

Oracles of Nostradamus

World events are rapidly catching up with the prophecies made by Nostradamus three hundred years ago. Whether his predictions were accidental or based upon an occult foreknowledge, they are frequently uncanny in their accuracy. His book of oracles is having a tremendous vogue at present, partly because of the wide variety of interpretations that can be made from his prognostications, but mainly because it makes fascinating reading when related to the catastrophes announced daily while the world is in crisis. This edition, edited by Charles A. Ward, gives special emphasis to prophecies of contemporary events and those immediately ahead.

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ORACLES OF
NOSTRADAMUS

BY CHARLES A. WARD

"Gentem quidem nullam video, neque
tarn humanam aique aoc tam neque tarn
immanent tamque barbaram, quae non
significari futura, et a quibusdam intel-
ligi praedicique posse censeat. ' '

c i c E RO, De Divinatione, i. 2.

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juorum potentia mtelleitualis immediate a Duo agitata
creditor,
rophetae dicuntur, quorum voluntas heroes, at quorum
intellectus et
r oluntas censetur agitata a potentns invisibilibus
dpendentibus, appel-
anft2r"VfiS9 CHRIST. THOMAMU&, in Brunch, Hnt. Phil, v
512.

Tu tc mocques aussi des prophetes que Dieu
Choisit en tes enfants et les fait au milieu
De ton sem apparoltrc, afin de te predire
Ton malheur u venii, metis tu n' en jats que nre
Ou soit que le grand Dieu I immense eternit"

Ait de Nostradamus I'enthousiasme excite,
Ou soit qut le demon bon ou rnauviis l
Comme un oracle antique, il a de ma^ite
Predit la plub grand part dc

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NOSTRADAMUS

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TO MY MOTHER

OvSev ev aptf/wiroitri Trarpos KCU /x?]rp6s a/jewr
"ETT\CTO, rots ocrt'ij, Ki'ppe, /u<7tt?\ dt/oj.

THLOGMS, p. 16, cd. 1766.

"But higher far my proud pretensions* rise,
The son of parents passed into the skies."

COWPLR, On My Mother's Pictute, line no.

II THERE CAN BE ANYTHING IN A BOOK I IKI
THIS WORTHY OI DEDICATION TO A BEING SO
NOBLL AS THOU IN LIFE WFRI EVER, A BEING
NOW MORI ENNOBLED STILL BY TH1 HEAVEN-
BLEACHFD RAIMENI Ot IMMORTALITY PUT ON;
Ft) THIK, PURE SOUL SLRINh' TO THtF DOFS
THY STILL I.OMNO SON, LAR1H-HAMPLRI D, DI-D1-
f,An THIS FHL Bl-ST LABOUR OI HIS HEAR I \N T D
HI AD AND YLARS. THF BIST OF IT IS THINE

1NDFLD AlKIAin; AND WLRT 1HL REST WORSE
HARVLSriD THAN PI-KIIAPS IT IS, MORTALITY
BEING M-LO\\LI) 1 OR DULY, THY SOUL Ri CLIV-
1NG MUST BE MUCH CH^NC.ID B^ IXAI,TATION,
II QUI 1-N-I.1KK, IT CANNOT MAKE A SORRY LOVE-
GIFT RICH B\ GOLDLV WILCOME GIVEN IT

II THINGS 01 K1IH Bt KIN, GOD WILLING, WE
SHAL1 MILT AGAIN IRE LONG. TILL WHEN,
I ROM THIS BARL HEATH TERREnt AND HOM1 LESS,
I SPFFD THL WORD ADILU DtAR ONE 1 FOR A
LITTLE WHILL ADIEU.

Tm SON,

C. A. W.

THREE PROPHECIES OF OLD TIME

That Tro> should triumph in Rome

Nuj/ Sc 8if Aiveiao (Sir) Tpwca-ffiv c/aei,

Koi iraiSdw 7reu~5es, rot KCJ> peToiriffffe ^iviavroa.

Iliad, xx. 306.

That America should be discovered

"Venient annis
Sarcula sens, quibils Oceanus
Vmcula rerum laxet, ct ingens
Pateat Tellus, Tiphysque novos
Dclcgat orbes; ncc sit terns
Ultima Thule."

StNFCA.

French Revolution, 1788-89, predicted in roth Century

"Des Ic X siccle, Albumasar avail calcule que 1'annee
mil sept cent
quatic-vingt-neuj scrait fconde en revolutions
sociales, a cause dc Tune

des grandes conjonctions de Saturne. L'astrologie est
vanite, errcur, men-
songe, tout ce que vous voudrez; mais enfin voila une
prediction d'une
authenticite irrecusable " ALBUMASAR, De Magms
Conjuncttombus
Tract, ii., Different. 8. Vide MIGNE, Diet, des
Propheties, \\. 339.

