

THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA  
POPULARLY CLASSED UNDER THE HEAD OF  
SPIRITUALISM

WITH FACSIMILE ILLUSTRATIONS OF  
THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE DRAWINGS  
AND DIRECT WRITING

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WITH A BRIEF INTRODUCTION BY

SIR OLIVER LODGE

*"I have both seen and heard, in a manner which would make unbelief impossible, things called spiritual, which cannot be taken by a rational being to be capable of explanation by imposture, coincidence, or mistake."*—PROFESSOR AUGUSTUS DE MORGAN.

NEW YORK  
BRENTANO'S  
1907

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## NOTE

THE writer desires to express his sincere thanks to the Council of the Society for Psychological Research for the permission given to make extracts from the *Proceedings* of the Society, from the privately printed *Journal*, and from "Phantasms of the Living"; and for allowing the reproduction of a series of THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE DRAWINGS. Also best thanks are due to Mrs. Myers, and to Messrs. Longmans, Green & Co., for permission to make quotations from Mr. F. W. H. Myers' great work, "Human Personality and its Survival of Bodily Death." Also to Mr. J. Burns and his brother, for freely granting permission for any use to be made of the James Burns 1873 Edition of the "Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society."

E. T. B.



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# INTRODUCTION

BY SIR OLIVER LODGE

CONSULTED by the publishers as to the production of a small popular text-book, which should constitute a summary indication of the nature of the evidence for ultra-normal physical or meta-psychical phenomena, I suggested Mr. E. T. Bennett as the right man for the task. I have now seen the proof sheets, and—without making myself in any way responsible for details—perceive that he has done the work well, and has presented a satisfactory outline of the testimony for whatever it may be worth. Concerning its value I will only say that to my mind there comes a stage at which belief in gratuitous invention and false statement becomes forced and irrational. With most of the evidence here adduced I have of course been familiar for years, in its original sources, and am well aware of the extreme difficulty or impossibility of understanding some of the alleged facts in any physical or physiological sense; nevertheless if

I am asked whether such impressions can be actually received and honestly recorded by sane people, and whether I recommend experiment by careful and competent and unsuperstitious observers as if a *prima facie* case had been made out—that is to say, as if some of these unusual and hitherto quite unexplained occurrences might possibly turn out to be true—having laws of their own and constituting an unopened chapter of science, or rather a new science, uniting characteristics from physical, chemical, physiological, and psychological sciences, and throwing new light on the connection between mind and matter—then, though doubtless the answer will be received with scorn, I answer unhesitatingly yes.

# SPIRITUALISM

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTORY

A SHORT title to a book has its advantages. It has also its disadvantages. It is almost inevitable that it should, on the one hand, seem to include much more than is intended, and, on the other hand, fail to convey the purpose of the author. "Geology" would be a tolerably large subject. "Astronomy" would be vastly larger. But "Spiritualism" is an infinite subject compared with either, and to suggest that its claims to scientific study be considered within the compass of a small volume of not much over a hundred pages seems the height of presumption!

It will therefore be well at the outset to indicate exactly what it is proposed to include in the present investigation into "Spiritualism." The alleged phenomena of Spiritualism may be roughly divided into two classes—physical and mental. Those which belong entirely to the latter class are outside the scope of this book. It is proposed to examine those phenomena of the former class, the reality of which may fairly be assumed to be

proved by scientific evidence. The scope of the work is thus reduced to reasonable proportions. There are several groups of phenomena which appear to violate, or at least to extend in a striking manner, laws recognised by Physical Science. The evidence to be relied on will be that of scientific men of high standing, and of other persons of unquestioned literary and social position.

There is, however, an important respect, in regard to which this inquiry is placed in an entirely different position to any ordinary scientific investigation, and one which adds greatly to the difficulties of the student. Ordinary experiments conducted in a physical laboratory can be repeated again and again under similar conditions, and similar results will follow. If attempts are made to reproduce the phenomena of Spiritualism, under what appear to be precisely similar conditions, by means which have previously been successful, failure to obtain the wished-for results may very probably follow. It is no use to rebel and to feel inclined to abandon the pursuit as useless! That would be most unscientific! The inquirer finds himself in the presence of a subtle elusive influence, which he seems unable to control, and which refuses to submit to the laws which govern physical experiments. On the other hand, perseverance may be richly rewarded. An unexplored field of scientific research of unlimited extent may open itself to view. Something of that joy may be experienced which the search into the unknown alone can give.

Mr. Arthur James Balfour, in an address on the



occasion of the annual dinner of the Royal Literary Fund, in 1893, said:—

“My friend, Lord Kelvin, has often talked to me of the future of science, and he has said words to me about the future of science which are parallel with the words I have quoted to you about the future of art, and with the hope which I have expressed to you with respect to literature. He has told me that to the men of science of to-day it appears as if we were trembling on the brink of some great scientific discovery which should give to us a new view of the great forces of Nature, among which and in the midst of which we move. If this prophecy be right, and if the other forecasts to which I have alluded be right, then indeed it is true that we live in an interesting age; then indeed it is true that we may look forward to a time full of fruit for the human race—to an age which cannot be sterilised or rendered barren even by politics.”

