority, that horses dream. Cuvier, Jerdon, Houzeau, Bechstein, Bennett, Thompson, Lindsay, and Darwin assert that birds dream; and, according to Thompson, among birds the stork, the canary, the eagle, and the parrot, and the elephant as well as the horse and the dog are “incited” in their dreams. Bechstein holds that the bullfinch dreams, and gives a case where the dream took on the character of a nightmare and the bird fell from its perch; and four great authorities say that occasionally dreaming becomes so vivid as to lead to somnambulism. Guer gives a case of a somnambulist watch-dog which prowled in search of imaginary strangers or foes, and exhibited toward them a whole series of pantomimic actions, including barking. Dryden says, “The little birds in dreams the songs repeat,” and Dendy’s “Philosophy of Mystery” quotes from the

“Domestic Habits of Birds” in proof of this.

We have often observed this in a wild bird. On the night of the 6th of April, 1811, about 10 o'clock, a dunnock (*Accentor modularis*) was heard in the garden to go through its usual song more than a dozen times very faintly, but distinctly enough for the species to be recognized. The night was cold and frosty, but might it not be that the little musician was dreaming of summer and sunshine? Aristotle, indeed, proposes the question—whether animals hatched from eggs ever dream? Macgrave, in reply, expressly says that his “parrot Laura often arose in the night and prattled while half asleep.”

*Third.* The dreams of the *blind* are of great importance, and the fact that persons born blind never dream of seeing is established by the investigations of competent inquirers. So far as we know, there is no proof of a single instance of a person born blind ever in dreams fancying that he saw. Since this series of articles was begun, the subject has been treated by Joseph Jastrow in the “Presbyterian Review.” He has examined nearly two hundred persons of both sexes in the institutions for the blind in Philadelphia and Baltimore. Thirty-two became blind before completing their fifth year, and not one of these thirty-two sees in dreams. Concerning Laura Bridgman, the blind and deaf mute, Professor G. Stanley Hall, quoted by Mr. Jastrow, says, “Sight and hearing are as absent from her dreams as they are from the dark and silent world which alone she knows.”

*Fourth.* The testimony is the same with regard to those born *deaf*. The celebrated Harvey P. Peet, L.L. D., in his researches, among the most philosophical ever made, places this fact beyond rational doubt: but other investigators furnish equally valuable evidence. In visiting institutions for the blind and the deaf I have made inquiry, and have never found an instance of a person born deaf, or of a child who lost his hearing before he was four years of age, dreaming of hearing. Among the results of recent inquiries I present the following from the principal of the State Institution for the Blind and Deaf at St. Augustine, Florida:

I have closely questioned the deaf children here as to whether they have ever *dreamed of hearing*, and the invariable answer is *No*. I have asked the same question of upwards of fifty deaf persons with the same result, except where the person interrogated has lost his hearing after learning to talk. Those last mentioned are all persons of some education who understood the question fully and were very positive that they had never dreamed of hearing more than a rumbling sound.

Very sincerely,  
PARK TERRELL.

I was one of the members of a committee of three to visit the State institution of Michigan for the blind and deaf, at Flint, where there were hundreds of pupils. The method of awakening them in the morning and of calling them to recitations and to chapel services was by beating a base-drum, which, of course, the blind could hear. But it was curious to observe the deaf awaking from a sound sleep at 5 in the morning, or called to chapel and recitation at other hours of the day, by the beating of a base-drum in the central hall. Those who could not have heard the reverberation of all the artillery in the world felt the vibration of the building produced by the beating of the drum and

obeyed the signal. Some of them dreamed of vibration; none born deaf of hearing.

In further elucidation of the subject I addressed a letter to Professor J. W. Chickering, Jr., of the National Deaf Mute College at Washington, D. C., and under date of February 3, 1888, received the following:

Deaf mutes of all grades dream frequently, though they are not given to imagination. As to the question whether they dream about anything involving sound, I have made diligent inquiry, and have been answered in the negative except in the case of the Rev. Job Turner. He says that he once dreamed of being counsel for a prisoner, and being greatly delighted to find himself making a very eloquent speech in his behalf.

The question of dreaming about sounds in the case of semi-mutes was discussed in the "American Annals" some years ago by Professor Greenberger of New York, and some statistics were given; but he dismisses your inquiry (i.e., whether persons born deaf ever dream of hearing) very abruptly by saying, "This question was put to a number of congenital deaf mutes, and, as might have been expected, their answers were all in the negative."

