

THE  
OCCULT REVIEW

EDITED BY  
RALPH SHIRLEY

“NOLLUS ADDICTUS JURARE IN VERBA MAGISTRI”

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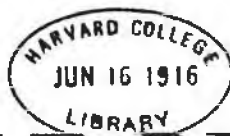
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# OCCULT REVIEW

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE DEVOTED TO THE INVESTIGATION OF SUPER-NORMAL PHENOMENA AND THE STUDY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL PROBLEMS.

EDITED BY RALPH SHIRLEY

*"Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri"*

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VOL. XVI.

JULY 1912

No. 1

## NOTES OF THE MONTH

THE few of us who believe in the miraculous incidents recorded in connection with the lives of mediæval and early Christian saints will certainly have their faith confirmed by the recent remarkable, if not miraculous, recovery from a long-standing illness of Miss Dorothy Kerin. The orthodox scientist, on the contrary, will have another remarkably well-attested incident to put into his waste-paper basket and forget about at the earliest possible

THE moment. This curious case, which attracted no STRANGE little attention in the daily Press at the time, on CASE OF account of its startling features, has been considered DOROTHY of sufficient importance by the doctor under whose KERIN. care the lady in question has been subsequently placed, to merit careful and detailed analysis and embodiment in book form.\* It is well that this has been done promptly while the evidence of her medical attendants is still obtainable at first hand, and before the dangers incidental to lapses of memory have had time to vitiate the evidential value of the record.

The main facts of the case will be fresh in the memory of most of my readers; but for the benefit of those who may not

\* *Faith & Suggestion, including an Account of the remarkable experiences of Dorothy Kerin.* By Edwin Lancelot Ash. London: Herbert & Daniel, 95 New Bond Street, W.

have been made acquainted with the case, and also on account of the importance of the particulars and exact facts in the evidence, it may be as well to summarize these in as brief a manner as is practicable.

Miss Dorothy Kerin is a young woman of the age of twenty-two. Up till February last her health had been in a very precarious condition for approximately seven years, during a considerable part of which period she had been actually bedridden. At the beginning of the present year she appeared to be rapidly sinking into a state of collapse from which there seemed no hope of recovery. From 1907 to 1912 she was understood to be suffering from consumption (tuberculosis of the lungs), the evidence as to this particular complaint becoming much stronger during the latter part of this period. In 1908 she was stated by her medical attendant to have inflammation of the stomach as well.

**MEDICAL EVIDENCE.** From 1910 to 1912 she was under the fairly constant observation of a medical practitioner of experience, whose diagnosis of the case was that it was one of rapidly advancing tuberculosis of the lungs. Of this she had the usual recognized symptoms; e.g., frequent hemorrhage, racking cough, profuse night perspirations, wasting, high temperatures, extreme physical exhaustion. She also exhibited the leading physical indications of this disease when examined by the stethoscope. She was officially notified under the Compulsory Notification of Consumption Act, which came into force at the beginning of the present year. During the last few days preceding her apparently miraculous cure she had every outward appearance of being *in extremis*, and her relatives expected her end at any moment.

The occurrence which led to her entirely unexpected recovery took place on the evening of Sunday, February 18, when her relatives were gathered round what they believed to be the bedside of the dying girl. She was at the time in what is described as a comatose condition, when suddenly those present in her bedroom were surprised to hear her begin to say very slowly the words, "I'm listening." After this she lifted up her arms, sat up in bed, and passed her fingers over her still closed eyes, which then slowly opened. She next looked round at her relations and told them

**ACCOUNT OF THE MIRACULOUS VISION.** with a smile that she had had a wonderful vision in which a voice had informed her that her sufferings were at an end, and she added that she was herself convinced that her sickness had entirely left her. She then called for her dressing-gown and insisted upon getting out of bed and walking round the room. "The

fact remains," observes Dr. Ash, "that she has been well ever since, and shows no untoward symptoms up to the time of writing, which is some two months since her remarkable recovery." It was clear to those in the room that the girl had both seen and heard something which was not apparent to any of the rest of those present. As to what this actually was, we have obviously only her own statement to go upon. This is her version of the facts:—

In my sleep something said, "Dorothy," three times distinctly. And I said, "Yes, I'm listening—who is it?" And then the Voice said, "Listen!" And then I felt two warm hands take hold of both of mine and lift them up and put my hands on my eyes, and then put them down again. The Voice then said, "Dorothy" again, after it had put my hands down.