There are some advantages which the study of this subject possesses over most branches of scientific inquiry. In its present early and incomplete stage the most important thing is the accumulation of carefully observed and recorded facts. Even as regards Thought-Transference, in which the number of careful experiments that have been made is far greater than in any other class of phenomena, it is still most important to multiply the quantity of the evidence. In most of the branches of the subject no expensive apparatus is required, and no special scientific or intellectual training. Accurate observation and careful recording, at the time, of all that

occurs, without prejudice, and without discouragement at apparent failure, are the chief requisites. Any person, or small group of persons of ordinary intelligence, can train themselves to be equal to this. A very simple instance occurred in the earliest experiences of the writer. After three or four sittings round a small table with two friends, at which there was meaningless tipping, and nothing better than commonplace sentences, the following was tipped out: "Try no more to move"—then this succession of letters—"a t a t a." It seemed useless to go on with nonsense, but one of the party suggested perseverance; when the following conclusion converted seeming nonsense into sense: "b l e take a pencil and write." The result was that one of the party rapidly developed into an interesting automatic writer.

It is quite impossible to foretell the extent of the aid that may not be given, in the explanation of some of these phenomena, by the persevering experiments of intelligent inquirers.

In the following chapters facts relating to several different kinds of phenomena are put before the reader, as to which the guarantee of authenticity and the quality of the evidence are both unimpeachable.

It is not proposed to travel all over the world in search of evidence; the illustrations will be drawn almost entirely from home sources. With all due respect to friends in distant parts, it will doubtless be a satisfaction to some readers to know that in these pages they will not meet with Mrs. Piper on the one hand, nor with Eusapia Paladino on the other.

With these few introductory remarks a calm and dispassionate consideration of the evidence presented is invited. First of all, three classes of phenomena will be taken up in the following order:—

(1) The Movement of Objects without any apparent Physical Cause.

(2) The Production of Sound without any apparent Physical Cause.

(3) The Production of Light without any apparent Physical Cause.

Two chapters will then be devoted to a study of the phenomena exhibited in the lives of two of the most noted "mediums" of modern times—Daniel Dunglas Home and William Stainton Moses. Both present manifestations of phenomena belonging to the three classes above-named, as well as striking examples of other kinds. A chapter on the "Divining Rod" will follow. Then a chapter on one of the forms of Thought-Transference, one which allows of its being included among physical phenomena. Two brief chapters will come next on "Spirit Photography" and on "Materialisations." It is explained that these are included, not because of any scientific evidence in their favour which can be quoted, but because of the extreme interest and importance of the subjects themselves, and also because the strong testimony and moral evidence in support of their reality seem to promise a tempting field for the scientific explorer, and to warrant a confident belief that the evidence he desires will be forthcoming. In a final chapter an endeavour is made to sum up results and conclusions.

## CHAPTER II

THE MOVEMENT OF OBJECTS WITHOUT ANY  
APPARENT PHYSICAL CAUSE

## THE COMMITTEE OF THE DIALECTICAL SOCIETY

So far as I am aware, the first systematic or scientific attempt to investigate the alleged phenomenon of the movement of objects without any apparent physical cause was made by the London Dialectical Society in the year 1869. On the motion of Dr. James Edmunds, a Committee was appointed "to investigate the Phenomena alleged to be Spiritual Manifestations, and to report thereon." The names of twenty-eight members were proposed. Three of these declined to act. Eight more names were added, so that the Committee, as finally constituted, consisted of thirty-three, three of whom were ladies. Among the best-known names were H. G. Atkinson, F.G.S.; Charles Bradlaugh; E. W. Cox, serjeant-at-law; Rev. C. Maurice Davies, D.D.; Charles R. Drysdale, M.D.; James Edmunds, M.D.; Robert Hannah; H. D. Jencken, barrister-at-law; William Volckman; and Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace, F.R.S. It is believed that Robert Hannah and Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace are the only survivors.

In order to investigate the phenomena in question by personal experiment and test, the Committee resolved itself into six Sub-Committees. In May 1870 the Committee appointed an Editing



Committee to prepare a joint report, based solely on the evidence that had been before it. A month later the Editing Committee presented a draft report, which with some trifling verbal alterations was adopted *nem dis*. A resolution was then carried that a copy be forwarded to the Council of the Dialectical Society, with a recommendation that it be printed and published. This the Council declined to do. Upon this the Committee met and passed the following resolution:—

“That the Report be referred to the Editing Committee, and that they be requested to prepare it for publication, together with any supplementary or counter reports that may be received from members of the Committee, and appending thereto the reports of the Sub-Committees, and the evidence, oral and verbal, that has been collected; the entire work, when ready for publication, to be submitted for approval to the Committee.”<sup>1</sup>

Such is the origin of the volume from which the following extracts are made.<sup>2</sup> Considerations of space necessitate dealing with the work of one Sub-Committee only. The essential part of the REPORT OF SUB-COMMITTEE No. 1 is as follows:—

“Since their appointment on the 16th of February 1869, your Sub-Committee have held forty meetings for the purpose of experiment and test.

