



ON GARDENS AND GROUNDS.

By REGINALD BLOMFIELD.

With Illustrations by F. INIGO THOMAS and REGINALD BLOMFIELD.

THESE are two methods of dealing with gardens and grounds, methods absolutely antagonistic in their principles, and based on very different traditions. The first, historically and on its merits, is the formal system, the second is the treatment known as landscape gardening; the latter has been in fashion for somewhat over a hundred years, whereas the formal system was the direct development of the mediæval garden, with its definite inclosure, and was followed as a matter of course in every civilized country in Europe down to the end of the seventeenth century.

The question at issue is simple. Is the garden to be considered in relation to the house, and as an integral part of a design which depends for its success on the combined effect of house and garden, or is the house to be ignored in dealing with the garden? The latter is the position of the landscape gardener; whereas the object of

formal gardening is to bring the house and grounds into harmony, to make the house grow out of its surroundings, to prevent its being an excrescence on the face of nature. Where a garden surrounds a house, it is *primâ facie* evident that the one must condition the other. Starting with the house as our datum, we must consider it as a visible object, what sort of thing it

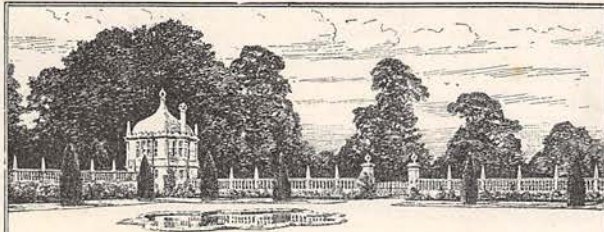


THE TERRACE STAIRS : PRIOR PARK NEAR BATH :

is that we are actually looking at. A house considered simply as a visible object presents to the eye certain masses arranged in definite planes and proportions, and certain colours distributed in definite quality and quantity. It is regular, it presents straight lines and geometrical curves. Any building with any pretensions to architecture implies premeditated form in accordance with certain conditions. However picturesque the result, however bravely some chimney breaks the sky line or some gable contradicts another, all architecture implies restraint and balance. There is order everywhere, and there is no escaping it. Now suppose this visible object dropped from Heaven into a piece of ground, and this piece of ground

laid out with a studied avoidance of all balance, all order, all definite lines, and the result must be a hopeless disagreement between the house and its surroundings, which result is exactly illustrated in most suburban villa gardens.

Something then of the quality of the house must be found in the grounds; the house will have its regular approach and its courtyard, rectangular, round, or oval, its paths straight and wide, its broad expanse of unbroken grass, its trimmed hedges and alleys, its flower beds bordered with box edgings, all will show the quality of order and restraint. The motive of the house suggests itself in the terrace and the

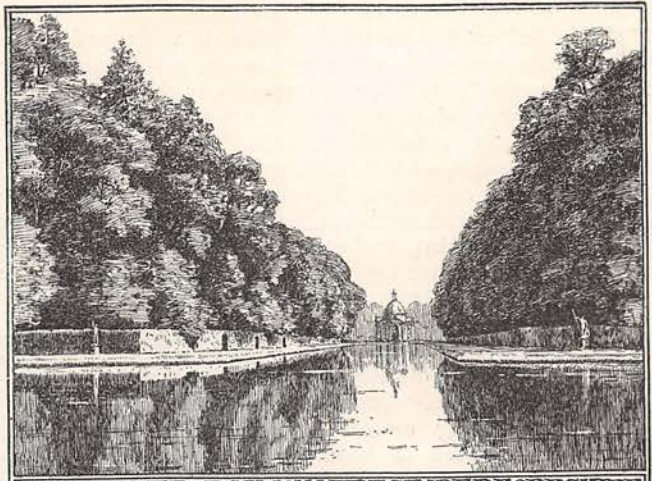


VIEW OF FORECOURT SHEWING ONE OF THE PAVILIONS: MONTACUTE:

gazebo, and recurs like the theme in a coda, as you pass between the piers of the garden gate. Thus the formal garden will produce with the house a homogeneous result not to be reached by either singly. Now let us see how the landscape gardener deals with the problem. The axiom on which his system rests is this, "Whatever nature does is right, therefore let us go and copy her." Let us obliterate the marks of man's handiwork (and more particularly any suspicion of that bad man the architect), and though we shall manipulate the face of nature with the greatest freedom, and zealously "copy nature's graceful touch," we shall be careful to make believe that we have not manipulated it at all; for deception is of the essence of landscape gardening. Thus to get variety and to deceive the eye into supposing that the garden is quite twice as large as it is, the paths are to wind about in all directions, and the lawns are not to be left in broad expanse, but dotted about with pampas grass, foreign shrubs, or anything else that will break up the surface, though a little more reflection might suggest that these several dots are so many points by which to measure the extent of the grounds. In regard to the design of these paths, as was said by a witty Frenchman, "*On n'a qu'à enivrer son jardinier, et à suivre son trace.*"