I may state to you, as a matter of fact, that one of our deaf-mute teachers, who has no memory of hearing, has waked from sleep in a fright by the report of firearms; but that would be accounted for by the concussion and consequent action upon the nerves of general sensation.

Truly yours,  
J. W. CHICKERING, JR.

Upon the above letter I may remark that the single case of the Rev. Job Turner, an educated man, accustomed to read and imagine spoken oratory, can be accounted for without assuming that he dreamed of hearing sounds, the speechmaking being a movement of his mind involving an act rather than a perception. The being wakened by the explosion of firearms is, as Professor Chickering justly says, explicable on the same principle as that which accounts for the awakening of the deaf and the communication of information by the rhythmical vibration of a building.

Leaving out of account the question of the dreamless state of infants and very young children, I deem the facts that animals dream, that the congenital blind and deaf never dream of seeing or hearing, conclusive proof that dreams are phenomena of the physical basis of mind, dependent upon changes in the circulation of the blood, and the condition of the brain and the nervous system; and that the images constructed in dreams are the automatic combinations of the sensations, experiences, ideas, and images stored in the mind.

Three further collateral evidences can be adduced. First, the modification of dreams by physical conditions. With this all are familiar. These are plainly, so to speak, efforts of the image-making faculty, active in dreams to account without the aid of the judgment for a physical sensation. Every one knows that the condition of the digestive organs, the position of the head or any other part of the body, will affect the dreams.

Another fact is that the dreams of the very aged, unless something unusually agitating is anticipated or occurs, generally recur to the scenes of former years, and therein greatly resemble their conversation. Even when the intellectual faculties are unimpaired, and the aged person is much interested in current events, and pursues a train of study and reflection by day under the control of the will, when at night the imagination is set free the scenes of early life or childhood furnish the materials of the

images much more frequently than contemporaneous events. This is in harmony with the known laws of memory.

In regard to the dreams of the insane, the "Medical Critic and Psychological Journal" of April, 1862, says:

The dreams of the insane are generally characteristic of the nature of the aberration under which they labor; those of the typho-maniac are gloomy and fidgetful; of the general paralytic, gay and smiling; of the maniac, wild, disordered, pugnacious; in stupidity they are vague, obscure, and incoherent; in dementia, few and fleeting; in hypochondria and hysteria the sleep, especially during indigestion, is disturbed and painful.

This is in accordance with all the indications.

### ACCOUNTING FOR THE CHARACTERISTICS OF DREAMS

IN dreams, time and the limitations of space are apparently annihilated. This is to be explained by the fact that the reports of the senses and the movements of external bodies by which we measure time are shut out, and the mind is entirely absorbed in a series of images.

I entered the South Kensington Museum in London and saw a painting of an Alderney bull, cow, and calf in a field, which produced so extraordinary an illusion that I advanced several steps toward it in broad daylight, under the belief that I was looking out of a window into the park. The same phenomenon occurs under the spell of an orator of the highest grade; and it is the charm of a theater to make an audience think and feel that a series of events which would ordinarily occupy many years is taking place before them. That which, under these circumstances, is accomplished to some extent by abstraction or external means in dreams is done entirely by cutting off all possibility of estimating time or space.

The mind is supposed to move more rapidly in dreams than in waking thoughts. Dreams certainly are more diversified and numerous than the waking thoughts of busy men and women absorbed in a particular routine of work, or in the necessary cares of the body, or in conversation circumscribed by conventional laws, the slow rate of speech, and the duty of listening. But it is an error to think that dream images are more numerous than those of reverie. In a single hour of reverie one may see more images than he could fully describe in a volume of a thousand pages. It is as true of the waking as of the dreaming state, that

Lulled in the countless chambers of the brain,  
Our thoughts are linked in many a hidden chain;  
Wake but one, and lo! what myriads rise:  
Each stamps its image as the other flies.

The apparent loss of identity in dreams, and the finding one's self in impossible positions, is the result of the entire occupation of the perceptive faculties with one image at a time. A dream that a man is a clergyman may change into one that he is a general commanding on the field of battle, and he will see no incongruity. He may even imagine

himself to be two persons at the same time, as in Dr. Johnson's case when he contended with a man, and was much chagrined to feel that his opponent had the better of him in wit. He was consoled, however, when on waking he reasoned that he had furnished the wit for both.

The vividness of dreams is to be explained in the same way. If a man sees that his own house is on fire, and his family in danger, he looks at the scene in such a way that he becomes for the time as unconscious of anything else as though there were nothing in his brain but the picture. So in the dream, as he sees nothing but the picture, it must be more vivid than any ordinary reality can possibly be; only from the most extraordinary scenes can an analogy be drawn.

