THE SIXTH SENSE.

BY THE EDITOR.

Physiologists are familiar with the fact that six fingers are sometimes actually found on one hand, and that the peculiarity seems to be hereditary in certain families, but it goes without saying that such instances are malformations, and have not justified the theory that they are indications of a superiority of any kind. We have even an instance in the Bible where a case is mentioned of a giant among the Gentile population of Palestine who was possessed of six fingers. It is reported that he was slain in battle (2 Sam. xxi. 20).

Among the notions of the Middle Ages which are now almost forgotten, is a belief that the faculty of prophetic dreams was a sixth sense, which was outwardly indicated by the possession of six fingers or six toes. No one except a very searching critic may have discovered that Pope Sixtus IV, who is represented on Raphael's Sistine Madonna, is possessed of six fingers. Raphael is too great a painter not to be able to render this feature so inconspicuous as to make it difficult for a casual observer to discover the sixth finger on the pope's hand, and yet it is plainly visible to every one who takes the trouble to look for it.

The same is true of St. Joseph, the husband of Mary, who according to the reports of the New Testament receives his instructions in dreams. He accordingly is a typical example of a person who in all his walks of life is guided by divine commands tendered to him through dreams. He therefore is represented with six toes.

If we look at Raphael's magnificent painting of the marriage of the Virgin to Joseph we notice that the groom's foot is left bare, which incident however is not fortuitous but offers the artist an opportunity to show that Joseph was a man possessed of the sixth sense, the faculty of dreams.

Here again Raphael has shown his artistic taste by rendering
the sixth toe so inconspicuous that it is scarcely noticeable, and only through a minute scrutiny are we able to verify the facts.

In this connection we will say that Mrs. Lucy MacDowell Mil-

burn, who has lectured in Chicago on Christian and Greek Art, especially on the life of the Madonna, interprets the peculiarity of
the sixth finger as an endowment belonging to a ruler of the Church for the purpose of guidance. Pope Sixtus received the faculty of dreams for the sake of pointing out with his hand the right way, while Joseph, destined to be a protector of the Christ-child was given a sixth toe because the faculty of dreams was to be a light on his path, serving to guide his feet in the path of righteousness.
Mrs. Milburn interprets the passage in Rev. xvii. 10, where we read of the seven kings of whom "five are fallen, one is, and the other is not yet come," to mean "seven senses" of which five senses have "fallen," which means that they have become sensual. The one that "is" refers to the sense of dreams, and the other that "is
not yet come” means the spiritual sense to be developed in the millenium which shall precede the end of the world.

It is difficult to give any authoritative explanation to any passage in Revelations, and so we will neither assent to nor contradict Mrs. Milburn’s statement.

We reproduce here the pictures illustrating the tradition concerning the sixth sense, both painted by the greatest master of Chris-
tian art, the one preserved in Dresden, the other in the Brera at Milan. The former may be regarded as the most typical picture of the Madonna, this ideal of womanhood as it lives in the minds of believers as well as lovers of art, and the child in her arms is a boy of a most thoughtful countenance, promising to grow into a genius of highest excellence, his expression noticeably indicating his contemplation of the infinite vista of eternity. The other picture representing the marriage of Mary to Joseph is of idyllic beauty, showing in the background a temple of the most lofty architecture, a marvel of poetic outlines and pleasing elegance.