“All of these meetings were held at the private

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, p. 228.

<sup>2</sup> Report on Spiritualism of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, together with the Evidence, Oral and Written, and a Selection from the Correspondence. Two editions have been published. Both are out of print.

residences of members of the Committee, purposely to preclude the possibility of pre-arranged mechanism or contrivance.

"The furniture of the room in which the experiments were conducted was on every occasion its accustomed furniture.

"The tables were in all cases heavy dining-tables, requiring a strong effort to move them. The smallest of them was 5 feet 9 inches long by 4 feet wide . . . and of proportionate weight.

"The rooms, tables, and furniture generally were repeatedly subjected to careful examination before, during, and after the experiments, to ascertain that no concealed machinery, instrument, or other contrivance existed by means of which the sounds or movements hereinafter mentioned could be caused.

"The experiments were conducted in the light of gas, except on the few occasions specially noted in the minutes.

"Your Committee have avoided the employment of professional or paid mediums, the mediumship being that of members of your Sub-Committee, persons of good social position and of unimpeachable integrity, having no pecuniary object to serve, and nothing to gain by deception.

· · · · ·  
"Your Committee have confined their Report to *facts* witnessed by them in their collective capacity, which facts were *palpable to the senses, and their reality capable of demonstrative proof.*

· · · · ·  
"The result of their long-continued and carefully-conducted experiments, after trial by every de-

tective test they could devise, has been to establish conclusively:—

“First: That under certain bodily or mental conditions of one or more of the persons present, a force is exhibited sufficient to set in motion heavy substances, without the employment of any muscular force, without contact or material connection of any kind between such substances and the body of any person present.

“Second: That this force can cause sounds to proceed, distinctly audible to all present, from solid substances not in contact with, nor having any visible or material connection with, the body of any person present, and which sounds are proved to proceed from such substances by the vibrations which are distinctly felt when they are touched.

“Third: That this force is frequently directed by intelligence.

“At thirty-four out of the forty meetings of your Committee some of these phenomena occurred.

. . . . .

“In conclusion, your Committee express their unanimous opinion that the one important physical fact thus proved to exist, that *motion may be produced in solid bodies without material contact, by some hitherto unrecognised force operating within an undefined distance from the human organism, and beyond the range of muscular action*, should be subjected to further scientific examination, with a view to ascertaining its true source, nature, and power.<sup>1</sup>

One selection is now given from the Minutes of

<sup>1</sup> Report, &c., pp. 7-13.

this Sub-Committee, illustrating the nature of the Evidence that came before them:—

“EXPERIMENT XXXVIII., Dec. 28th [1869].—Eight members present. *Phenomena*: Rapping sounds from the table and floor, and movements of the table, with and without contact. The alphabet was repeated, and the following letters were rapped: ‘A bad circle—want of harmony.’ At the letter f, the table tilted three times, and at the letters a, r, gave several forcible horizontal movements, tilting at either end.

“Raps, with slight tiltings of the table, beating time to the measure of a song. Two or three poems were recited, to the measure of which there were loud raps from the table and floor, and the table also marked the metre by various horizontal movements and tiltings.

“Hood’s Anatomy Song being repeated by one of the members, the knocking, rapping, and tilting sounds, with various horizontal, trembling, and vibratory movements of the table, accompanied it, in exact harmony with the measure, added to which were strange movements, in accordance with the character of the verses. In one instance the table shifted its position several feet, the tips of the fingers only being in contact with it.

“MOVEMENTS WITHOUT CONTACT. — Question: ‘Would the table now be moved without contact?’ Answer: ‘Yes;’ by three raps on the table. All chairs were then turned with their backs to the table, and nine inches away from it; and all present knelt on the chairs, with their



wrists resting on the backs, and their hands a few inches above the table.

“Under these conditions, the table (the heavy dining-room table previously described) moved four times, each time from four to six inches, and the second time nearly twelve inches.

“Then all hands were placed on the backs of the chairs, and nearly a foot from the table, when four movements occurred, one slow and continuous for nearly a minute.

“Then all present placed their hands behind their backs, kneeling erect on their chairs, which were removed a foot clear away from the table. The gas also was turned up higher, so as to give abundance of light; and under these test conditions, distinct movements occurred, to the extent of several inches each time, and visible to every one present.

“The motions were in various directions, towards all parts of the room—some were abrupt, others steady. At the same time, and under the same conditions, distinct raps occurred, apparently both on the floor and on the table, in answer to requests for them.

“The above-described movements were so unmistakable, that all present unhesitatingly declared their conviction, that no physical force, exerted by any one present, could possibly have produced them; and they declared further, in writing, that a rigid examination of the table showed it to be an ordinary dining-table, with no machinery or apparatus of any kind connected with it. The table was laid on the floor with its legs up, and taken to pieces so far as practicable.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Report, &c., pp. 390–391.