In dreams circumstances often appear which had been known by the dreamer, but practically forgotten. Men have sworn that they never knew certain things, and maintained that they had been revealed to them in dreams, when subsequent investigation proved indubitably that they had known, but had forgotten them. The recurrence is precisely like ordinary waking experiences. Events which have not emerged into consciousness for a score of years, or even a half-century, and phrases, parts of words, expressions of countenance, tones of voices, analogies stumbled upon in the most out-of-the-way places, may in a single moment bring an entire scene with several series of related events before the mind.

The testimony of the mind excited to a certain degree of activity by the fear of death by shipwreck or fire, or, as Whymper has shown in his "Scrambles among the Alps," the immediate expectation of a fatal fall, is that it seems to see at a glance the whole of the past life. This is sufficient to show what it can do in an entirely normal state, and nothing can ever occur in dreams more vivid than this, though it is to be considered that we have only the statements of these persons in regard to what they think was their mental condition; nor in any case could they know that they saw everything.

When one dreams that he is dreaming, which occasionally occurs, he is approaching the waking state; but since he cannot at that time sit in judgment on what he dreams fully without waking himself, it is equally clear that his state resembles that of a delirious person who may perceive that he is delirious and acknowledge it, but in a few seconds be absorbed again in what he sees.

Some of the most interesting achievements of the mind in dreams are the composition of poetry and the working out of mathematical problems. Dr. Abercrombie says that his friend Dr. Gregory told him that thoughts and even expressions which had occurred to him in dreams seemed to him so good when he awoke that he used them in his college lectures. Condorcet, having gone to bed before finishing certain profound calculations, said afterwards that sometimes the conclusions of the work had been revealed to him in dreams. Dr. Abercrombie says that Benjamin Franklin, than whose a more well-balanced and self-controlled mind never existed, assured Cabanis that the bearing and issue of political events which puzzled him when awake were not unfrequently unfolded to him in his dreams. Dr. Carpenter attempts to explain this by the theory well known as "unconscious cerebration." Like the terms of the phrenologists, this may describe but does not explain the process; and what it describes occurs frequently while we are awake. Not only in questions of memory, but in the profoundest thought, how often, when we have been compelled to turn from one class of work to another, and are, so far as our consciousness reports, entirely absorbed in it, in an

instant a thought germane to the first problem which was occupying the mind appears with such clearness as to surpass in pertinency and value anything which we had previously reached. We are compelled to take note of it, and in the case of defective recollection the best of all modes is to cease to think about the matter, and in a short time it will appear almost with the intelligence of a messenger bringing something for which he had been sent.

It would not be surprising, when one has wearied himself, and his perceptions have been somewhat obscured, even though nothing had occurred of the nature of unconscious cerebration, if after a refreshing sleep the first effort of his mind should classify and complete the undigested work of the day before. The dream imagery under which such things are done frequently invests the operation with a mysterious aspect, which, on analysis, appears most natural. I am informed by one of the participants that some time since two gentlemen in Pennsylvania were conversing concerning an intricate mathematical problem. One of them succeeded in its solution by algebraic methods. The other insisted that it could be done by arithmetic, but, after making many efforts, gave up the problem, and retired for the night. In the morning, he informed his friend that in the night, while he was asleep, an old Scotch schoolmaster, who had been his instructor many years before, appeared to him and said, "I am ashamed of you that you could not do that sum. It can be worked out by arithmetic, and I will show you how now." And he added that he had immediately done so, and in the morning when he awoke he had put the figures on paper just as his schoolmaster had done in the dream; and there they were, a complete solution of the example.

It was a very impressive dream, but easily explained. It was a workable problem. The man, ashamed of himself that he could not do it and exhausted with his efforts, had sunk into a troubled sleep. His mind undoubtedly had recurred to his old teacher and the rule; and as he dreamed about the matter the working out of the problem had to come in some form. What more natural than that the image of the teacher who taught him the greater part of what he knew of the subject of arithmetic, especially in difficult problems, should have come in to give bodily shape to the shame which he felt, and that his fancy should attribute the information to him. So that, instead of such a dream being extraordinary, it is the most natural method in which it could occur.

