

**CHAMELEON,  
BEING A BOOK OF  
MY SELVES**

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Chameleon, being a book of my selves by Benjamin DeCasseres

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**BENJAMIN DECASSERES**

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## THE BRAIN AND THE WORLD

**W**E never come into contact with things, but only with their images. We never know the real—only effigies of the real. We do not pursue objects; we pursue the reflection of objects. We do not possess things; we possess the emotions that things inspire.

If I pluck a flower and hold it in my hand I have merely come into contact with an image in my brain created by certain complex influences transmitted through the senses from an unknowable. No one pursues power or wealth; he pursues ideas and images of power and wealth. Strictly speaking, I do not live in a house, in the air, but live in my house-image, my air-image. Images and thoughts being the very pulp of consciousness, it follows that in images and thoughts there lies the only reality we can ever know. Imagination and its elements are not the effigies of matter, but what we term matter is the



effigy of our images. Hence the imaginary world—the world of intellect and images—is the only real world. It is the unanalyzable data of consciousness.

We never get over the threshold of our images. We live in images whether in rest or motion. Illusion does not consist in believing our images and dreams to be real, but in believing that there exists anything else but images and dreams. The illusions of the brain are the only realities; they become delusions when we try to externalize them. All practical men are insane because they seek to externalize the internal. All poets and philosophers are sane because they seek to internalize the external.

Idolatry is the worship of the non-existent. All practical life is founded on the belief that there is something to be had outside of the self, that there is a pleasure to be had in things *per se*, that Mecca is a place, not a belief. Matter is something fashioned by the brain, an eidolon of the will, the symbol of an image. The practical person tries to grasp the symbol; the poet tries to grasp the image. The former must always fail because we never

come into contact with matter, which is the symbol of ideas; no mind ever comes into contact with the external world. The latter (the poet) always succeeds because he arrays himself in himself; lives immediately in the thought, image or emotion that a thing creates; he knows that the materialization of an image is the substitution of a symbol for a reality.

The sense of universal disillusion, of the almost total absence of relation between dream and deed, is the ever-recurring proof of the egocentricity of man. He is the sun around which swing and dance the worlds tossed off through immeasurable time; worlds so seeming real, but which are mere spawn of dreams, man's chance-litter. To stretch out the hand from the House of Images seeking to grasp this domed and pinnacled mirage is the signal that wakes the imps of irony from their subterranean vaults and sends them swarming and gibbering over the roofs and through the streets of that image-chrismed city, now suddenly become a deserted city of rotted rookeries.

The eternal legend of the Brain and the World, of the Image and the Mirage is

found in all ages—in the fables of Tantalus and Ixion, in the world-wisdom of Don Quixote and Faust, in “*El Magico Prodigioso*” of Calderon, in the Dhamapada, in the Ibsen plays. The legerdemain of the senses it is that scratches those lines of sorrow at mouth-ends, draws heavy blank curtains over the wild scenery of the eye, sets a flag of truce on the purposeful brow and sends us to cower behind the breast-works of an eternal reticence.

Men sail the seas for adventure, travel towards the poles for the novel and seek in remote lands the tang of the strange, the witchery of the weird; but the adventure, the novelty, the tang and the witchery are in men themselves. I am my own novelty, my own adventure; it is I who give tang to life. I am bewitched of wonder and mystery—than me there is nothing more weird that is conceivable. He who goes a-seeking leaves himself behind. Other than your soul there is no reality. We can go toward nothing unless that thing has first come toward us. The brain is not only the center of gravity, but is gravity. The Will is not only the inventor of the universe, but is the universe.