TESTIMONY OF W. F. BARRETT, F.R.S., PROFESSOR  
OF PHYSICS IN THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF  
SCIENCE FOR IRELAND.

No endeavour appears to have been made by any of the members of the Committee of the Dialectical Society to follow up the results which they had obtained. The individual members who had previously been active in such matters continued to take an interest in them, but there is no evidence that a single new inquirer was gained. The next event of any importance, in the direction of scientific inquiry into the subject, was the reading by Professor W. F. Barrett of a paper before the meeting of the British Association at Glasgow in 1876. This paper was entitled "On Some Phenomena Associated with Abnormal Conditions of Mind," and dealt mainly with what was subsequently designated "Thought-Transference." Professor Barrett also referred to some "physical phenomena" which had come under his notice. He says: "I am bound to mention a case that came under my own repeated observation, wherein certain inexplicable physical phenomena occurred in broad daylight, and for which I could find no satisfactory solution either on the ground of hallucination or fraud."<sup>1</sup>

In a paper read before the Society for Psychical Research in 1886, entitled "On Some Physical Phenomena commonly termed Spiritualistic, witnessed by the Author," Professor Barrett describes in detail the phenomena he referred to in the paper

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. i. p. 240

read ten years previously at the British Association, and the circumstances under which they occurred. The following paragraphs give the important features:<sup>1</sup>—

Mr. C., a solicitor, with his wife and family, had come to reside for the season in the suburban house of a friend and neighbour of Professor Barrett's. He was an Irish country gentleman who had an utter disbelief in spiritualism. Professor Barrett was therefore not a little amused on making Mr. C.'s acquaintance, to find that he had in his own family what appeared to be spiritualistic phenomena then and there going on. Mr. C. gave Professor Barrett every opportunity of close and frequent investigation. The sittings extended through the months of August and September 1875. There were present besides Professor Barrett, Mr. and Mrs. C., and their young daughter Florrie, a bright, frank, intelligent child, then about ten years old. They sat at a large dining-room table, facing French windows, which let in a flood of sunlight. Shortly, scraping sounds, raps, and noises resembling the hammering of small nails, were heard. Florrie's hands and feet were closely watched, and were observed to be absolutely motionless when the sounds were heard. Besides knocks, there were occasional movements of the furniture. Seated one day at a large dining-room table in full sunlight, Florrie, and Mr. and Mrs. C., and Professor Barrett being the persons present, all their fingers visibly resting on the surface of the table, three legs of the table rose off the ground to a sufficient height

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 29–33.

to allow Professor Barrett to put his foot easily beneath the castor nearest him. The importance of the comparatively small amount of "movement" phenomena in this case is increased by their association with "sound" phenomena of great variety and frequency. These will be fully described in the next chapter.

Another case which Professor Barrett cites in the same paper may be thus summarised as far as phenomena of movement are concerned:<sup>1</sup>—

The sitters were Mr. L., a well-known photographer in Dublin, his niece, Miss L., and Professor Barrett. While noticing the raps and knocks, Professor Barrett observed a frequent uneasy movement of the entire table, which was a moderately large and heavy one, four feet square. It sidled about in a most surprising manner. Lifting their hands completely off the table, the sitters placed themselves back in their chairs, with their hands folded across their chests. Their feet were in full view. Under these conditions, and in obedience to Professor Barrett's request, the table raised the two legs nearest to him off the ground eight or ten inches, and then suspended itself for a few moments. A similar act was performed on the other side. Then a very unexpected occurrence happened. To quote Professor Barrett's own words:—

"Whilst absolutely free from the contact of any person, the table wriggled itself backward and forward, advancing towards the armchair in which I sat, and ultimately completely imprisoning me in my

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 33-35.



seat. During its progress it was followed by Mr. L. and Miss I., but they were at no time touching it, and occasionally were so distant that I could perceive a free space all round the table whilst it was still in motion. When thus under my very nose, the table rose repeatedly, and enabled me to be perfectly sure, by the evidence of touch, that it was off the ground, and further, that no human being, consciously or unconsciously, had any part in this movement."

Professor Barrett, with his accustomed caution, comments thus:—

"The results, it is true, were very remarkable and unaccountable; but though I had not the slightest doubt of the good faith of Mr. L. and Miss I., yet I do not adduce this evidence as unexceptionable. I should have preferred to have taken precautions which were not so easy to impose on a lady, and I should also have preferred to have had the seance at my own house."

This latter objection was met by Mr. L. and Miss I. going to Professor Barrett's house shortly afterwards, no one else besides Professor Barrett being present. Some remarkable sounds were again heard. Then, this happened—again quoting Professor Barrett's own words:—

"Suddenly, only the tips of our fingers being on the table, the heavy loo-table at which we were sitting made a series of very violent prancing movements (which I could not imitate afterwards except by using both hands and all my strength); the blows were so heavy that I hurriedly stopped the performance, fearing for the safety of the gas chandelier in the room below. Here, too, I cannot

avoid the conclusion that the phenomena described are inexplicable on any known hypothesis."