The mind when awake is capable, by an effort of the imagination, of conceiving the most grotesque ideas. For example, a man sees before him a huge rock. He may conceive the idea that that rock is transformed into pure gold, and that upon it is a raised inscription made of diamonds promising the rock as a reward for the guessing of a conundrum. Being awake, he perceives both clearly—the rock in its original character, and the image of the gold rock with the raised letters in diamonds. Perceiving both, he knows the rock to be real, and the other to be fantastic. If the faculties by which he identifies the granite rock were to be stupefied, leaving those by which he conceives the idea of the gold and diamonds in full exercise, it is clear that he would believe that the granite rock was gold. If awake, in this state, he would be insane; if asleep, he would be dreaming. So, if the dreamer be absorbed in images which seem to him real, if the faculties by which he would distinguish an ideal conception from an objective reality were restored, he would take cognizance of his surroundings, and though the image might remain it would not seem real. The statement of this self-evident fact is sufficient to show what all the evidence I have collated combines to prove, that *Mercutio*, in

“Romeo and Juliet,” was scientifically correct when he said:

True, I talk of dreams,  
Which are the children of an idle brain,  
Begot of nothing but vain fantasy.

Nightmare, with all its horrors, is but a variety of dreams. The causes for its peculiarities are various—position; pressure upon the stomach, whereby the sympathetic nerves are affected, and through them the brain; extreme fatigue, etc. When a person is awake and has precisely the same unfavorable physical sensations which would produce nightmare, he refers them to their proper source, changes his position, measures the probable consequences, resorts to medical aid, or absorbs himself in work; but when asleep, the mind attempts to account for the sensation; and will perhaps construct an image of Bunker Hill Monument pressing upon his chest to account for a sensation which, if he were awake, he would have no difficulty in explaining.

The relation of sleeping on the back to nightmare is so simple as hardly to need an explanation. Many persons never have an attack unless they get into this position.

Somnambulism differs from dreams in the fact that one or more of the senses may be in an active condition, and that one or more of the organs may respond to the idea which absorbs the mind. A merchant in New York, traveling on the Mississippi River, occupied the same state-room with a stranger of highly respectable appearance. In the morning the stranger, taking up his stockings, said sadly, “I see I have been at my old tricks again.” “To what do you refer?” asked the merchant. “My stockings are wet, and I must have arisen in the night and traveled all over the ship.”

As already remarked, talking in the sleep is the simplest form in which somnambulism appears. Usually dreamers do not move their limbs, and especially are incapable of rising or walking, because under ordinary circumstances the impulse to do these things is generated by the will, and it requires a strong exertion thereof to overcome the inertia of the body and to begin the complex series of motions necessary to move from place to place. In sleep the image is not sufficiently vivid to take control of the muscles.

Cicero says that if it had been so ordered by nature that we should actually do in sleep all that we dream of doing, every man would have to be bound to the bed before going to sleep. The justice of this remark is illustrated in the case of somnambulism.

The peculiarity of somnambulism which identifies it with dreaming is complete absorption of all the powers and faculties in the image. A voice falling in with that may be heard; one speaking of other matters is unnoticed. Dreamers who have never been somnambulists could, by a process of training, be transformed into such; and, what is more important, the tendency can be destroyed if taken in time.

Sir Henry Holland says that it is an old trick to put the hand into cold water, or to produce some other sensation not so active as to awaken, but sufficient to draw the mind from a more profound to a lighter slumber; thus the sleeper may be made to answer questions.

Great light has been reflected upon nature by artificial somnambulism, known by the various names of mesmerism, animal magnetism, electro-biology, hypnotism, etc. It is a very astonishing fact that in these states a particular sense may be exalted so as to give results in which a normal condition would be impossible; and which to a superficial

observer, and even to an investigator if he be inexperienced, appear to transcend the bounds of the human faculty.\*

[\*Abnormal states, involving changes radically different from dream somnambulism, happen spontaneously when awake, occur in delirium, and at rare intervals the somnambulist may pass into them. It is not the purpose of this paper to consider such.]

### MYSTERIOUS DREAMS ANALYZED.

IF the foregoing attempt at explanation covered all the actual phenomena of dreams, there is no reason to doubt that it would be satisfactory to readers of intelligence; but it is claimed by many that in dreams premonitions of future events are given, especially of death; that events which have taken place, of interest to the person who receives the communication, are made known; and that the knowledge of current events is frequently imparted when the dreamer is at a great distance.

I will give an example of a dream of premonition which has occurred in the United States within three years. A young man, nineteen years of age, a student in a large seminary about sixty miles from New York, was strongly attached to a teacher. The teacher died, to the great grief of the student. Some time afterward the young man dreamed that the teacher appeared to him and notified him that he would die on a certain day and hour. He informed his mother and friends of the dream, and expressed a firm belief that when that time came he should die. The family considered it a delusion; and as no alarming change took place in his health, they were not worried. When the day arrived they noticed nothing unusual; but after dining and seeming to enjoy the meal and to be quite cheerful, he went to his room, lay down, and died without a struggle.