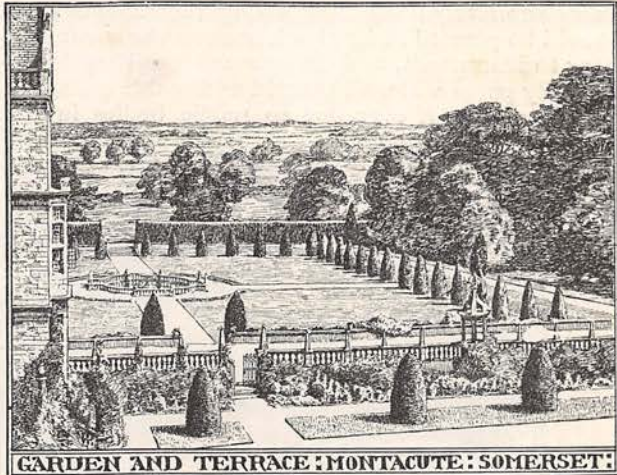
For the purpose of the landscape gardener no particular training in design is necessary. Like Capability Brown, he considers that knowledge hampers originality, and he therefore dispenses with any. Instead of seeing that, if what he calls his art is an art at all, it must stand in correlation to the other arts; that the basis of the arts is one; that with all the limitations necessary to each particular art of design, certain common principles underlie them all; instead of being alive to this idea, with the necessary study which it entails, he applies a perfectly untrained intelligence to the observation of natural scenery, and endeavours to reproduce the results of his observation in "the landscape garden." Little or no reference to architecture is ever made by the landscape gardener. He feels like Demetrius the silversmith that his craft is in danger to be set at nought, if the architect once got his hand in, and having succeeded in expelling the architect a hundred and fifty years ago, he is naturally unwilling to let him in again.

Thus the substantial difference between the two views of gardening is this. The formal school insists on design: the house and grounds should be designed together



THE WATER PAVILION: WREST: BEDFORDSHIRE

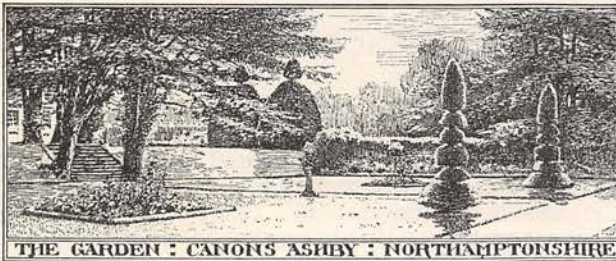
and in relation to each other; no attempt should be made to conceal the design of the garden, there being no reason for doing so; but the bounding line, whether it is the garden wall or the line of paths and parterres, should be shown frankly and unreservedly, and the garden will be treated specifically as an inclosed space to be laid out precisely as the designer pleases. The landscape gardener, on the other hand, turns his back upon architecture at the earliest opportunity, and devotes his energies to making the garden suggest natural scenery, to giving a false impression of its size by sedulously concealing all boundary lines, and to modifying the scenery beyond the garden itself by planting or cutting down trees as may be necessary to what he calls his picture. As a result, the buildings he has to put up in the garden are ignorant and unscholarly in the last degree; his garden is neither one thing nor the other; it cannot be natural scenery, and it hasn't the retirement, the repose, the charm of association found in a garden designed in close relation to the house; and worst of all he shows an utter indifference to the beauty of that nature whose devoted servant he professes to be. He uses the word "nature" without any precise significance, and makes it his stalking horse for all kinds of absurdity. "*Il faut se méfier du mirage de ce mot 'naturel' lorsqu'il s'agit des nuances de la sensibilité. Outre qu'il sert de masque le plus souvent aux inintelligences des ignorants ou aux hostilités des gens vulgaires, il a le malheur de ne pas envelopper de signification précise au regard du philosophe.*"



GARDEN AND TERRACE: MONTACUTE: SOMERSET:

In matters of taste there is no arguing with a man—probably a people with a feeling for design and order will prefer the formal garden, while the landscape garden, as it requires no knowledge of design appeals to the average person, "who knows what he likes," if he doesn't know anything else.

