

Seeing Through the Dark Glass— Visions of A. E. Williams

I HAVE SPOKEN of a training of the will, but have not indicated the spring of power in our being, nor dilated on those moments when we feel a Titanic energy lurks within us ready to our summons as the familiar spirit to the call of the enchanter. If we have not power we are nothing and must remain outcasts of the Heavens. We must be perfect as the Father is perfect. If in the being of the Ancient of Days there is power, as there is wisdom and beauty, we must liken ourselves to that being, partake, as our nature will permit, of its power, or we can never enter it. The Kingdom is taken by violence. The easier life becomes in our civilizations, the remoter we are from nature, the more does power ebb away from most of us. It ebbs away for all but those who never relax the will but sustain it hour by hour. We even grow to dread the powerful person because we feel how phantasmal before power are beauty and wisdom, and indeed there is no true beauty or wisdom which is not allied with strength.

The text in this article, reprinted by permission of the Theosophical Publishing House, Wheaton, IL, is excerpted from A. E. Russell's book, The Candle of Vision, now out of print. The author affirms the sanctity of the Creative force, and stresses that that moral purification and the cultivation of selflessness must precede any attempt to awaken occult powers. Russell's visionary experiences remind us that the very earth is holy, permeated as it is by the life of the Spirit.

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For one who cultivates will in himself there are thousands who cultivate the intellect or follow after beauty, and that is because the intellect can walk easily on the level places, while at first every exercise of the will is laborious as the lift is to the climber of a precipice. Few are those who come to that fullness of power where the will becomes a fountain within them perpetually springing up self-fed, and who feel like the mountain lovers who know that it is easier to tread on the hilltops than to walk on the low and level roads. Because in our ordered life power is continually ebbing away from us, nature, which abhors a vacuum in our being, is perpetually breaking up our civilizations by wars or internal conflicts, so that stripped of our ease, in battle, through struggle and sacrifice, we may grow into power again; and this must continue until we tread the royal road, and cultivate power in our being as we cultivate beauty or intellect.

Those who have in themselves the highest power, who are miracle-workers, the Buddhas and the Christs, are also the teachers of peace, and they may well be so having themselves attained mastery of the Fire.

It is because it is so laborious to cultivate the will we find in literature endless analysis of passion and thought, but rarely do we find one writing as if he felt the powers leaping up in his

body as the thronged thoughts leap up in the brain. I was never able to recognize that harmony of powers spoken of by the ancients as inhabiting the house of the body, lurking in nerve-centre or plexus, or distinguish their functions, but I began to feel, after long efforts at concentration and mastery of the will, the beginning of an awakening of the fires, and at times there came partial perception of the relation of these forces to centers in the psychic body. I could feel them in myself; and sometimes see them, or the vibration or light of them, about others who were seekers with myself for this knowledge; so that the body of a powerful person would appear to be throwing out light in radiation from head or heart, or plumes of fire would rise above the head jetting from fountains within, apparitions like wings of fire, plumes or feathers of flame, or dragon-like crests, many-colored.

Once at the apex of intensest meditation I awoke that fire in myself of which the ancients have written, and it ran up like lightning along the spinal cord, and my body rocked with the power of it, and I seemed to myself to be standing in a fountain of flame, and there were fiery pulsations as of wings about my head, and a musical sound not unlike the clashing of cymbals with every pulsation; and if I had remembered the ancient wisdom I might have opened that eye which searches infinitude. But I remembered only, in a half terror of the power I had awakened, the danger of misdirection of the energy, for such was the sensation of power that I seemed to myself to have opened the seal of a cosmic fountain, so I remained contemplative and was not the resolute guider of the fire.

And indeed this rousing of the fire is full of peril; and woe to him who awakens it before he has purified his being into selflessness, for it will turn downward and vitalize his darker passions and awaken strange frenzies and inextinguishable



Courtesy of the artist, Annie Lauro

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Shekinah

While the Shekinah was the actual manifestation of Deity as Jehovah, or the Holy Spirit, in the ancient Tabernacle in the Wilderness, the artist has suggestively chosen to represent the Holy Spirit's manifestation as a planetary spinal Spirit Fire, rising from the purified crystalline earth through the second vital center, situated in the pelvic basin, shaped like and symbolized as the chalice or communion cup, to the head centers. Above, the Holy Spirit hovers as a dove.

desires. The turning earthward of that heaven-born power is the Sin against the Holy Breath, for that fire which leaps upon us in the ecstasy of contemplation of Deity is the Holy Breath, the power which can carry us from Earth to Heaven. It is normally known to man only in procreation, but its higher and mightier uses are unknown to him. Even though in our scriptures it is said of it that it gives to this man vision or the discerning of spirits, and to that poetry or eloquence, and to another healing and magical powers, it remains for most a myth of the theologians, and is not mentioned by any of our psychologists though it is the fountain out of which is born all other powers in the body and is the sustainer of all our faculties.

Normally I found this power in myself, not leaping up titanically as if it would storm the heavens, but a steady light in the brain, "the candle upon the forehead," and it was revealed in ecstasy of thought or power in speech, and in a continuous welling up from within myself of intellectual energy,

vision, or imagination. It is the afflatus of the poet or musician. As an ancient scripture says of it, "The Illuminator is the inspirer of the poet, the jeweller, the chiseler and all who work in the arts." It is the Promethean fire, and only by mastery of this power will man be able to ascend to the ancestral Paradise. Again and again I would warn all who read of the danger of awakening it, and again and again I would say that without this power we are as nothing.