The following case is said to be authentic. The father of a certain lady died. About a year afterward she aroused her husband by sobbing and trembling violently, while tears ran down her cheeks. She explained that she had just had a vivid dream, in which she had seen her father assemble all his children in his room in the old house, and tell them that the family heirlooms were being disposed of to strangers. The same dream recurred the next night. A day or two afterward this lady, while walking in the town where she lived, saw her father's walking-stick, with a gold band bearing an inscription, a gift from all his children, in the hands of a stranger. The sight so affected her that she fainted. Later inquiries proved that the stick had changed hands on the day previous to her first dream.

The case of William Tennent is in point. Mr. Tennent, a remarkable preacher of Freehold, N. J., zealous in promoting revivals, had a particular friend, the Rev. David Rowland, who was exceedingly successful. A notorious man named Thomas Bell, guilty of theft, robbery, fraud, and every form of crime, greatly resembled Mr. Rowland. Passing himself off for him, he imposed upon citizens of Hunterdon County, N. J., robbed them and fled, everywhere representing himself as the Rev. Mr. Rowland. At the time he perpetrated this robbery in Hunterdon County, "Messrs. Tennent and Rowland, accompanied by two laymen, Joshua Anderson and Benjamin Stevens, went into Pennsylvania or Maryland to conduct religious services. When Mr. Rowland returned, he was charged with the robbery committed by Bell. He gave bonds to appear at the court of Tranton, *and the affair made a great noise throughout the colony*. Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens appeared, and swore that they were with Mr. Rowland and

heard him preach on that very day in Pennsylvania or Maryland. He was at once acquitted." But months afterward Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens were arraigned for perjury. Anderson was tried and found guilty. Tennent and Stevens were summoned before the next court. Stevens took advantage of a flaw in the indictment and was discharged. Tennent refused to do that, or to give any assistance to his counsel, relying upon God to deliver him. The authorized "Life of Tennent" now gives the particulars:

Mr. Tennent had not walked far in the street (the bell had rung summoning them to court), before he met a man and his wife, who stopped him, and asked if his name was not Tennent. He answered in the affirmative, and begged to know if they had any business with him. The man replied, "You best know." He told his name, and said that he was from a certain place (which he mentioned) in Pennsylvania or Maryland; that Messrs. Rowland, Tennent, Anderson, and Stevens had lodged either at his house, or in a house wherein he and his wife had been servants (it is not now certain which), at a particular time which he named; that on the following day they heard Messrs. Tennent and Rowland preach; that some nights before they left home, he and his wife waked out of a sound sleep, and each told the other a dream which had just occurred, and which proved to be the same in substance; to wit, that he, Mr. Tennent, was at Trenton, in the greatest possible distress, and that it was in their power, and theirs only, to relieve him. Considering it as a remarkable dream only, they again went to sleep, and it was twice repeated, precisely in the same manner, to both of them. This made so deep an impression on their minds, that they set off, and here they were, and would know of him what they were to do.

On the trial the evidence of these persons, and of some others who knew Bell, and were acquainted with his resemblance to Mr. Rowland, was sufficient to secure Mr. Tennent's acquittal.

To explain such dreams as these some introduce a supernatural element, claiming they are sent by God to warn his people; others adopt the hypothesis now known as telepathy; while still others content themselves with vague references to "clairvoyance."

A personal and close investigation of a great number of alleged premonitions of death, revelations of current and past facts, and predictions of the future has afforded me no ground for a scientific presumption either of supernatural interference, of telepathy, or of clairvoyance. That is, authentic cases can be more reasonably explained without than with any of these assumptions.

The English Society of Psychological Research was founded in 1882, and has pursued its investigations since that time. The names of its president, vice-presidents, corresponding members, and council include men justly distinguished in various fields of scientific investigation, and some occupying high religious positions; and the list of members is also very imposing. It is proper to say, however, that the investigations, as is usual in such cases, have been committed to a few persons, enthusiasts in the matter, and many of the most learned and conservative members of the body appear from the reports of all the proceedings which I have carefully read, to take no active part in the work. Indeed, Professor G. Stanley Hall, Professor of Psychology and Pedagogics in Johns Hopkins University, who is one of the corresponding members, regrets, in an elaborate review of the proceedings, the absence from the investigations of the most distinguished alienists. The Society, having to a great extent surrendered the investigations to certain persons, has practically committed itself to the hypothesis

of telepathy, or the ability of one mind to impress or to be impressed by another mind otherwise than through the recognized channels of sense. Of course dreams have a bearing upon this subject, and to dreams the Society has paid a great deal of attention.

