

# CHAPTER X

## PROMISES AND VISIONS

“Search while thou wilt; and let thy reason go  
To ransom truth, e’en to th’abyss below;  
Rally the scattered causes; and that line  
Which nature twists be able to untwine.  
It is thy Maker’s will; for unto none  
But unto reason can He e’er be known.”

— Sir Thomas Browne

The dealings which Kelley had in Lubeck with the spirits seem to throw a light on all his relations with Dee. Kelley is gaining confidence; he sees that he is already able to dupe his employer considerably. He has only to manipulate the conversations a little to show up often his so-called sincerity. He can pretend he is aghast at Il’s levity, and he seems to have been cunning enough when the spirits very often blamed him.

Buthis dreams of advancement in wealth and fame were no nearer accomplishment. He had seen through Dee’s ambition. It was very different from his own, but he thought he could use it to his own advantage. Dee was now flattered without stint.

So at the sitting in November 15 he sees eleven noblemen in rich sables. One, wearing a regal cap trimmed with sable, is seated on a chair beset with precious stones. “He is a goodlier man than the Lord A.L.” He addresses Dee with glittering promises. He is the King or the Emperor, and is represented in the margin of the diary by a crown. He says to Dee: —

“Pluck up thy heart and be merry, pine not thy Soul away with inward groanings, for I will open unto thee the secrets of Nature and the riches of the world, and withal give thee such direction that shall deliver thee from many infirmities both of body and mind, ease thee of they tedious labours and settle thee where thou shalt have comfort.

“Thanks be given unto the Highest now and ever.

“Why doest thou [hesitate] within thy thought? Hast thou not need of comfort?”

“Yes, God knows, for I am half confounded.”

“Then first determine within thyself to rest thee for this winter. Secondly, open thy mind to desire such things as may advance thy credit and enrich thy family, reap unto thee many friends and lift thee up to honour. For I will stir up the mindes of learned men, the profoundest in the world, that they shall visit thee. And I will disclose unto you such things as shall be wonderful and of exceeding profit. Moreover I will put to my hands and help your proceedings, that the world may talk of your wisdom hereafter. Therefore wander not farther into unknown places: contagious, the very seats of death for thee and thy children and such as are thy friends. If thou enquire of me where and how, I answer, everywhere, or how thou wilt. Thou shalt forthwith become rich, and thou shalt be able to enrich kings

and help such as are needy. Wast thou not born to use the commodity of this world? were not all things made for man's use?"

Here are the old dreams of the philosopher's stone, the elixir of life, the transmutation of metals and all the works of alchemy, for which both these travellers were adventuring their lives in a foreign land. Dee does not seem exactly dazzled by these allurements. He only begs leave to ask questions, and seeks to keep the speaker to the point. "Are they to stay there and not to go on with Laski? Where are they to spend the winter?"

"Where you will," comes the answer. "Are you so unwise as to go with him now? Let him go before, and provide for himself and the better for you. In the Summer, when it is more fair, you can follow. The weather now will be hard and the travel unfit for children. Heap not up thy wife's sorrow."

"I desire to live in quiet that my spirit may the better attend to the service of God."

"Well, you are contented?"

Dee asks again, are they to part from Laski? Will it not be prejudicial to their arrangement, they having entered into a kind of covenant with him? "Are you not content?" the visitor repeats.

Then he did impart some remarkable information to Dee, in which there was certainly a grain of telepathically conveyed truth.

"Your brother is clapped up in prison. How like you that? Your house-keeper I mean."

This evidently refers to Nicholas Fromond.

"They examine him. They say that thou hast hid divers secret things. As for thy books, thou mayst go look at them at leisure. It may be that thy house may be burnt for a remembrance of thee, too. Well, if they do, so it is. I have given thee my counsel, and desired to do thee good. The choice is thine."

There is no evidence that Fromond was imprisoned, but he was a poor protector of his brother-in-law's valuable effects. He was powerless against a mob who broke into Dee's house not long after his departure from Mortlake, made havoc of his priceless books and instruments, and wrought irreparable damage. It was not nearly two months since Dee had left Mortlake, and, moving from place to place, it was unlikely that he had heard any news from thence. No date has ever been assigned to this action of the mob. It is quite conceivable that it actually took place on this day, November 15, and that by Kelley's clairvoyant or telepathic power the news was communicated across the sea and continent to Dee.

The poor astrologer was torn with doubts and misgivings. He fell upon his knees, uttering a piercing supplication to the "Author of all truth and direction of such as put their trust in him."

"I most humbly beseech thee consider these promises thus to me propounded. If they be true and from thee, confirm them. If they be illusions and

not from thee, disprove them. For hardly in my judgment they do or can agree with our former precepts and order taken by thee.”

And again, in an agony:

“O Lord, I doubt of these promises of ease, wealth, and honour: I suspect the whole apparition of the eleven to be an illusion. O confirm my judgment or disprove it.”