After discounting the "pious platitudes" spelt out by the tilts of the table, and the possibility, and even probability, that "unintentional muscular movements" were the cause of these, and after recognising the impossibility of keeping up a continuous vigilant watch on the hands and feet of any person, and after supposing that Miss I. had some ingenious mechanism concealed about her person, whereby she could produce the sounds that were heard, Professor Barrett says: "This would fail to account for the undoubted motion of a heavy table, free from the contact of all present. After giving due weight to every known explanation, the phenomena remain inexplicable to me."

#### TESTIMONY COLLECTED BY FREDERIC W. H. MYERS.

Next in order of time come two papers by Mr. F. W. H. Myers, under the title of "Alleged Movements of Objects without Contact, occurring not in the Presence of a Paid Medium." They are published in vol. vii. of the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research.<sup>1</sup> The first article goes over most of the ground traversed in the earlier part of this chapter, but devotes twenty lines only to the Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society, and refers only to Professor Barrett's cases as having been already published. A number of other cases are, however, described in detail. The evidence in these scarcely comes up to the level of scientific,

<sup>1</sup> Vol. vii. pp. 146-198 and pp. 383-394.

and unless it had been sifted by so careful a critic as Mr. Myers, who convinced himself of the reality of the facts, could hardly be considered of much value. The two following cases in the first article present the strongest evidence.

(1) THE ARMSTRONG CASE.—Mr. George Allman Armstrong, of 8 Leeson Place, Dublin, and Ardna-carrig, Bandon, writes an account dated 13th June 1887. After vouching for the perfect good faith of the small group of experimenters, he describes in detail the movements of a table. The “rising” was generally preceded by a continuous fusillade of “knocks” in the substance of the table. When the knocks had, as it were, reached a climax, the table slowly swayed from side to side like a pendulum. It would stop completely, and then, as if imbued with life, and quite suddenly, would rise completely off the floor to a height of twelve or fourteen inches at least. It nearly always came down with immense force, and on several occasions proved destructive to itself, as the broken limbs of the table used at Kinsale could testify. The table was a round, rather heavy walnut one, with a central column standing on three claw legs. Mr. Armstrong says that on several occasions he succeeded in raising the table without contact. It rose to the fingers held over it at a height of several inches, like the keeper of a strong electro-magnet.<sup>1</sup>

(2) A BELL-RINGING CASE.—Mr. Myers, in introducing this case, says: “The usual hypotheses of fraud, rats, hitched wires, &c., seem hard to apply. The care and fulness with which it has been re-

<sup>1</sup> For full account see *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vii. pp. 159-160.

corded will enable the reader to judge for himself more easily than in most narratives of this type. Our informant is a gentleman [Mr. D.], occupying a responsible position; his name may be given to inquirers.”<sup>1</sup> The detailed report of the occurrences occupies no less than twelve pages, the greater part of which consists of a long letter addressed by Mr. D. to the Society for Psychical Research. He explains that he is writing in the main from notes taken at the time and not from memory. The following is an abstract:—

On Friday, 23rd September 1887, he took his four pupils to a circus, his lady housekeeper also going, leaving two servants at home. They left at about 2 P.M. All but himself returned about 5.30 P.M. The two servants were on the doorstep, telling the boys not to go in by the area door—the kitchens being below ground—and explaining that all the bells were ringing violently, no one touching them, and that they had been doing so almost ever since half-past two. When the master of the house came home, he found the same state of things, the servants almost in hysterics and the bells ringing. Nine bells hung in a row just inside the area door, opposite the kitchen door, and there was one bell—a call bell—on the landing at the top of the house.

Mr. D. frequently saw several of these bells ringing at once, the ringing being sudden and very violent, louder, he believed, than they could be rung by pulling the handles. One bell was more than once pulled over, so that it could not return to its

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vii. p. 160.



normal position. Several of the upstairs bells had no bell-pulls. The bellhanger was several times summoned to the premises. He showed that the wires could not have been entangled, and entirely agreed that it would be an utter impossibility for any animals, such as cats or rats, to ring the bells as they were rung. The house was quite a new one, standing alone, surrounded by unoccupied plots of building land.

As to the question of trickery. There seemed no possibility of that being the explanation. The phenomena occurred when the housekeeper and pupils were all away; also when the cook was away; also when only the two servants and the master were in the house, and both of them in his sight. For instance, he says he stood in the passage in front of the nine bells watching them ring, with both the servants close by. Once in particular he watched the housemaid on her knees in the middle of the wash-house scrubbing the tiles, while the front door, area door, and bath-room bells were pealing violently. The ringing was also heard by tradesmen, and by men working in the gardens near. The wires of the bells were distinctly moved, not only the bells and the clappers. The bell-handles were never observed to be moved. The ringing lasted between three and four weeks, and then ceased. Knockings in considerable variety were also heard, and a few cases of the movement of chairs and small articles, without any contact, also occurred.