The disregard of conditions shown by the landscape gardener in dealing with



THE GARDEN: CANONS ASHBY: NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

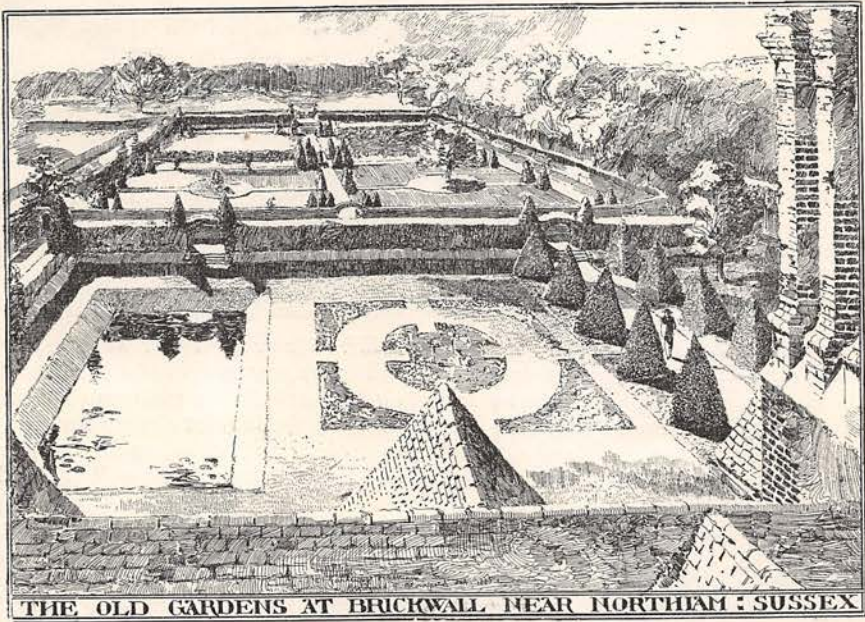
house and gardens is even more conspicuous in his treatment of public grounds. A London square is entirely rectangular and formal, yet hand over the square garden to a landscape gardener and he will very soon upset its character. His dislike of straight lines and simplicity amounts almost to a mania.

In Bloomsbury, till within the last few years, there existed a good old-fashioned square garden laid out in four grass plots, with a lime walk and a border of flowers running round the sides. But the landscape gardener appeared on the scene, and speedily put all this to rights. He cut down three sides of the lime walks and heaped up some ugly grass hummocks, and made the most curiously unreasonable paths, and then charged a handsome sum for having destroyed one of the few square gardens in London with any pretension to design.

In dealing with great spaces the landscape gardener seems to have no idea of mass. He is for ever breaking up his outline with little knots of trees, and reducing the size of his gardens by peppering them all over with shrubs. Such a place as Battersea Park for instance, is like a bad piece of architecture, full of details which stultify each other. If the park had been planted with groves and avenues of limes

like the Boulevard at Avallon, or the squares at Vernon, or even like the east side of Hyde Park, between the Achilles statue and the Marble Arch, at least one definite effect would have been reached. We should have had shady walks and noble walls of trees, and bright masses of varied colour in the borders instead of the spasmodic futilities of Battersea Park.

Why the laying out of public parks should be handed over to engineers and landscape gardeners at all instead of to trained designers, no one knows. These things are administered on no intelligible system in England, and in all such efforts as these the landscape gardener is well supported by the odd taste and pettiness of English municipal bodies, and the total absence of any competent ædileship. Two hundred years ago Evelyn was suggesting that avenues of limes and oaks and other trees should be planted in England, such as the great avenue of walnut trees from Heidelberg to Darmstadt, and the avenue from Utrecht to Amersfoort, "four leagues long, and fifty paces wide, all planted with oaklings." The little that is done in this direction is seldom if ever due to public bodies in England. For instance, it has been



THE OLD GARDENS AT BRICKWALL, NEAR NORTHIAM, SUSSEX.