The subject of telepathy I shall not treat in this article, for the Society as represented in the two bulky volumes entitled "Phantasms of the Living," edited by Edmund Gurney, Frederic W. H. Myers, and Frank Podmore, does not claim that the cases which they have presented, drawn from dreams, would be sufficient to prove the truth of telepathy. They confess that they are on doubtful ground, and say:

For (1) the details of the reality, when known, will be very apt to be read back into the dream, through the general tendency to make vague things distinct; and (2) the great *multitude* of dreams may seem to afford almost limitless scope for *accidental* correspondences of a dream with an actual occurrence resembling the one dreamt of. Any answer to this last objection must depend on statistics, which, until lately, there has been no attempt to obtain; and though an answer of a sort can be given, it is not such a one as would justify us in basing a theory of telepathy on the facts of dreams alone.

They acknowledge that dreams, being often somewhat dim and shapeless things, "subsequent knowledge of events may easily have the effect of giving body and definiteness to the recollection of a dream." They concede that "millions of people dream every night, and in dreams, if anywhere, the range of possibilities seems infinite." But when they come to present the subsequent cases, their reasoning upon them is in many instances almost puerile, and is unscientific in its destitution of rigor. For example, in cases of partial fulfillment where a person dreamed of death, and the dream did not occur until a number of hours after the death, they call that a deferment of percipience. They say that the impression when it first arrived "was unable to compete at the moment with the vivid sensory impressions and the crowd of ideas and images that had belonged to normal senses and waking life, and that it may thus remain latent until darkness and quiet give a chance for its development." The same sort of reasoning might be applied to account for the fact that such information is not universally communicated. It is flying about loose in the heavens and in the earth; but, not being able to compete with the crowd of images in any except few cases, does not generally materialize.

Where a woman dreams twice of death and it is fulfilled, and she also has the candor to state that on another occasion she dreamed of a death and nothing came of it, they say:

The absence of any ascertained coincidence on the third occasion might be represented as an argument for regarding the correspondence on the two previous occasions as accidental, but it would be a very weak one; since even if the dream had recurred a thousand times, the chances against the accidental occurrences of two such coincidences would still remain enormous.

Many of the cases they cite depend upon vague memory, and others do not supply adequate particulars.

Their general method of writing about these dreams and of the whole theory of telepathy is that of an affectionate mother lingering over her own child, and wherever

coddling is necessary doing it *con amore*. There are two radical defects to be seen in the entire method: First, not a twentieth part of the care is taken in the investigation of the cases and their authentication which would be required for a case of ordinary importance in a court of justice; secondly, the use of the so-called doctrine of chances is so ludicrous as to be practically a burlesque of science. They sent to 5360 persons taken at random, asking them to state whether they had ever had a dream of the death of some person known to them, which dream was an exceptionally vivid one, and of which the distressing impression lasted an hour after arising in the morning, at any time within the twelve years 1874 to 1885 inclusive. Of these 173 answered "Yes." It would be difficult to believe, if it were not published to the world on the authority of the Society, that any one should conclude that that number could furnish a basis upon which to ascertain an average to be applied to the whole population; yet they do so, and say that it is as satisfactory as the proof that a similar number of persons taken at random would afford on the average number of cases of short-sight or color-blindness.

Short-sight and color-blindness are physical conditions, depending upon physical causes; dreams are evanescent, irregular, depending upon phenomenal causes, and the dream images of a single family in a single week may amount to millions, of which any one under the operations of laws not subject to statistics may be vividly remembered.

But of the whole number of 173 who had vivid dreams of death, there were only 24 where the event fell within 12 hours of the dream. By an application of the law of chance they endeavor to maintain that there would not be more than *one* such coincidence in that time, and that, therefore, "twenty-four is twenty-four times larger than the doctrine of chance would have allowed us to expect." As well might the law of chance be applied to the determination of the number of thoughts on any given subject that would naturally arise in one or more minds in a given period.

As shown in an article on "Astrology, Divination, and Coincidences," published in THE CENTURY for February, 1888, the "law of chance" is not capable of application to such subjects. Events are continually occurring, whether attention is directed to them or not. Of all possible occurrences, the time, place, and manner of death are most uncertain. Human lives revolve about a few central points—home, business, health, friends, travel, religion, country. Dream images are about persons and things. That there can be millions of images portrayed in the gallery of dreams, and that the great majority deal with these pivotal points of human life and human thought, taken in connection with the fact that all the events of human history, past, current, and future, revolve about these same points, make it absolutely certain that the number of coincidences must be vast. It is, in fact, smaller rather than larger than might reasonably be expected.