We shall never scale the Heavens, and religions, be they ever so holy, will never open the gates to us, unless we are able mightily to open them for ourselves and enter as the strong spirit who cannot be denied. This power might cry of itself to us:

*My kinsmen are they, beauty, wisdom, love;
But without me are none may dare to climb
To the Ancestral Light that glows above
Its mirrored lights in Time.*

*King have I been and foe in ages past.
None may escape me. I am foe until
There shall be for the spirit forged at last
The high unshakable will.*

*Fear, I will rend you. Love, I make you strong.
Wed with my might the beautiful and wise.
We shall go forth at last, a Titan throng,
To storm His Paradise.*

The Earth

I THINK of earth as the floor of a cathedral where altar and Presence are everywhere. This reverence came to me as a boy listening to the voice of birds one colored evening in summer, when suddenly birds and trees and grass and tinted air and myself seemed but one mood or companionship, and I felt a certitude that the same spirit was in all. A little breaking of the barriers and being would mingle with being. Whitman writes of the earth that it is rude and incomprehensible at first. "But I swear to you," he cries, "that there are divine things well hidden." Yet they are not so concealed that the lover may not discover them, and to the lover nature reveals herself like a shy maiden who is slowly drawn to one who adores her at a



Fresco, Raphael, from *Scenes of the Life of Moses*, Second Loggia, eighth bay, Papal Palace, Vatican

Moses and the Burning Bush

Moses was instructed to take off his shoes for "the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exodus 3:5). Through His shed blood Christ Jesus entered the Earth, sanctifying the entire planet as "holy ground."

distance, and who is first acknowledged by a lifting of the veil, a long-remembered glance, a glimmering smile, and at last comes speech and the mingling of life with life.

So the lover of Earth obtains his reward, and little by little the veil is lifted of an inexhaustible beauty and majesty. It may be he will be tranced in some spiritual communion, or will find his being overflowing into the being of the elements, or become aware that they are breathing their life into his own. Or Earth may become on an instant all faery to him, and earth and air resound with the music of its invisible people. Or the trees and rocks may waver before his eyes and become transparent, revealing what creatures were hidden from him by the curtain, and he will know as the ancients did of dryad and hamadryad, of genii of wood and mountain.

Or earth may suddenly blaze about him with supernatural light in some lonely spot amid the hills, and he will find he stands as the prophet in a place that is holy ground, and he may breathe the intoxicating exhalations as did the sibyls of old. Or his love may hurry him away in dream to share in deeper mysteries, and he may see the palace chambers of nature where the wise ones dwell in secret, looking out over the nations, breathing power into

this man's heart or that man's brain, on any who appear to their vision to wear the colour of truth.

So gradually the earth lover realizes the golden world is all about him in imperishable beauty, and he may pass from the vision to the profounder beauty of being, and know an eternal love is within and around him, pressing upon him and sustaining with infinite tenderness his body, his soul and his spirit.

I have obscured the vision of that being by dilating too much on what was curious, but I desired to draw others to this meditation, if by reasoning it were possible to free the intellect from its own fetters, so that the imagination might go forth, as Blake says, "in uncurbed glory." So I stayed the vision which might have been art, or the ecstasy which might have been poetry, and asked of them rather to lead me back to the ancestral fountain from which they issued. I think by this meditation we can renew for ourselves the magic and beauty of Earth, and understand the meaning of things in the sacred books which had grown dim.

We have so passed away from vital contact with divine powers that they have become for most names for the veriest abstractions, and those who read do not know that the Mighty Mother is that Earth on which they tread and whose holy substance they call common clay; or that the Paraclete is the strength of our being, the power which binds atom to atom and Earth to Heaven; or that the Christos is the Magician of the Beautiful and that It is not only the Architect of the God-world but is that in us which sees beauty, creates beauty, and it is verily wisdom in us and is our deepest self; or that the Father is the fountain of substance and power and wisdom, and that we could not lift an eyelash but that we have our being in Him.

When we turn from books to living nature we begin to understand the ancient wisdom, and it is no longer an abstraction, for the Great Spirit whose home is in the vast becomes for us a moving glamour in the heavens, a dropping tenderness at twilight, a visionary light in the hills, a voice in the heart. The Earth underfoot becomes sacred, and the air we breathe is like wine poured out for us by some heavenly cupbearer.

As we grow intimate with earth we realize what

sweet and august things await humanity when it goes back to that forgotten mother. Who would be ambitious, who would wish to fling a name like Caesar's in the air if he saw what thrones and majesties awaited the heavenly adventurer? Who would hate if he could see beneath the husk of the body the spirit which is obscured and imprisoned there, and how it was brother to his own spirit and all were children of the King? Who would weary of nature or think it a solitude once the veil had been lifted for him, once he had seen that great glory? Would they not long all of them for the coming of that divine hour in the twilights of time, when out of rock, mountain, water, tree, bird, beast or man the seraph spirits of all that live shall emerge realizing their kinship, and all together, fierce things made gentle, and timid things made bold, and small made great, shall return to the Father Being and be made one in Its infinitudes.

When we attain this vision nature will melt magically before our eyes, and powers that seem dreadful, things that seemed abhorrent in her, will reveal themselves as brothers and allies. Until then she is unmoved by our conflicts and will carry on her ceaseless labors.

*No sign is made while empires pass.
The flowers and stars are still His care,
The constellations hid in grass,
The golden miracles in air.*

*Life in an instant will be rent
When death is glittering, blind and wild,
The Heavenly Brooding is intent
To that last instant on Its child.*

*It breathes the glow in brain and heart.
Life is made magical. Until
Body and spirit are apart
The Everlasting works Its will.*

*In that wild orchid that your feet
In their next falling shall destroy,
Minute and passionate and sweet,
The Mighty Master holds His joy.*

*Though the crushed jewels droop and fade
The Artist's labors will not cease,
And from the ruins shall be made
Some yet more lovely masterpiece.* □