Prefc

ace

THIS is no doubt a strange book. An attempt to gather a
meaning out of a few of the involved, crabbed, and
mystical
quatrains of the great seer of France, the greatest
perhaps
that the world has ever seen, must of necessity be
strange.
My treatment, too, may possibly seem to many no less
strange than the subject-matter itself. I will speak
specially
as to this latter point towards the close of the
preface.

In last December treating upon Nostradamus in the Gen-
tleman's Magazine, I had occasion to remark that every
honest man of awakened powers is a kind of prophet, and
has to do with the future, or eternity, as it is
usually styled.
Since then I have come upon the same idea in the
writings
of Philo Judaeus. He thinks that the Scriptures testify
in
some sort that every good man is a prophet:

"For a prophet says nothing of his own, but everything
that he says
is strange, and prompted by some one else; and it is
not lawful for a
wicked man to be an interpreter of God, as also no
wicked man can be

properly said to be inspired; but this statement is only appropriate to the wise man alone, since he alone is a sounding instrument of God's voice." PHILO, Heir of Divine Things, 52, Bohn, ii. 146.

Again, at page 30 of this book, it will be seen that I have described the faculty of anticipating the future, a thing so remarkably developed in Nostradamus, as being, if once we admit its existence in him, a perceptive endowment of the whole human race, that must be classified as a sixth sense. I have since found, with no little delight, that Coleridge, in

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his "Table Talk" (ed. 1³⁶, p. 19), designated such faculty as "an inner sense," for, speaking of ghosts and dreams, he says;

"It is impossible to say whether an inner sense 'Iocs not really exist in the mind, seldom developed, indeed, but which may have a power of presentiment. All the cxtc;nal senses have their correspondents in the mind; the eye can set .lll object before it is distinctly apprehended, why may there not be a corresponding power in the soul 3 The power of prophecy might have been merely a spiritual excitation of this dormant faculty " *

* This noble and enlarged thought is worthy of Coleridge, who is the greatest thinker of our century, whether >ou take him

as poet or philosopher. Nobody has yet claimed for him the pre-eminence which, I believe, to be his. The peculiar, nay, unique faculties of the man have blinded the men of his own time to the super-eminent, intellectual, practical, and imaginative endowments with which he was so abundantly furnished. By the middle of the next century, some hundred or so years from his death, the fact will have dawned upon the world, it not before. It will then be recognised that such a personality as his, was "a great birth of time," and to be registered as such in the deathless calendar of genius. Saint, seer, and sage was that man. Not "spoilt in the making," as the witty Lamb put it, with all the lambent malice of a friend jocose. We must admit, of course, some damage that hindered general currency, as also the attainment of such now worthless cash-results as fell to beings distinctly inferior to himself, such as Byron, Southey, Wordsworth, Moore, great as some estimate them to be; and this failure shut Coleridge out from social success, that success which most of us so ignorantly and greedily covet here, because it makes the present comfortable. But the chief reason, of any shortcoming hurtful to success, that may be observable in Coleridge, no doubt arose from his being far too great to be adequately measured by any of his fellow-men. Many of them were, it is true, highly "able men as the world goes. Even Carlyle, however, who has disparaged him, when placed beside him, dwarfs to a man of Lilliput. We have to bear in mind always that excellent remark of La Bruyere, "Celui qui ne prévoit rien, est souvent éludé, celui qui prévoit trop, est toujours malheureux." This is true of all prophets, and especially true of Coleridge.

But, another thing there is that helps to diminish Coleridge in the general estimation. He has not completed work enough, in well set and fixed form, for posterity to be quite able to render him adequate, that is to say, resplendent justice. His unexampled conversational gifts have somewhat barred the way to a due appreciation of his equally unexampled literary potentialities. His conversational aptitudes have perished in the moment of their triumphant display. Being without record in this respect, he suffers precisely as the greatest actor does Triumphs of the table and the salon

PREFACE IX

In the matter of prophecy, Photius says, in his "Amphilochia," that prophecy is by no means necessarily connected with virtue: for that Herod pre-announced, as it were, that the Gentile magi, Judaea, and the world were about to recognize Christ for King, and so he desired to make away with him. In this way he played the part of prophet to the whole human race. Caiaphas, he thinks, was not conscious of what he said; in the mania of a desire to kill, his lips prophesied that it was right that one should die to save the whole world. "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children," is a foreboding instinct of the same description. In the council of the Pharisees (John xi. 48), it was prophetic, "If we let him alone, the Romans will come and take away our place and nation;" and though they followed out their own counsel, this is just what happened. "And see," he

adds,
"the ass in the Old Testament could forecast future things."
He was an heretical writer, Photius, but he was evidently not so far away, as the world is now, from believing that prophetic endowment is a sense widely distributed to humanity in general. These hints alone may furnish us with food for useful meditation.