Then there was a beautiful light which flashed over the screen at the corner of the foot of the bed. The light came right over the bed—and at the back of it was a beautiful Angel. It had got my hands in its hands—and put them on to my eyes—and then he said—

"Dorothy! Your sufferings are over! Get up and walk!"

My eyes came open and I looked round and saw them all—my relations—round the bed. And I said, "I want my dressing-gown; I want to walk."

My mother then tried to hold me down in bed, and the Voice—which had together with the light come to here—(showing a place near the left side of her face)—again said, "Get up and walk."

My mother said, "You must not get up." And I said to her, "Can't you hear it?" and she couldn't.

Then after all they gave me the dressing-gown, and some of the light from the foot of the bed came round by me and I put my hand on it—and I got out of bed and followed it, and it went straight to the door, and then I walked straight out of the passage into the little room at the end of the passage to see if my stepfather was there, to find him. And he wasn't there, so I went right back into the front room again.

The light was still on my hand—and it went out of the door again, and down the passage and into the little room—where he (my stepfather) was then.

And then I went right back to the front room and sat down on a chair—and the light joined itself to the other piece of light again (a portion of this had wandered over the bed) and disappeared over the screen, where it had come from.

When I sat down in the chair, they (my relations) were all shaking and frightened. And my stepfather fell down on the floor and started crying—in an attitude of prayer.

And I said, "Why are you all so frightened? I am quite, quite well!"

And I told them I felt as though I could eat some supper. And I had it—and ever since I have been quite well and strong—without even the littlest bit of pain—not even tired.

There were two other visions, subsidiary, in a sense, to this healing vision, one before the experience in question, and one after. The first occurred on the night of February 14. In this

vision Miss Kerin heard what she describes as "a great flocking noise." "Then all came light, dazzlingly light, after which there were crowds and crowds all in white, some having wings and some lilies, and those that had wings had halos round their heads." Finally one of the bright crowd came forward and said to her, "No, Dorothy, you are not coming yet," after which the vision vanished. This vision was apparently in the nature of a preparation for the healing vision of four days later. The third vision occurred on the night of March 10, and is best given in her own words :—

I suddenly heard a Voice say, "Dorothy!" Then I woke up and sat up in bed—and that great beautiful light came all over the bed again, from the foot, until it came right up all round me—and then in the middle it opened—and there was a beautiful, beautiful Woman's face, with a beautiful halo on the head.

The shoulders and arms followed the head out of the light. In her right hand she had a beautiful Annunciation lily—a big one—and she was holding both her hands up like that (extending her arms and raising them until the hands were just above the level of the head).

And then she said, "Dorothy, you are *quite* well," and she put a special stress on the word "quite."

Then she said, "The Lord has brought you back to use you for a great and privileged work. Many sick will ye heal in your prayer and faith." She did not say by or through your prayer and faith, but "in."

"Comfort the sorrowing! Give Faith to the faithless!" Then she said, "Many rebuffs you will have, but remember, you are thrice blessed. His grace is sufficient for thee, and He will *never* leave thee!"

Then she made the sign of the cross on me with her beautiful lily, and it came right on my face, so that I could smell the scent of it.

Then she put my hand on the pillow and said :

"Now sleep, child!"

I did not see her go away, but after she was gone the room was full of the scent of the lily.

Then I slept until the morning.

In a case like this the natural tendency among the sceptical, when no doubt remains of the reality of the recovery, is to ascribe the previous illness to extreme hysteria. This explanation is a

particularly difficult one in the present case in view of the extent of the medical evidence and of the fact that the doctor who had charge of her for two years preceding her recovery reported that he had found evidence of tuberculosis of the lungs on repeated examinations. It cannot, however, be disputed that several doctors detected hysterical symptoms at various stages of her illness, particularly the earlier ones, and it is not improbable that her physical ailments were complicated by this condition. It is, however, by no

WAS IT A  
CASE OF  
HYSTERIA ?

means clear how hysterical symptoms could have simulated the symptoms of consumption so effectively as to bring their victim to death's door. Dr. Ash summarizes the result of the investigations he undertook, and arrives at the following conclusions:—

(1) The girl had been ill for about seven years, during the greater part of which she had kept to her bed.