It is natural that a large proportion of dreams of a terrifying nature should be about deaths, because in deaths center all grounds of anxiety about one's self or one's friends. As death is the king of terrors and the dream state often a disturbed state, death would be also the king of dreams.

Out of the 173 who declare that they have had distressing dreams, there have been only 24 cases of fulfillment. An exact statement of the situation of the twenty-four persons dreamed about, or their physical condition and circumstances, would be as essential to a scientific estimate as the condition and circumstances of the dreamer.

The recollection of dreams depends much upon habit and upon the practice of relating them. I found by experience that this had a tendency to perpetuate a particular dream. For twenty-five years I was visited at irregular intervals by the dream of the death, by drowning, of my brother who is still living. It frequently recurred soon after I had told it with elaborateness of detail to another. The number of appalling dreams that come to nothing is very great, where the vividness of details sometimes fairly compels belief. In many instances a dream of one's death originates in a profound derangement of the nervous system, and the effect of such a dream upon that weakened condition may be fatal. The young student to whom reference has been made came of a family peculiarly liable to instant death from heart disease. Since that period his only brother died without warning, when quietly, as it was supposed, reposing upon his bed. The dream was so vivid that the young man believed it, and prepared himself for it in his mind while his body was depressed by the natural physical effect. If he had been treated as another young man was who had a similar dream, and believed it as implicitly, he might have lived. In that case a sagacious physician, finding evidences that death was near, and believing the symptoms to be caused wholly by the impression that he was to die, administered a heavy dose of chloroform. When the young man became conscious and found the hour fixed upon for his death long passed, he speedily recovered.

The repetition of dreams on the same night or on other nights is explained by the impression which they make; and doubtless the number 3 has literary and religious associations which have an effect upon some dreamers. If they have a notion that 3 is the number for significant dreams, they, having dreamed the same thing thrice, are now fully aroused and sleep no more. This is not always the case. A member of Congress dreamed that his only daughter died; he awoke in great agitation, and on composing himself to sleep the dream returned. This continued for the fourth time, and even until the *ninth*, and after each recurrence he was awakened; and in the morning, though not a believer in dreams, he hastened to his home in a western State, feeling assured that something terrible had happened or was about to happen. The first person whom he met was his daughter, in perfect health.

Coinciding dreams of two persons about a third are often not fulfilled. Abercrombie gives the case of a young man and his mother dreaming substantially the same dream the same night, in which he told her that he was going on a long journey, and she said, "Son, thou art dead." But nothing came of the dream. A young man not far from New York dreamed that his father was being burned to death in a hotel. The same night a lady, a friend of the family, dreamed the same. Nothing came of it.

In regard to the dream of William Tennent's witnesses, the following points may be noticed: First, "the affair made a great noise in the colony"; secondly, Tennent, Stevens, and Anderson all knew where they had been in Pennsylvania or Maryland, and it was easy for them to procure witnesses who could conclusively prove their innocence, and a supernatural interference was not necessary; thirdly, the delay between the trial of Rowland and that of Tennent at a period when information was principally distributed by word of mouth, taken in connection with the general interest in the subject of religion at that time and the excitement produced by the preceding trial, rendered it highly probable that every person in any community where Rowland had preached knew about these facts. The account cannot tell much about these witnesses, or even whether the

preaching and the dream occurred in Pennsylvania or Maryland. The natural explanation of the whole proceeding is that they knew the facts and had talked, or heard others talk, about the trial; and so far as evidence goes they had themselves talked about it, and the double dream was a mere coincidence. Whether this be true or not, the facts that the accounts are so defective, contradictory, and improbable, and that Mr. Anderson was allowed to be convicted and punished when he was as innocent as Mr. Tennent, greatly strengthen the natural explanation of the entire proceedings, for it is certain that fortunate coincidences have as often helped sinners as saints.

The possibilities of coincidence in human affairs are incomputable. A gentleman residing near New York remarked to a friend on the 4th of February, 1888, "We shall have snow to-day." There was not a sign of it then, but before they separated the snow began to fall. "How did you know that it would snow?" asked the friend. The sad and singular answer was, "Forty-three years ago to-day I buried my only son. It snowed that day and has snowed on the 4th day of February every year since, and I felt sure that it would snow to-day." Let those who fancy that the law of probabilities is of any value when applied to a particular day ascertain how many chances there were that it would snow for forty-three consecutive years in a certain part of the country on the 4th day of February.