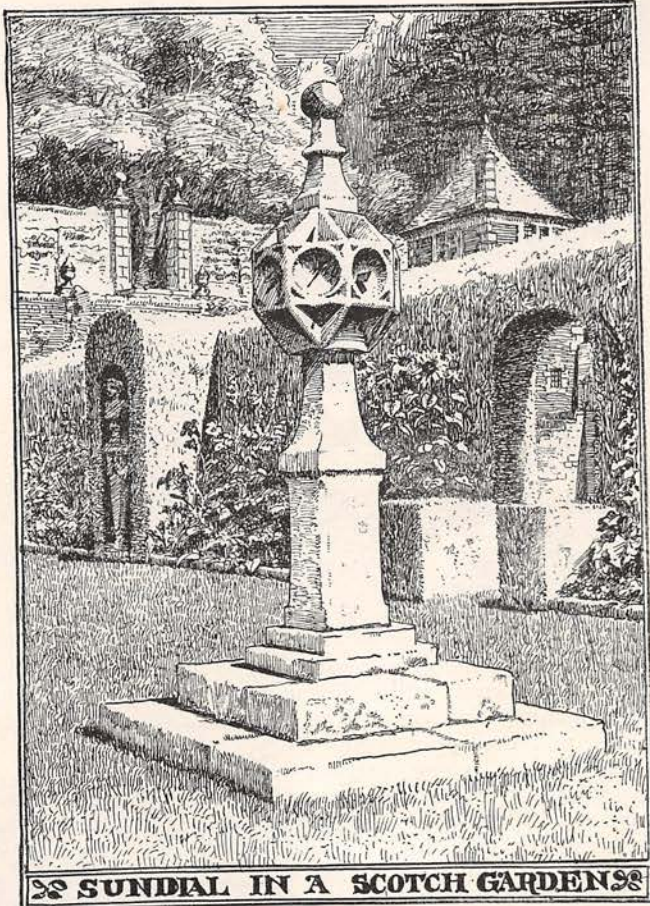
reserved for a private society to complete Wilkin's design for the National Gallery, by placing the orange trees in cases along the front to Trafalgar Square.

Perhaps of all the unsatisfactory public grounds in England, the worst is the public cemetery. Here again we find the same disregard of decent order, the same hatred of simplicity, the same meanness of imagination. Here, if anywhere, all banalities should be avoided. We want rest, even if it is sombre in its severity, but instead we are offered narrow winding roads, and broken pillars under weeping willows, and everything that can suggest the ghastly paraphernalia of the undertaker. Why not have long walks of yew at once, with cypress trees or junipers? but the landscape gardener is nothing if not "natural," and so he gives us a bad copy of an ill-chosen subject. Only nature left alone can create her own particular beauty, and only in the churchyard of some far-away village can her work be judged, where the grass grows tenderly over the dead, and the graves are shadowed by immemorial yews, and the sun-dial patiently wears away on its grey stone base as it counts the silent hours.

The landscape gardener claims to himself a monopoly of "nature"—yet he mauls her with imperturbable callousness, he finds fault with her for not having arranged trees and water to his liking, and finally insults her by attempting to establish a hierarchy of trees and plants based on much the same principle as that which dis-

tinguishes a gentleman by his incapacity to do any useful work. Directly it is proved that a tree or plant is good for food, it is expelled from the flower garden without any regard to its intrinsic beauty. The hazel hedge has gone, and the apple-tree has long been banished from the flowers. Of all trees, the apple-tree in bloom is perhaps the loveliest, and what can be done with it in a garden is shown at Penshurst, yet the landscape gardener would shudder at the idea of a grove or a hedge of apple-trees in the flower garden. He will give you instead a conifer or a monkey puzzler, though the guelder-rose grows wild in the meadow and the spindle tree in the wood, and the rowan and the elder and the white-thorn. Every one admires these trees as a matter