(2) From 1906 to the end of 1908 the medical opinions differed as to whether the case was one of consumption or hysteria simulating tuberculosis. But whilst there were numerous signs and symptoms that might have been taken to indicate consumption, no definite sign of hysteria appears to have been noted. One doctor states definitely that whilst uncertain as to consumption, he was quite certain that the illness was neither hysteria nor malingering.

(3) In 1909 the evidence pointed more and more in the direction of consumption. But not finding the microbes of that infection, her doctors, rightly or wrongly, "fell back on" hysteria as the diagnosis.

(4) In 1910 and 1911 the doctors and nurses who attended the case were certain that it was one of advancing tuberculosis of the lungs.

(5) In February of this year (1912) *physical exhaustion was real and severe.*

(6) During the week ending February 18, the girl was indeed in that condition which is generally conveyed by the term "dying." So much so that her then medical attendant thought death might occur at any time.

(7) That the patient, instead of dying, saw or dreamt a "vision," which was immediately followed by her restoration to health and strength, and by the sudden disappearance of all symptoms.

(8) That *because* the illness had thus terminated, and the symptoms disappeared so completely, not a few medical men concluded that *therefore* the illness should be labelled "hysteria," and the circumstances thereof considered of no importance.

As Dr. Ash well points out, hysteria in a medical sense is a very real disease, and must not be confused with the popular use of the word in its signification of loss of self-control and shamming. The victim of hysteria is liable unconsciously to mimic other complaints.

WHAT IS Hysteria? The condition can lead to bleeding from the mouth and nose, and may produce states of profound exhaustion and even blindness and deafness. The main point, however, which will appeal to the lay mind, is the fact that whatever the nature of the disease may have been, the physical condition immediately preceding recovery was as serious as it could possibly have been short of death actually taking place.

Dr. Ash devotes an interesting chapter in his book to the question of the meaning of the vision experiences of Miss Dorothy Kerin, and discusses the question as to what precise value should



be placed upon them. Most readers will probably agree with the doctor that they may fairly be placed side by side with such experiences as the voices of Joan of Arc, the visions of St. Theresa, and the experience of St. Paul on the road to Damascus. It will, however, be more difficult for most of us to come to a definite conclusion on the question under what precise category of psychic phenomena these visions are to be classed. We need hardly be troubled with the suggestion that experiences of the kind are by-products of hysteria. The results are so greatly in excess of anything that we are accustomed to in the way of effects of a material cause, that their magnitude in itself renders such an hypothesis ridiculous on the face of it. One of these incidents revolutionized the history and religion of the world. Another restored its own monarchy to France, and the instance before us is shown to have transformed the whole physical condition of the subject of the experience.

It is, however, quite open to us to argue that visions of the kind are subjective in character and not objective, that they are the products of a spiritual state of the individual which translates its own sensations into a dramatic form, and creates by the power of its imagination beings who appear to convey messages and assurances which are in reality nothing but the potent auto-suggestions of the subliminal self. Such an explanation can be supported by numerous dream experiences in which the dramatic faculty plays a leading part, while in reality all the *dramatis personæ* are identifiable with different characteristics or stand-points of one individual—the dreamer. Numerous instances of this have been given by Carl Du Prel in his celebrated work on Transcendental Philosophy (*The Philosophy of Mysticism*), and also by other scientific writers on the subject of the Dream World. If we accept the hypothesis that the experiences are actual and spiritually objective (if I may use the expression), we are brought face to face with certain difficulties.

The tendency of all such visions is to translate themselves into the religious thought of the seer and to take on his or her thought atmosphere. If he or she is a Christian the vision will take the form of the Virgin Mary or angels with wings, or even of Jesus Christ; if, on the other hand, the entranced person is a Buddhist or Mohammedan the visions will harmonize in a similar way with the faith of the beholder. Thus with regard to Dorothy Kerin's visions Dr. Ash quite pertinently observes:—

ARE VISIONS  
SUBJECTIVE  
OR  
OBJECTIVE ?

