

A DISCOVERY WHICH SHOULD HELP THE BLIND.

A Licentiate of the University of Paris, Professor Louis Farigoule, has just published a book with the arresting title "Extra-retinal Vision, and the Par-optic Sense," which promises us nothing less than the possibility of acquiring a new sense, or rather, of extending our present sense of touch, enabling it to supplement that of sight. M. Louis Farigoule, as Jules Romains, is an admirable and well-known poet. He proves by his new work that he is no stranger to pure science, and he shows this with such skill that his discovery (if it can be verified scientifically) will mark one of the most important dates in the history of physiology.

The author assures us, first of all, that it is possible for everyone, whoever he may be, in a certain condition of consciousness induced by hypnotism, to see clearly exterior objects, colours as well as forms, without any help from the ordinary vision through the eyes, retina and optic nerve. By means of special instruments, and a strict method and control, he is certain that he has eliminated any possibility of perception of the object by the senses of touch or of smell. *It is a real vision by the skin* of the body or the face, by means of organs known as *ocellae*, tiny microscopic nerve-endings situated in the epidermis, each of which is a little rudimentary eye, complete in itself, and connected with the central nervous system. They are the identical end-organs discovered by Ranvier, small cells concave on the one side, convex on the other, which he named "ménisques," "expansions hédériformes" or intra-epithelial baskets. But no one has recognised their true function until now.

M. Farigoule believes that man is gifted with the faculty of seeing with the skin, by means of light, in just the same way as in the ordinary retinal vision—of perceiving different intensities of light, colours, the opacity or transparency of objects, and even the reflections of substances in a mirror. It seems to be enough that a sufficient extent of the skin-surface, at least several square centimetres, should be brought into position opposite the object to be seen, and that a minimum amount of light should be thrown upon it. An opaque hand-screen, or too thick a piece of material would effectually prevent "paroptic vision."

M. Farigoule says that five subjects for the experiment were chosen *at random*, and all succeeded in seeing exterior objects in this way, showing how general the phenomenon is. They

were able to read newspapers with their hands, decipher numbers with their chests, see furniture with their faces and backs, &c. One must read M. Farigoule's book for his own description of the particulars of this extraordinary power of vision. The details which he gives are as minute as they are striking.

But the author goes a step further—he believes that this function is latent in everyone, that it doubtless existed in primitive forms of life before the ocular vision which, he believes, has now so far triumphed as to throw this pre-existing faculty in the sub-conscious. He has struggled to awaken it in himself, and after a laborious apprenticeship, and having secured himself against the possibility of any trace of auto-suggestion, he has succeeded in obtaining, in his normal condition, the same phenomena which he had obtained in his hypnotised subjects. In spite of the very practical and positive method which rules all his experiments, one can only read his results with wonder and awe.

One conclusion is evident. As there is no question here of any more or less occult powers, and if it is true that some such power exists in practically everyone and can be awakened by an education of the attention without even leaving the normal state of consciousness, we are perhaps in the presence not only of a great discovery, considered from the purely scientific point of view, but also of a practical process which could render the greatest of all services to the blind—endowing them with a power of vision which, if it were developed, should prove itself scarcely inferior to that which they have lost.

The author believes this. He asks that others should learn to control and perfect his discovery. So the psycho-physiologist Farigoule will perhaps be the means of giving light to the blind just as he already, as the poet Jules Romains, has been able to illuminate by his brilliant verses the imagination and vision of the mind.—An article in the "Ouest-Eclair" of November 4th, 1920, translated by Constance M. Symonds, A.R.San.Inst.

WHERE TO WORSHIP ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

I know thine Abbey, Westminster,
As sea-birds know their nest,
And flies my home-sick soul to thee,
When it would find a rest;
Where princes and old bishops sleep,
With sceptre and with crook,
And mighty spirits haunt around
Each Gothic shrine and nook.

Bishop Cox.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)