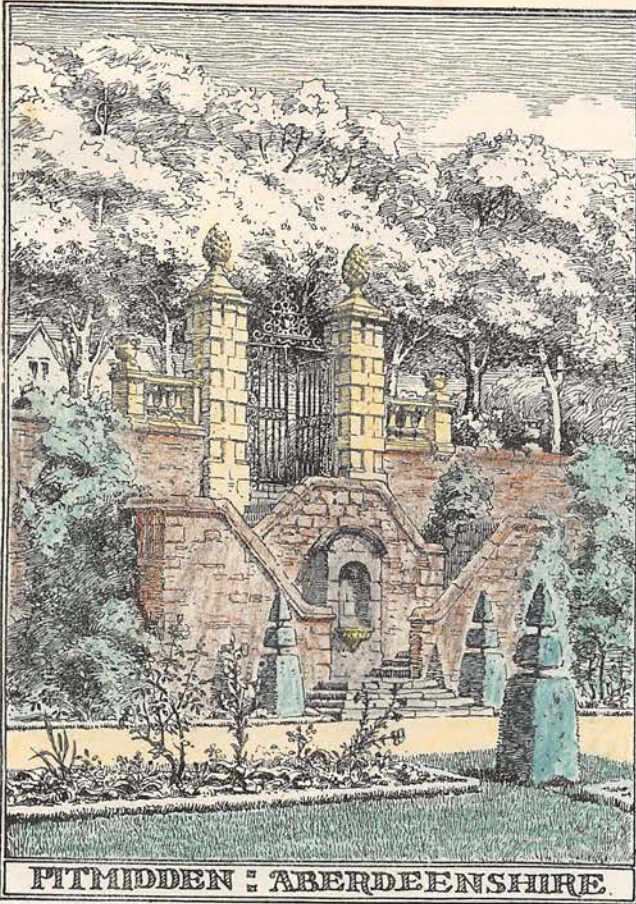
of proper sensibility to nature, but it does not seem to occur to people that they would grow with as little difficulty in the garden, and at much less expense than the shrubs which are offered by the nursery gardener. And surely the pear-tree and the chequer-tree, the quince, the medlar, and the mulberry, are entitled by their beauty to a place in the garden. Within the walls of the gardens of Alcinous there were pomegranates and pears and apple-trees with gleaming fruit, and luscious figs and olives. Or again in the ground of a mediæval tapestry all beautiful flowers and fruits grow together, the strawberry next the violet, and columbines among the raspberries, and fair roses twine among the apple boughs. So too William Lawson in the *New Orchard*; — “What more delightful than an infinite varietie of sweet-smelling flowers, decking with sundrye colours the greene mantle of the earth, the universal mother of us all, so by them bespotted, so



SUNDIAL IN A SCOTCH GARDENS

dyed, that all the world cannot sample them, and wherein it is more fit to admire the Dyer, than to imitate his workmanship, colouring not only the earth, but decking the ayre, and sweetening every breath and spirit? The rose red, damaske, velvet, and double double province rose, the sweet muske rose double and single, the double and single white rose, and the faire and sweet-scenting woodbine double and single, purple cowslips and double cowslips, primrose double and single, the violet nothing behind the best for smelling sweetly, and a thousand more, will provide your content, and all these by the skill of your gardener so comely and orderly placed in your borders and squares.” It is more of this unsophisticated liking for everything that is beautiful that ought to be allowed free play in the garden, less of the pedantry that lays down rules about nature, and is at heart indifferent to the beauty about which it preaches.

If there were any truth in his cant about “nature” would the landscape gardener bed out asters and geraniums, would he make the lawn hideous with patches of brilliant red, bordered by blue lobelias, varied by streaks of purple, and add his finishing touch in the magenta of his choicest dahlia? would he plant them in patterns of stars



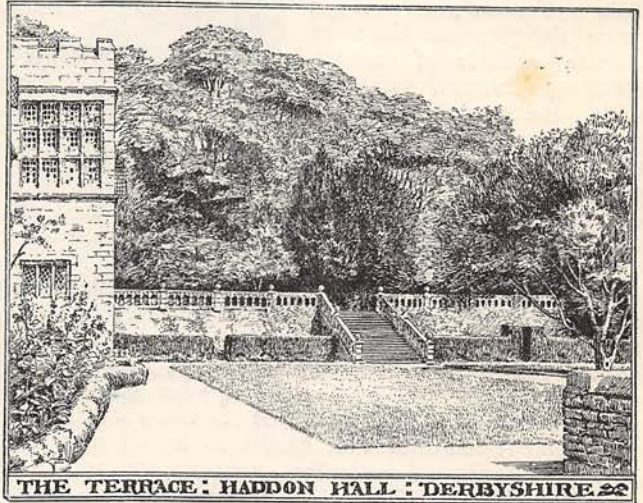
PITMIDDEN : ABERDEENSHIRE.