are like the triumphs of the stage, we can only revive them in spirit, OF the basis of some felicitously appreciative sentence, chance embalmed IB print, that some competent contemporary has ejaculated. I, for instance, know the overwhelming power of Kcan onl\ through my mother, and the burning phrases left behind b\ Byron and Coleridge. But the next generation can have no cognizance of him bt\ond those phrases. It is for this precise reason I indite so long a note as this on Coleridge, out of the pure respect I bear him for his stupendous intelligence and incom- mensurable soul. I have, indeed, tried to put on record elsewhere my im- pression of his poetry; but, I have not \tt been able to get it printed. Should it ever be so, it would at least acqune some value from the fact of its representing, in a limited and qualified degree, Coleridge's vivid influence upon one who may partially stand on the footing of a con- temporary. Coleridge is a spirituals in the world, and his modes of re- vealing himself are such as lead the run of mankind to esteem him visionary; but it will be found that it is they, not he, that must be reck- oned "such stuff as dreams are made of "

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Now, with all this a reader will very likely say,
Supposing
we grant you the prophetic as a sixth sense, to be
henceforth
reckoned as a permanent though generally latent endow-
ment of the race, what is the good of such a sense,
suppos-
ing, with you, that your prophet can never be
understood
till after the event has taken place, and then only
when
some drudging interpreter has untwisted his tortuous
lan-
guage and thrown it into the intelligible vernacular 15

There are several ways of replying to this. First, are
there
not thousands of objects in the domain of nature that
man
has not yet discovered the use of? Anatomists are still
at a
stand to tell us what is the use of the spleen. What
naturalist
can say for what reason the noxious serpent is sent
into the
world? Why was the Georgium Sidus only discovered by
Herschel in 1781, instead of by Pythagoras, a much
greater
man? Sensible men have commonly to content themselves
with simply ascertaining the existence of a fact, and
they
have to rest all the while in total ignorance of why
this fact
exists. Again, suppose you believe, as the majority do,
in the
Christian revelation; how can you account for the
multi-
plicity of sects who read the Bible each in its own
way? Can
you account for a divine revelation that reveals one
thing
to one man and a contrary thing to another? Obviously,
then, there are many things that exist as facts, and
yet no
man living can assign the reason for them. With regard

to
any fact that can be asserted, the first thing to
establish is,
Is it a fact ? That once settled, you may wait for the
rest of
it until you can get it.

But again, and with special regard to Nostradamus, you
will see (and by referring to the index you may find
the
various places at which I treat of it) that he must
have had
the whole sequence of visions passing clearly before
his eyes,
with some vocal utterances occasionally accompanying

PREFACE XI

them, by which the names of men and places and things
were announced to him. His method was to set this down
in prose narration, either during the sitting or
instantly
afterwards. On inspection, at cooler intervals, and
when he
had descended from the heat and ecstasy of fatidical
rap-
ture, he would discern at once that the sequence must
be
broken and the names concealed. If, as it stood in
prose, it
had been understood by the world, it would have fallen
not
as a prophecy but as a thunderbolt; not as a thing in
book-
form, but as an earthquake, that must have changed or
shaken the face of Europe, and so have interfered
perpet-
ually with its own realization.

Seeing this, he followed the practice of the elder
oracles of
Delphi, Dodona, and the rest. He broke up the sequence,
threw the utterances into metre, mingled much learning
linguistic to darken them, and obscured the names, of
the
great men introduced, under the impenetrable mask of
the

anagram. Thus regarded, it is not a subject for wonder that he did this: it would have been akin to madness to have done anything else.

It now becomes desirable that I should furnish some clue to enable a reader to arrive rapidly at the pith of this book and its oracular forecasts, so that he may discern for himself in a few minutes, whether, or whether not, the topics treated of have for him a sufficient interest to lead him on to make a thorough study of the book, or to decline it altogether. There is a huge prejudice in this our day that sets in strongly with the multitude against anything that endeavours to deal seriously, or by mystical insight, with things occult, spiritual, or future.

The reader, first of all, should glance over the life of Nostradamus. It will be for him to determine whether my vindication of his name from imposture be adequate or not.

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Dr. Cobham Brewer is the most recent writer who asperses him as a "charlatan"* (see his "History of Germany," p. 164). The reader will see that Nostradamus is of Jewish birth. Coleridge remarks ("Table Talk," p. 31) that all other nations

"Seem to look backwards, and also to exist for the present; but in the Jewish scheme everything is prospective and preparatory; nothing, however trifling, is done for itself alone, but all is typical of something yet to come."