So he seeks for a revelation of guidance, writes letters to Laski, and waits. Soon he perceives these temptations to have come from “a very foolish devil.” He decides that they will continue to throw in their lot with Laski, who rejoined them in Lubeck. He left again to visit the Duke of Mecklenburg, they meanwhile going by Wismar to Rostock and Stettin, which place they reached at ten o’clock on Christmas morning. Laski joined them in a fortnight. They passed on by Stayard to Posen, where Dee adds an antiquarian note that the cathedral church was founded in 1025, and that the tomb of Wenceslaus, the Christian king, is of one huge stone. It was here that Dee began to enter curious notes about Kelley in the *Liber Peregrinationis*, written in Greek characters, but the words are Latin words, or more frequently English. The supposition is that Kelley was unacquainted even with the Greek alphabet. Dee kept his other foreign diary, written in an *Ephemerides Coelestium* (printed in Venice, 1582), secret from his partner, for Kelley had obtained possession of an earlier one kept in England and had written in it unfavourable comments, as well as erased things, about himself. Dee had the last word, and has added above Kelley’s “shameful lye,” “This is Mr. Talbot’s, his own writing in my booke, very unduely as he came by it.” The various diaries sound, perhaps, confusing to the reader, but are really quite simple. By the private diary is meant the scraps in the *Bodleian Almanacs*, edited by Halliwell for the Camden Society, in which he seldom alludes to psychic affairs. The *Book of Mysteries* is the diary in which he relates all the history of the crystal gazing. The printed version (*True Relation*) begins with Laski’s visit to Mortlake on May 28, 1583.

Winter had now set in with unwonted rigour, and one is amazed at the celerity with which this great caravanserai of people and goods pushed on from place to place. From Stettin to Posen, for instance, is more than 200 miles, and it was accomplished within four days and apparently with only one stop. Then southwards into the watery district between the Oder and the Warthe, where the country was so icebound that they had to employ five-and-twenty men to cut the ice for their coaches for a distance as long as two English miles. On February 3 they reached Lask, on the Prince’s own property, and at last were comfortably housed in the Provost’s “fair house by the Church.” Here Dee was ill with ague, but the table was set up, and a new spirit called Nalvage appeared in the globe. Nalvage’s “pysiognomy was like the picture of King Edward the Sixth. His hair hangeth down a quarter of the length of the cap, somewhat curling, yellow.” Dee, of course, had seen the young King when he presented his books, so this is a first-hand reminiscence. Nalvage stood upon a round table of mother-of-pearl, and revealed to them many cabalistic mysteries, tables of letters and names. There was a terrible vision of Mrs. Dee lying dead, with her face all battered in, and of the maid Mary being pulled out of a pool of water half drowned. But it seems to portend no more

than did another piece of ill news conveyed at the same time: "Sir Harry Sidney died upon Wednesday last. A privy enemy of yours." Dee says, "I ever took him for one of my chief friends," and adds, with unconscious humour:

"Note. At Prague, Aug. 24, I understood that Sir H. Sidney was not dead in February nor March, no, not in May last. Therefore this must be considered. Doctor Hagek, his son, told me."

This note makes us realise for a moment how slowly news travelled from England to the Continent in this year of grace 1584.

The informant, Madimi, "a little wench in white," told Dee that she had been in England at his house, and all there were well. The Queen said she was sorry she had lost her philosopher. But the Lord Treasurer answered, "He will come home shortly a begging to you." "Truly," adds Madimi, "none can turn the Queen's heart from you." Then, recurring to Mortlake, she says: "I could not come into your study. The Queen hath caused it to be sealed." This no doubt after the breaking in of the rioters. Dee was counselled to go and live at Cracow. He would like to be led step by step, and begs to know what house "is in God's determination for me and mine." Madimi answers, "As wise as I am, I cannot yet tell what to say." Dee demurs to the expense, and reproaches her for not telling them sooner. Needless cost would have been saved, and he does not know if Laski will have enough money for yet another move. He had rather Kesmark had been redeemed before Laski went to Cracow. Perhaps then his credit with the people would be greater.

Laski had heavily mortgaged his estates in Poland; he was in debt, and he had apparently raised a loan on his Kesmark property for a large sum of money. The bond was to expire on St. George's Day, April 23 next, and without the Emperor's help Dee did not see how it could be met. Kelley recurs to the Danish treasure he had found in England, hidden in ten places, which they would fain have transported to Poland now, very speedily, for Laski's use. Dee is anxious to know from Madimi whether his rents are being duly received in England by his deputy or not, "whether Her Majesty or the Council do intend to send for me again or no." They ask instructions from Gabriel about Kelley's red powder, and how they shall use it. Dee seeks for information about the Prince's wife, whom they have not yet seen, but they doubt she is not their sound friend. He begs for medicine for his ague. And again, shall he take the pedestal, being made in Lask for the holy table, on to Cracow when they go, "rather than make a new one there, both to save time and to have our doings the more secret"? This pedestal was for the crystal to rest in upon the table. Three iron hasps and padlocks were also made at Lask for the table. If any answer to these questions was vouchsafed by the spirits, it was in the usual enigmas.

Part of Dee's baggage, a chest left at Toon on their way out, not having arrived, they did not immediately obey the injunction to move on to Cracow, but after about five weeks in Lask, they again journeyed forward.