Gervase Markham and Lawson, was its unaffected simplicity. The purpose of a garden, as a place of beauty and seclusion, a place for quiet thought and leisurely enjoyment, was

kept steadily in view. The grass and the yew hedges were trimmed close to gain their full beauty from the sunlight. Sweet kindly flowers filled the knots and borders. Peacocks and pigeons brightened the terraces and lawns. Everything too was reasonable, the broad grass walk with its paved footpath in the centre, was cool on the grass in the summer and dry on the pavement in winter; and the garden house was solidly built and comfortable. The borders were not filled with bedded-out plants, because for long months they would be bare and desolate, and because there is no pleasure in a solid spot of hard, blazing colour. The charm of a border of old-fashioned flowers is the variation in their colours, and partly too the delight in their associations. There is music in their very names; gillyflowers, and columbines,

and lozenges and tadpoles? would he border them with paths of asphalt? would he not rather fill his borders with every kind of beautiful flower that he might delight in, and set them off with grass or pleasant green? It is impossible to take his professions seriously when he so flies in the face of nature, when he transplants exotics into impossible conditions, when rarity, difficulty and expense of production are his tests of the value of a flower. The beauty that he claims for his garden is not his, but that of the flowers and the grass and the sunlight and the cloud, which no amount of bad design can utterly destroy.

A garden is so much an individual affair, it should mark so distinctly the idiosyncrasy of its owner, that hints as to details are not of very much use. The two chief faults to avoid in garden design are affectation, posing that is, and over-elaboration. The chief characteristics of the older formal garden, the garden of



THE TERRACE : HADDON HALL : DERBYSHIRE.

hollyhocks and marigolds, ladies' slipper, London pride, bergamot and dittany, flower of Bristol, love lies bleeding, love in a mist, and apple of love; these are a few old names to contrast with the horrors of the nursery gardener's catalogue, these too, are the sort of flowers for our gardens. The formal garden lends itself readily to designs of smaller gardens within the garden, such as gardens of roses and lilies, or of poppies, or "coronary gardens" filled with all flowers for garlands, such as Spenser names:—

“Bring hither the pinke and purple cullumbine
 With gillyflowers;—
 Bring sweet carnations and sops in wine,
 Worne of paramours;
 Strew me the ground with daffodown-dillies
 And cowslips and kingcups and lovèd lilies;
 The pretty paunce
 And the chevisaunce
 Shall match with the faire flower de luce.”

These, and many another fancy such as English men and women loved three hundred years ago, might be carried out, not for archæology, not for ostentation, but because they give real pleasure and delight. This after all is the only principle. It is nothing to us that the French did this or the Italians that; the point is, what has been done in England, what has been loved here, and by us, and by those before us. The best English tradition has always been on the side of refinement and reserve, it has loved beauty, not the obvious beauty of the south, but the charm and tenderness, the inexpressible sweetness of faces that fill the memory like half-remembered music. This is the feeling that one would wish to see realized in the garden again, not the coarse facility that overwhelms with its astonishing cleverness, but the delicate touch of the artist, the finer scholarship that loves the past and holds thereby the key to its meaning.

DUMBLEDOWNDEARY COME TO LIFE AGAIN.

By GEORGE AUGUSTUS SALA.

With Illustrations by J. W. COULDERY.

I DO not, thank Goodness, number any Mahatmas among my acquaintance, nor am I ordinarily in receipt of letters "precipitated" to my address from Thibet or elsewhere; save in the case of anonymous letters, written by nobody knows whom, and despatched nobody knows whence, but the rascally senders of which you would so dearly like to precipitate to Perdition *via* the nearest police station. Nor do I think it worth while to trouble myself much more about the doctrine of the metempsychosis; save to indulge, now and again, in a furtive wish that there were a grain of truth in Lucian's affirmation that the souls of usurers are translated after their death into the bodies of asses (Hampstead Heath or Herne Bay ones?), there to remain for terms of years, for poor men to take their pennyworths out of their bones. Yet, in common with most of my fellow humans, I cannot help yielding occasionally to the "previous state of existence" hallucination: if hallucination it be. Unexpected, unbidden, inscrutable in its genesis, an impression starts up in your mind that you have done, or heard or seen, or been Something—you know not how, or where or why—at some time before time, as recorded or summoned up by your farthest reaching memory, was. A verse from a poem, a text from the pulpit, a particular street, or house, in a town which you have never (to your knowledge) set foot in before; a strain of music; a picture; a feature in the face of a stranger; nay, such or such a jaggedness of outline in a cloud or a kaleidoscopic change in its tints in a sunset sky will suffice to bring up the indefinable but irrepressible Something—the remembrance of that of which you have no tangible memory. Your doctor (wise man) may tell you that you are only suffering from a morbid