



# Crystal Gazing: Its History and Practice, with a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic Scrying

*Northcote W. Thomas*

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THE personal references with which Dr. Lang and Mr. Thomas honour me in this entertaining booklet are gratifying in so far as they show that the discussion between Dr. Lang and myself, although now of ancient date, remains occasion of mental disquiet. Dr. Lang's touching allusion to his continued hepatic troubles commands my unabated sympathy, the more so as I fear that they may retard his conversion. Mr. Thomas seems to mistake logomachy for logic. He quotes me as contending that, as the phenomena which savages attribute to spirits are explained by science as due to natural causes, spirits do not exist. That is rather a travesty of what I said; but let it pass. Then he offers a parallel. Some ignorant rustics attributed the working of a steam-driven machine to horses inside it; they were mistaken; therefore, horses do not exist! Surely the ordinary man, who has never had Mr. Thomas's advantages of a course of Mill or Jevons, will reply that, in the one case, the rustics referred the mystery to known or ascertainable causes, since they had seen horses doing divers kinds of field work; while in the Other case, the mysteries are ascribed to a cause of which the savages know, and can know, nothing. The savage and the spiritualist are at one in explaining what puzzles them as due to something of which they are totally ignorant. But their conceptions of that "something" prevent the application of the saying, *Omne ignotum pro Magnifico*.

As for the subject-matter of the volume, there is little, there can be little, that is new. For the pictures seen in glass balls, mirrors, beryl stones, and other objects reflecting light, vary in detail only according to the idiosyncrasy or "personal equation" of the scryer. Crystal-gazing is as "old as the hills"; Æschylus attributed its discovery to Prometheus, Zoroaster to Ahriman, and the Fathers of the Church to the Devil. Modern explanations are less concrete: they refer the phenomena to the vague pseudo- or quasi-supernatural. When Mr. Thomas rebukes Professor Ray Lankester for daring to speak of telepathy as a "thing" (does Mr. Thomas contend that it is a person?), and when Dr. Lang confesses belief that there is evidence (ingathered, it is presumed, by the Society for Psychical Research) in support of the survival of human personality, the uneasy feeling arises that both of them are in the movement which arrests the explanation of the occult on scientific lines.

Mind is greater than consciousness; its depths no plummet has sounded, but its abnormal workings indicate that what man seeks after in the heavens lies within him. Mr. Thomas closes his book with the announcement that "crystals can be obtained of the Society for Psychical Research, 20 Hanover Square, to whose care reports of crystal-gazing may be consigned" to him. It is not easy to reconcile his statement that "the crystal is apt to anticipate events" with the assurance that "moderate indulgence in the sport is no more harmful than an after-dinner snooze." Sport, indeed!

—*The Graduate Magazine*, Vol. 16 [1917]

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