Further than this, Thomas Burnet, in his eloquent Latin-ity, tells us ("Arena:. Philos," Book I. chap. vii. p 59, ed. 1727) that Apollonius said bitterly of the Jews that they were the most inept of barbarians, and never invented a single thing useful to mankind. That they were what Bacon would call a people of "no fruit." They taught nothing in their schools, says Burnet, of the circle of the sciences, "ad encyclopedia? studia," as we do now, but that no race in the world so abounds with prophets, and men endowed with the celestial spirit, as "the Jews."

Those who care anything for the occult processes, that incite to prophetic utterance, would now do well to read the chapter on magic, commencing at p. 67. It gives a few hints as to the practices of adepts, and of the Roman superstitions about tripods, alphabetic interrogatories, and so forth; and it becomes tolerably clear from all this, that Nostradamus was skilled in all the known methods of incantation, astral, pharmaceutic, or electrical, and that he practised them in all their fulness, though with reticent circumspection, and very reluctant and enigmatic avowal. The account of the conspirators against Valens (p. 77) strongly resembles the modern table-turning. But, as this chapter is more curious by far than necessary, it may be passed over by all those who merely wish to appraise quickly the value of Nostradamus

as a figure in history with claims to prophetic faculty hanging on to it.

From the Historical Fragments, commencing at p. 81, it will be seen that he clearly prophesied the violent death of Henri II., to whom he dedicates his "Luminary Epistle."

The historical context is very interesting, as showing not only the exact fulfilment of the forecast of Nostradamus; but, that another astrologer, who was consulted by the king, had forewarned him in almost the same words of the same danger threatening, that he should die "in duel/' We see the king adhering to the literal word duel, and out of court etiquette feeling the manifest impossibility of the prophecy being fulfilled. We get also the gossip of the court about it, and about the value of horoscopes, from the Princesse de Cleves; furthermore, we learn about the obstinate blindness with which the king forced on his own destruction at the very close of the day and tournament, by the indulgence of a pure whim against the advice and wish of everybody around him. The murder of Henri III., in like manner, is announced, together with the death of his father, at p. 88; at p. no it is foreshadowed again as proceeding from the hand of a young monk; and at p. in the name of Clement is hinted by a play upon the French words signifying mild and clement. The massacre of St. Bartholomew's Day, at p. 94, stands out in all its vivid horror, and as proceeding from the very hands of le rot farouche; but, compressed into four lines only.

The coming of Henri IV. to the French throne is introduced with the very name of his family, Vendome, figured in the anagram Mendosus. Here we find also (p. 116) the execution of the Marshal de Biron; his name is actually given as Robin, which yields it letter for letter in anagram. This, too, is concerning a man not probably born when the

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stanza was devised. The name of the marshal is disguised, because it would have marked him out too distinctly when he came upon the stage of public life; but, the name of Lafin is given, the subordinate individual who betrayed Biron to the King. It occupies pages to describe this event, but with the terseness, reappearing constantly, which is so remarkable a feature in the style of Nostradamus, he compresses the whole event, and all that he has to say upon it, into six lines.

The chapter on Louis XIV. (p. 132) teems with curiosities of the same inscrutable order; though less startling than what we have already pointed out, yet is it quite sufficient to have made the reputation of an ordinary man.

We may now pass to England (p. 146), and the quatrain relating to its seven governmental changes, throughout a period of two hundred and ninety years; this is as startling as anything of the kind can well be. The next instance, that on the Stuart Dynasty (p. 149), conveying, as it does, the struggle between Charles I. and Cromwell, is simply miraculous; and it should challenge the attention of a

listening
world. This would seem to be the inevitable result,
unless
the learned of all orders and degrees can, singly or
com-
bined, do away with the interpretation put upon it.
Lonole
is now for the first time pointed to as being the
anagram of
Old Noll, or Oliver Cromwell. But before this
transpired,
M. le Pelletier had none the less applied the quatrain
to
Charles and Cromwell. If this fails to convince a
reader that
he is in the presence of a seer and worker of wonders,
I do
not know what can bring recognition home to him. The
single line (p. 152)

"Scnat de Londres mcttront a mort leur Roy."

has, as presenting the execution of Charles I., made,
in for-

PREI- \CE XV

mer but forgotten days, the round of the world, and
from
time to time has served to keep alive a sort of dumb
admis-
sion that there had once been a fatidical diviner of
note
called Nostradamus. Burns remarks, what we all know,
that
"the passion of prying into futurity, makes a striking
part of
the history of humctn nature." It does not look much
like it,
though, when such a prophecy as this has been allowed
to
pass out of memory; so that few even of educated men
could re-syllable it to you, or furnish you wi!:h any
better
criticism on the man who penned it, than that he was an

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