Inquiry of the passengers on many ocean voyages has shown that not a ship crosses the sea upon which there is not some passenger who had a dream that the ship would be destroyed, which strongly tempted him to remain at home; or was warned by a friend, who, after such a dream, prophesied disaster; or which had not left behind some intending passenger deterred by a dream.

Many of the supposed cases of fulfillment of dreams, and where the coincidences are most startling, relate to events which neither man nor devil, disembodied spirit nor angel, could foreknow if true, since neither the events nor their causes were in existence in the universe; and the fulfillment depended upon actions involving juxtapositions which could not have been foreseen by any finite being, as they were themselves coincidences, and only conceivable as foreknown by God, because of the assumption of his infinity.

## THE RATIONAL USE OF DREAMS

By some it is maintained that dreams are of great value in the argument for the immortality of the soul; the short method being that they prove the soul immaterial and independent of the body, and if immaterial then immortal. If this has any value it would apply equally to animals.

Others have held that we are responsible for our dreams. An article in the "Journal of Psychological Medicine," for July, 1849, says that we are as responsible for our dreams as for our waking thoughts; just as much so as we are told we shall be at the great tribunal for every idle word. And another writer affirms that in dreams each man's character is disintegrated so that he may see the elements of which it is composed. But few dreams are more absurd than such conceptions of them as these. Gluttony, evil thoughts, intemperance, vigils, and anxiety may affect dreams, but the responsibility is for the gluttony and other vices and sins; these are simply the incidental results. Many of the most devout and religious persons who have been unduly excited in religious

work have been terrified and driven almost to doubt their acceptance with God by the fearful dreams of an impure or immoral character which have made their nights hideous. Religious biography abounds with such accounts. These persons have attributed them to the devil, of whom one of them naïvely said, "The evil spirit, having no hope of succeeding with me by day, attacks me in sleep." Intellectual persons of sedentary habits have also been troubled in this way. The explanation in such cases is simple. The "Journal of Psychological Medicine," for January, 1857, says:

When persons have been much engaged during the whole day on subjects which require the continued exercise of the intellectual and moral attributes, they may induce so much fatigue and exhaustion of those powers that when they are asleep, to their subsequent sorrow and surprise, they may have the most sensual and most vicious dreams.

The writer proceeds to explain the fact upon the natural principle that the exhausted intellectual faculties, not being active and vigorous in the dream, the intellect received imperfect impressions; while the animal propensities having been in a state of comparative inactivity, manifested greater activity.

In the case of great religious excitement, the principle embodied in the stern saying of a writer that "When one passion is on fire, the rest will do well to send for the buckets" is a sufficient explanation. The intellect and the will being subdued by sleep, the generally excited condition of the brain and the nervous system produces a riot in the imagination.

Some persons rely upon dreams for evidence of acceptance with God, and of God's love. Where they have other evidences and sound reason, they do not need the help of dreams. When destitute of other evidences, it has often been observed that their conduct is frequently such as no Christian, and sometimes as no moral person, could safely imitate.

One of the best things said in favor of dreams is by David Hartley, M.D.

The wildness of our dreams seems of singular use to us, by interrupting and breaking the course of our associations. For if we were always awake, some accidental associations would be so much cemented by continuance, as that nothing could afterwards disjoin them, which would be madness.

Notwithstanding, I would prefer to take the risk of dreamless sleep.

Any marked increase in the number or change in the character of dreams should be seriously considered. They are sometimes the precursors of a general nervous and mental prostration. In such cases habits of diet and exercise, work and rest, should be examined. If dreams which depress the nervous energies and render sleep unrefreshing recur frequently, medical counsel should be taken. The habit of remembering and narrating dreams is pernicious; to act upon them is to surrender rational self-control.

A gentleman of Boston who travels much is in the habit of dreaming often of sickness and death in his family. He always telegraphs for information, but has had the misfortune never to dream of the critical events, and to be away from home when most needed. Still, like the devotee of a lottery, he continues to believe in dreams. Another, whose dreams are equally numerous and pertinent, never so much as gives them a

thought, and has had the good fortune to be near his family when needed.

An extraordinary dream relating to probable or possible events may be analyzed, and anything which seems of importance in it from its own nature or the way things are stated, may be made a matter of reflection without superstition. But to take a step upon a dream which would not be taken without it allies the person who does it to every form of superstition that stultifies the god-like faculty of reason.

J. M. Buckley.

Transcribed by Blake Linton Wilfong  
aka The Wondersmith  
for Dream Central Station  
[wondersmith.com/dreams](http://wondersmith.com/dreams)