dream, even when they think themselves awake, of those few striking ideas with which their lonely lives are diversi­fied ; of corpses, funeral processions, and other subjects of terror ; or of marriages, the arrival of strangers, and such like matters of more agreeable curiosity.

Let it be observed, also, that the ancient Highlanders of Scotland had hardly any other way of supporting themselves than by hunting, fishing, or war, professions which are con­tinually exposed to fatal accidents ; and hence, no doubt, additional horrors would often haunt their solitude, and a deeper gloom overshadow the imagination even of the har­diest native.

A treatise on this subject was published in the year 1762, in which many tales were told of persons whom the author believed to have been favoured, or haunted, with these il­luminations ; but most of the tales were trifling and ridicu­lous, and the whole work betrayed, on the part of the com­piler, the most extreme credulity.

That any of these visionaries are apt to be swayed in their declarations by sinister views, we will not say ; but this may be alleged with confidence, that none but igno­rant people pretend to be gifted in this way ; and in them it may be nothing more, perhaps, than short fits of sudden sleep or drowsiness, attended with lively dreams, and arising from some bodily disorder, the effect of idleness, low spirits, or a gloomy imagination. For it is admitted, even by the most credulous Highlanders, that as knowledge and indus­try are propagated in their country, the second sight dis­appears in proportion ; and nobody ever laid claim to the faculty who was much employed in the intercourse of so­cial life.1 Nor is it at all extraordinary that one should have the appearance of being awake, and should even think one’s self so, during those fits of dozing ; that they should come on suddenly, and while one is engaged in some busi­ness. The same thing happens in persons much fatigued, or long kept awake, who frequently fall asleep for a mo­ment, or for a long space, while they arc standing, or walk­ing, or riding on horseback. Add but a lively dream to this slumber, and take away the consciousness of having been asleep, and a superstitious man may easily mistake his dream for a waking vision ; which, however, is soon forgotten when no subsequent occurrence recalls it to his memory, but which, if it shall be thought to resemble any future event, exalts the poor dreamer into a Highland pro­phet. This conceit makes him more recluse and more melancholy than ever, and so feeds his disease, and mul­tiplies his visions, which, if they are not dissipated by busi­ness or society, may continue to haunt him as long as he lives, and which, in their progress through the neighbour­hood, receive some new tinctures of the marvellous from every mouth that promotes their circulation. As to the prophetical nature of this second sight, it cannot be ad­mitted at all. That the Deity should work a miracle in order to give intimation of the frivolous things of which these tales are composed, the arrival of a stranger, the nailing of a coffin, or the colour of a suit of clothes ; and that these intimations should be given for no end, and to those per­sons only who are idle and solitary, who speak Gaelic, or who live among mountains and deserts ; is like nothing in nature or providence that we are acquainted with, and must therefore, unless it were confirmed by satisfactory proof, be rejected as absurd and incredible.

To these objections Dr Johnson replies, that by pre­suming to determine what is fit and what is beneficial, they presuppose more knowledge of the universal system than man has attained, and therefore depend upon principles too complicated and extensive for our comprehension ; that

there can be no security in the consequence when the pre­mises are not understood; that the second sight is only wonderful because it is rare, for, considered in itself, it in­volves no greater difficulty than dreams, or perhaps than the regular exercise of the cogitative faculty ; that a gene­ral opinion of communicative impulses, or visionary repre­sentations, has prevailed in all ages and among all nations ; that particular instances have been given, with such evi­dence as neither Bacon nor Bayle has been able to resist ; that sudden impressions, which the event has verified, have been felt by more than own or publish them ; that the second sight of the Hebrides implies only the local frequency of a power which is nowhere totally unknown ; and that where we are unable to decide by antecedent reason, we must be content to yield to the force of testimony. By the preten­sion to second sight, no profit was ever sought or gained. It is an involuntary affection, in which neither hope nor fear are known to have any part. Those who profess to feel it do not boast of it as a privilege, nor are considered by others as advantageously distinguished. They have no temptation to feign, and their hearers have no motive to encourage the imposture.

SECT, a collective term, comprehending all those who follow the doctrines and opinions of some famous divine, philosopher, or other person.

SECTION, in general, denotes a part of a divided thing, or the division itself. Such, particularly, are the subdivisions of a chapter, called also *paragraphs* and *articles.* The mark of a section is §.

Section, in *Geometry,* denotes a side or surface of a body or figure cut off by another, or the place where lines, planes, and the like, cut each other.

SECTOR, in *Geometry,* is a part of a circle comprehend­ed between two radii and an arc of the circle.

Sector is also a mathematical instrument, of use in find­ing the proportion between quantities of the same kind ; as between lines and lines, surfaces and surfaces, &c. whence the French call it the *compass of proportion.* The great ad­vantage of the sector above the common scales is, that it is made so as to fit all radii and all scales. By the lines of chords, sines, &c. upon the sector, we have lines of chords, sines, &c. to any radius between the length and breadth of the sector when open.

The sector is supposed to have been invented by Guido Baldo, or Ubaldo, about the year 1568. The first printed account of it was in 1584, by Gaspar Mordente, at Antwerp, who says that his brother, Fabricius Mordente, invented it in 1554. Treatises on its use have been written by Daniel Specle at Strasburg in 1589; also by Thomas Hood at London in 1598, and by Lewin Hulse at Frankfort-on-the- Maine in 1603, who says that it was invented long before by Justus Byrgius. But the honour of the invention was claimed by Galileo, who wrote on its use in 1607, and by Balthasar Capra of Milan. There are also treatises on it by our countrymen Gunter, Forster, and others.

Before the invention of logarithms, practical men were more easily contented with approximate solutions than they are at present. Now, however, any question that can be resolved by the sector can be about as readily answered by the smallest table of logarithms, and with perfect certainty, as far as the table extends. Hence it is that the sector is not much used, although it is commonly reckoned one of a complete set of mathematical instruments.

For treatises on its use, see Bion on Mathematical Instru­ments, translated by Stone; Robertson’s Treatise on Ma­thematical Instruments ; and Adams’s Geometrical Essays.

Any one possessing a sector will easily understand its

’ This, however, is denied by Johnson, who affirms that the islanders of all degrees, whether of rank or understanding, universally admit it ; except the ministers, who, according to him, reject it, in consequence of a system, against conviction. He affirms, too, that in 1773, there was in the Hebrides a second-sighted gentleman, who complained of the terrors to which he was exposed.