OBJECTIONS  
TO THE  
OBJECTIVE  
HYPOTHESIS.



" They were obviously of such a nature as to form a picture of the typical religious kind. Every one is familiar with engravings and paintings, stained glass windows, Christmas cards, and so forth, in which crowds of angels with wings and halos appear. Just such an assemblage appeared in the first vision, while in the second there was only one angelic personage, who, however, manifested all the characteristic properties of his order, as we know them from time-honoured stories."

There have been many records of people who, when dying, have been witnesses of the Beatific Vision, and have claimed to have seen the Founder of the Christian Faith. What justification have we for crediting the actual reality underlying such an assumption? Again there was, I remember, a case in the recent Welsh revival of one of the revivalists who, among other experiences, had a vision of a celestial being. So clearly did he see the angel in question that he was able to distinguish the feathers on her wings. The fact is, habit is second nature with us, and even those who have discarded the Christian religion still find themselves unconsciously thinking in terms of Christianity.

But in disputing the objectivity of visions on the strength of these arguments, it must be admitted that we are going further than the evidence actually warrants. The psychic will see a ghost clothed as he would expect him to appear. The fact that the ghost is not naked cannot be held as evidence in disproof of his presence, though this argument has been not unfrequently employed to discredit the genuineness of all apparitions. The point that really arises is whether there is an actual presence underlying the vision seen, and if so to what extent this vision is clothed upon by the mentality of the seer. It might be argued, indeed, that the form assumed was a hypnotic suggestion conveyed by the apparition to the subconsciousness of the percipient. The evidence, however, rather points in the other direction, inasmuch as it appears in most cases to be the early religious training of the seer which colours the visionary picture. Such visions are not confined to the celestial sphere. The teachings embodied in childhood on the subject of hell will take root and people the imagination of the adult. Thus St. Theresa saw an apparition of the Devil seated at the foot of her bed, clothed in the conventional form, which she was successful in exorcising by means of her Bible—or was it holy water? On the assumption in defence of which I am at present arguing, we should be justified in postulating the presence of an evil spirit and concluding that the imagination of St. Theresa did the rest.

The question then, with regard to the vision-picture, is, as Dr.

Ash seems to appreciate, whether or not some conscious reality underlies the vision, or whether it is merely the child of the imagination of the sub-conscious self. It is a question of the "hidden spring," as the doctor calls it, which has liberated the picture. Was this "spring" operated from within or from without? If from without, was it operated from a material or from a spiritual sphere? The fact that the picture seen takes form in the sub-conscious mind of the visionary, "throws no certain light on the stimulus of which the picture is merely a secondary result—an interpretation."

**THE TRUE SCIENTIFIC ATTITUDE.** This appears to be the true scientific attitude to adopt, and each incident of the kind must be judged on its own merits, and according to the evidence which it offers of the bona fides of the visionary and the practical results accruing from the vision. The genuineness of the vision in question is attested by such startling subsequent verification that it is impossible to feel wonder that the girl who experienced it expresses her own absolute confidence in the presence and reality of her spiritual visitants and the message and mission which they imparted to herself.

I am asked by the Publishers of *The Path* to state that arrangements have been made to hold their Fourth Annual International Summer School at Torquay for two weeks, from August 3 to 17.

**THE INTERNATIONAL SUMMER SCHOOL.**

I understand that members of the school will have accommodation reserved for them in a number of selected boarding establishments and private hotels. This summer gathering includes a series of lectures, the names of some of the lecturers being as follows: Rev. K. C. Anderson, of Dundee, Sir Richard Stapley, Prof. P. Geddes, Mabel Collins, Prof. Bickerton, W. Tudor Pole, etc., etc. Those who wish for further information on the subject should apply to the Secretary, International Summer School, Oakley House, Bloomsbury Street, W.C.



*Photo: Campbell Gray.*  
DOROTHY KERIN. April, 1912.