

IT is in ages of great cleverness and surface pleasurings that the greatest mystics arise. Where, then, is our great poet of mysticism? In "William Blake: His Philosophy and Symbols" (Houghton Mifflin) S. Foster Damon has given us not only a scholarly treatise, with marginal notes on Blake's work, but he has succeeded in writing a number of readable chapters in which he discusses the philosophy of mysticism and its special bearing upon the life of the great eighteenth century poet. This is a book that the collector of well printed volumes and the student, either of lyric poetry or of mysticism, cannot well be without. I found the chapter on "'Spirits' and Their 'Dictation'" particularly enlightening. If there ever was anyone gifted with powers ordinarily termed psychic or visionary, it was Blake. His conscious and subconscious minds were so tuned as to work in almost perfect harmony, yet he made no violent claims to supernatural powers. Damon says of this phenomenon, in part:

Of Blake's telepathy, we have only a single anecdote, though it is quoted as characteristic. Blake and various friends were at Hampstead, and one of them, Samuel Palmer, left for London. "Presently Blake, putting his hand to his forehead, said quietly: 'Palmer is coming; he is walking up the road.' 'Oh, Mr. Blake, he's gone to London; we saw him off in the coach.' Then, after awhile, 'He is coming through the wicket — there!' — pointing to the closed door. And surely, in another minute, Samuel Palmer raised the latch and came in amongst them."

-J. F.