Mr. D. was at one time disposed to think that the housemaid was in some way connected with the

disturbances, but he could trace no evidence. She was a young girl who had not been out to service before. She got into such a state of nervous excitement about the occurrences, that brain fever or something serious was feared. She had only been in the house a few weeks previous to the commencement of the manifestations, and nothing occurred after she left. Mr. D. was, however, perfectly convinced that she had nothing to do voluntarily with the bell-ringing.<sup>1</sup>

The second paper by Mr. Myers is devoted exclusively to some "strange experiences" which occurred several years previous to 1891, at the village of Swanland, a few miles from Hull, in the East Riding of Yorkshire. The evidence is that of John Bristow, who states he was an eye-witness. There were no intellectual phenomena, nothing but the apparently meaningless throwing about of pieces of wood—directed, however, by some intelligence, so as to attract attention without doing harm. Here again what value the case has rests almost solely on its having received the critical study of Mr. Myers.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the full account in Part XIX. of the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, which part is included in vol. vii., and may be obtained separately for 2s. 6d.

<sup>2</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vii. pp. 383-394.

## CHAPTER III

THE PRODUCTION OF SOUND WITHOUT ANY  
APPARENT PHYSICAL CAUSE

IF the tipping of small tables when the hands of the sitters are in contact is excepted—under which circumstances it is generally impossible to determine whether the result is psychical, or due merely to muscular action unconsciously exercised—the production of raps and other sounds is the most frequent of the phenomena under consideration. They are, however, generally so intermixed with other phenomena that it is difficult to treat them separately.

## THE DIALECTICAL SOCIETY.

In the extracts from the Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society given in the preceding chapter, it will be remembered that raps and other noises are referred to as being frequently heard, and also as apparently produced by an intelligent agency.

## TESTIMONY OF PROFESSOR W. F. BARRETT, F.R.S.

The reader is asked to refer to the general conditions of the case of Mr. C. testified to by Professor Barrett in the previous chapter. He says:—

“ They (the sounds) came more readily and more loudly when music was played, or a merry song struck up. Usually they kept time with the music,

and altogether displayed a singular degree of intelligence. Sometimes a loud rhythmic scraping, as of a violoncello bow on a piece of wood, would accompany the music. Again and again I placed my ear on the very spot on the table whence this rough fiddling appeared to proceed, and felt distinctly the rhythmic vibration of the table, but no tangible cause was visible either above or below the table. . . . On one occasion, when no one else was in the room, . . . I asked my young friend the medium to put her hands against the wall, and see how far she could stretch her feet back from the wall without tumbling down. This she did, and whilst in this constrained position—with the muscles of arms and legs all in tension—I asked for the knocks to come. Immediately a brisk pattering of raps followed my request. All the while the child remained quite motionless. My reason in making this experiment was to test the late Dr. Carpenter's muscular theory of the cause of the sounds. Had Dr. Carpenter been present, I feel sure he would have admitted that here at any rate that theory fell through.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Barrett sums up his conclusions on this case thus:—

“A long and careful examination convinced me that trickery on the part of the child was a more improbable hypothesis than that the sounds proceeded from some unknown agency. Nor could the sounds be accounted for by trickery on the part of the servants in the house, for in addition to my careful inquiries on this point, Mr. C. informed me

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 29–30.

that he had obtained the raps on the handle of his umbrella out of doors, when the child was by his side; and that the music-master complained of raps proceeding from inside the piano whenever the child was listless or inattentive at her music lesson. Mrs. C. told me that almost every night she heard the raps by the bedside of the child when she went to bid her good-night; and that after she had left the room and partially closed the door, she would hear quite an animated conversation going on between her daughter and her invisible companion, the child rapidly spelling over the alphabet, and the raps occurring at the right letters, and the child thus obtaining with surprising rapidity a clue to the words spelt out.

“Still more violently improbable is the supposition that the parents of the child were at the bottom of the mystery, stimulated by a desire to impress their friends with the wonderful but imaginary gifts their child possessed. The presence of the parents was not necessary for the occurrence of the sounds, which, as I have said, often took place when I was the only person in the room besides the child.

“Hallucination was the explanation which suggested itself to my own mind when first I heard of the phenomena, but was dismissed as wholly inapplicable after the first day's inquiry; nor do I think that any one could maintain that different people, individually and collectively, for some weeks, thought they heard and saw a series of sounds and motions which had no objective existence.

“No! I was then, and am still, morally certain



that the phenomena had a real existence outside oneself, and that they were not produced by trickery or by known causes. Hence I could come to no other conclusion than that we had here a class of phenomena wholly new to science.”<sup>1</sup>

After some three months the sounds ceased as unexpectedly as they had commenced.

