

**CRYSTAL GAZING, ITS HISTORY
AND PRACTICE, WITH A
DISCUSSION OF THE EVIDENCE
FOR TELEPATHIC SCRYING**

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Crystal Gazing, Its History and Practice, with a Discussion of the Evidence for Telepathic
Scrying by Northcote W. Thomas & Andrew Lang

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NORTHCOTE W. THOMAS & ANDREW LANG

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CRYSTAL GAZING

Its History and Practice, with a
Discussion of the Evidence for
Telepathic Scrying

With an Introduction by
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INTRODUCTION

“Do you believe in crystal gazing?” is a question which one is often asked. One can only reply: “What do you mean by believing in crystal gazing? If you mean, Do I believe that it is worth while to pay half-a-crown, or a guinea, as a fee to a person who professes to discover by crystal gazing the whereabouts of lost property, or of a missing friend, or to foretell events?—I do not ‘believe in crystal gazing.’” One hears wonderful tales of successes in this kind, but not at first-hand; and the people who tell them are not very critical, while the practisers are, to begin with, breaking the law. But if the question means, Do I believe that some people have the faculty of seeing faces, places, persons in motion, sometimes recognisable, in a glass ball, or in water, ink, or any clear deep?—then I do believe in the existence of this faculty. Whether the things thus seen ever answer, except by fortuitous coincidence, to thoughts in another person’s mind, things unknown to the crystal gazer, is a different question, to which I return later. But as to the actual existence of an experience which the gazer can only describe as “seeing” such or such things in the glass ball I have no doubt whatever. I shall use for the

practice the old English word "scrying"—a form, one may guess, of "describing." Perhaps I may as well give the grounds of my belief, as far as that belief extends. Like other people, I had heard and read, all my life, of "magic mirrors"—ever since, in childhood, I perused the Notes to "The Lay of the Last Minstrel," and Scott's story, "My Aunt Margaret's Mirror," and Kingsley's Egyptian chapters in "Eothen." Like other people, I thought the stories nothing but mediæval or Oriental romances. But Miss Goodrich-Freer published an essay on crystal gazing in the *Proceedings of the Society for Psychological Research*. The essay contained a brief and interesting history of the practice, and records of personal experiences by the author, "Miss X," whose real name I did not know. I was staying at a hospitable country house, a castle with an ancient legend for being "haunted." None of us ever saw any of the traditional spectres. We sent to London for a glass ball, in which none of us could see anything that was not very natural and normal. The hostess was the last who tried: she found that the ball first yielded mere reflections, then seemed to grow milky, then black, and then pictures appeared. These to some slight degree rather disturbed her equanimity, being novel in her experience, and not corresponding to any conscious thoughts in her mind, which might have suggested them to a person very capable of "visual-

ising"—that is, forming pictures "in her mind's eye" of the object of her conscious thoughts. This power exists in very various degrees, perhaps especially in women, children, and people of genius. Thackeray and Dickens have left descriptions of their own power of visualising: perhaps most imaginative writers possess it, but other writers possess it, who do not seem to be successfully imaginative. The crystal pictures, however, were seen, not "in the mind's eye," but projected outwards into the glass, and did not correspond to any thoughts which the gazer knew that she was thinking, or had ever thought.

This lady's faculty went no further. In perhaps one case she partially beheld the object on which a friend fixed his mind; in another she saw a curious mystical design that we shortly afterwards found on the cover of a book, recently published, which had not then reached us, and in a third case, when scrying in the crystal cover of a miniature of the Chevalier de St George (James III. and VIII.), she saw what might be explained as the march of his army across the field of Shirramuir. But there was no evidence to anything unusual in such scrys.

I got a glass ball, and, at St Andrews and elsewhere, people of both sexes, and of many social conditions, from my cook of that day (who made the experience casually, as she saw the ball lying about), to golfers, men of business, men of letters, a physi-

cian—all sorts and conditions of men and women, friends, kinsfolk, and chance acquaintances of my own. The proportion of successes in "seeing" crystal pictures was very great—unusually so, I believe. The subject had not then won its way into magazines and general literature and conversation, yet the symptoms, so to say, were identical in cases of success. The ball grew milky, then black; then the pictures appeared, as an almost invariable rule, though the experimenters were not told what to expect, and were quite ignorant of the little that had been written on the topic. I, therefore, took leave to think that all experimenters were not playing on my artless confidence. One lady tried to scry in a glass jug of water. She saw landscapes, an "Ecce Homo," and other things, and doubted whether the Church (she was of the ancient faith) sanctioned the practice. She added, what was curious, that, as a child, she used to spill ink, gaze into it, and see such pictures as she now beheld in the water.

An incident occurred which I have narrated elsewhere. I lent the ball to a Miss Balfour, who only then saw, I think, an old-fashioned piece of furniture. Her brother laughed at her, and took the ball into the study, whence he returned, looking perplexed. He admitted that he had seen a person whom he knew, under a lamp. This was at about 5 P.M., on a Sunday, at St Andrews. He would find