There is one form of sound manifestation to which no allusion has been made—what is called the “Direct Voice.” It is alleged to be of frequent occurrence in spiritualistic circles. Articulate words are, it is stated, spoken “direct,” not through the voice organs of any person present. The phenomenon, so far as I have heard, occurs only in darkness—and is an objective voice audible alike to every one present. It corresponds to the phenomenon of “direct writing.” But no attempt that I am aware of has been made to treat the matter scientifically. One of the earliest alleged occurrences of this phenomenon took place in London, at a private seance at which I was present at the house of Mr. Thos. Everitt, who departed this life in August of last year, and who was one of the most prominent London spiritualists, Mrs. Everitt being the medium. Some little time later, at a similar seance at the same house, the sitting was terminated by the singing of a hymn by three or four soft, gentle voices, purporting to be “direct” voices, which sounded as if they proceeded from the top of the room close to the ceiling. They were certainly not the voices of any of the company present. It was one of the most beautiful and

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 31.

touching manifestations I ever experienced. I can only compare it to the singing of a choir of boys' voices, high up out of sight in Truro Cathedral, which I had heard many years before. The seances at Mr. Everitt's were conducted in an exclusively religious tone, and afforded no opportunity for obtaining scientific evidence. It is much to be desired that a careful inquiry should be made into the reality of so interesting a phenomenon.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE APPEARANCE OF LIGHT WITHOUT ANY APPARENT PHYSICAL CAUSE

THE appearance of Lights at Spiritualistic circles, apparently not due to any physical cause, is very widely asserted. The character of the Lights is as varied as it is possible to imagine. Faint, cloudy, indefinite luminous appearances—brilliant stars which move or hover among the sitters—globes or balls of light, like illuminated ostrich eggs, or spheres of mother-of-pearl lit up from within—pillars of light—are some of the many forms which this manifestation takes. But anything approaching to scientific evidence of the reality of the phenomenon is singularly scarce. And I am not aware that anything has ever been done towards testing or endeavouring to ascertain the nature of the light. One reason for this is, no doubt, that to investigate light phenomena, the exclusion of other light is

obviously requisite. Hence the necessity for dark seances. The objection to a dark seance in itself can of course have no scientific basis. But a strong feeling against dark seances has arisen from the abuses to which they have led. It is possible that the extent of the evil has been exaggerated, and has thus produced an exaggerated prejudice against darkness as a condition. It is, however, safe to say, that, even if promiscuous seances are ever useful or wise, a promiscuous dark seance should never be sanctioned by an earnest inquirer.

Orthodox science has not yet condescended to bestow any attention on "spirit lights." I had the privilege of private acquaintance with Dr. Tyndall, and once acted as his assistant at some lectures he gave in a country place. I remember sending him a report of some rather remarkable manifestations of light witnessed at a private seance in London, under fairly good test-conditions. Dr. Tyndall was at the time engaged in some special optical investigations, and I asked him to spend five minutes in reading the notes enclosed. Dr. Tyndall's reply, in his laconic, jocular style, was to this effect—"I have spent five minutes as you desired, and it is a long time since I spent five minutes so badly!"

The best series of "light" phenomena, both as regards their varied character, and as regards the observers, and the care with which records at the time were made, occurred in the presence of Mr. W. Stainton Moses. A special chapter is devoted to his general experiences later on, but I will deal with the phenomena of lights here, and make this the only illustration of this branch of the subject. For



the general credibility of the W. Stainton Moses phenomena the reader is referred to the opening paragraph of Chapter VI. The following pages are taken, by way of either extract or abstract, from two articles on Mr. W. Stainton Moses by Mr. F. W. H. Myers. They thus have the advantage of Mr. Myers' moral certificate, so to speak, as to their value. The articles were published in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Stainton Moses says that the first occasion on which large luminous appearances were seen at the circle consisting of Dr. and Mrs. Speer and himself was on 7th June 1873. They had become familiar with floating masses of luminous vapour; and on several occasions, the masses condensed, so to speak, until a distinct objective light was formed. On that evening, however, a number of cones of soft light similar to moonlight appeared in succession. There was a nucleus of soft yellow light surrounded by a haze. They sailed up from a corner of the room and gradually died out. They seem to have been carried in a materialised hand, a finger of which was shown at request, by placing it in front of the nucleus of light.<sup>2</sup>

Subsequently they saw another kind of light altogether. It was apparently a little round disc of light which twinkled like a star. It flashed with great rapidity, and answered questions by the usual code of signals. On about half-a-dozen occasions a bright scintillating light apparently resting on the mantelshelf was seen. It was about the size of a

<sup>1</sup> Vol. ix. pp. 245-352, and vol. xi. pp. 24-113.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, vol. ix. pp. 273-274.

pigeon's egg, and looked like a large diamond lit up with strong light.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Stainton Moses gives a description of "a most remarkable light, of quite a different kind from any that he had ever heard or read of." It appeared six times, diminishing in brilliancy on each occasion. Mr. Stainton Moses says: "The light was first observed directly behind us—a tall column about half an inch or rather more in width, and six or seven feet high. The light was of a bright golden hue, and did not illuminate objects in its neighbourhood. For a minute a cross developed at its top, and rays seemed to dart from it." Dr. Speer, who had been watching the strange phenomenon with absorbing interest, asked permission to examine it more closely. Leave being given, he went to the light, put his face close to it, and passed his hand through it. He detected no odour, and the light did not disappear. No warmth came from it, nor did it perceptibly light up the room. It remained visible until the seance was concluded.<sup>2</sup>

The following graphic description shall be given in Mr. Stainton Moses' own words:—

"The room, which had been filled (especially round me) with floating clouds of light, grew suddenly dark, and absolute stillness took the place of the previous loud knockings. It would have been a strange scene for an ear-witness. The table, isolated, with no human hand touching it, giving forth a series of mysterious thuds of varying intensity, some of which might have been made

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 276.

<sup>2</sup> See *ibid.*, pp. 276–277.

with a muffled sledge-hammer, all indicating intelligence—an intelligence that showed itself by deliberation, or eagerness, or stately solemnity according to the nature of the communication. Around the table three persons sitting with a hush of expectation, and faces (if they could have been seen) of awe-stricken earnestness. . . . The room shrouded in darkness, except at one end, where shifting masses of luminous vapour now and again gathered into a pillar which dimly outlined a form, and again dispersed, and flitted round the head of one of the sitters. No scene could be imagined more calculated to strike a novice with awe, none more solemn and impressive for those who participated in it.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. W. Stainton Moses thus describes the formation of the lights at a sitting on 9th August 1873 :—

“I witnessed the formation of some eight or nine very beautiful spirit lights. They formed quite close to me, and near my left hand, about a foot from the floor, floating upwards till they reached the level of the table and became visible to Dr. Speer. They were expressly made at my side, instead of, as usual, at my back, so that I might see them. They seemed to develop from a very bright speck, about the size of a pea, until they attained the size of a soda-water tumbler, and showed a soft luminosity like pale moonlight. They seemed to be covered with drapery and to be held by a hand. They faded slowly out, remaining visible about thirty or forty seconds, or perhaps

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 290.

a minute. The largest would be about eight inches long.”<sup>1</sup>

On 14th April 1874, Dr. Speer and Mr. Stainton Moses held a sitting by themselves. Mr. Stainton Moses thus describes what happened:—

“To-night lights commenced again, but of a quite different character to any we had seen before. They darted about like a comet, coming from the side by the harmonium, or near the fireplace. They were evanescent, and apparently of diffuse luminosity, within which was a nucleus of light, not, however, visible to me. We had some ten or twelve of these, some more brilliant than others, some visible both in the looking-glass and in the glass of the book-case, and they were showing a trail of reflected light on the table, when suddenly there arose from below me, apparently under the table, or near the floor, right under my nose, a cloud of luminous smoke, just like phosphorus. It fumed up in great clouds, until I seemed to be on fire, and rushed from the room in a panic. I was fairly frightened, and could not tell what was happening. I rushed to the door and opened it, and so to the front door. My hands seemed to be ablaze, and left their impress on the doors and handles. It blazed for a while after I had touched it, but soon went out, and no smell or trace remained. I have seen my own hands covered with a lambent flame; but nothing like this I ever saw. . . . The lights were preceded by very sharp detonations on my chair, so that we could watch for their coming by

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 319.



hearing the noise. They shot up very rapidly from the floor.”<sup>1</sup>

This sensational experience must conclude the evidence respecting the lights, for the present. One more selection has, however, been made, which is deferred to the special chapter on Mr. Stainton Moses' experiences as a whole. The present chapter must be read in connection with that chapter. It is admitted that the testimony quoted with regard to the Lights does not reach the level of scientific evidence. At the same time, when due consideration is given to the existing contemporary records, and to the careful way in which Mr. Myers examined the whole case, it is difficult to avoid the conviction that the Lights were objective phenomena, not produced by any known physical cause. It is much to be regretted that efforts were not made to secure a critical study of the Lights by a competent scientific man.

## CHAPTER V

### PHYSICAL PHENOMENA ALLEGED TO HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PRESENCE OF DANIEL DUNGLAS HOME

SCIENTIFIC evidence of the reality of the Physical Phenomena alleged to have occurred in the presence of D. D. Home is scarcely to be looked for in the two volumes written by himself, nor even in the two volumes published after his death by Madame

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xi. pp. 44-45.



Home. The alleged phenomena failed to attract the attention of more than a very few men of science during Home's lifetime. Of these the most eminent is Sir William Crookes, F.R.S. With regard to Sir William Crookes' evidence the reader is referred to two paragraphs on page 124.

#### THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE DIALECTICAL SOCIETY.

Again, the Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society, or rather the documents which accompany it, supplies some good evidence. Home had four sittings with one of the Sub-Committees, but the phenomena were of a trifling and inconclusive character. This was attributed to the state of Home's bodily health. He was on the eve of a severe illness. Several persons subsequently sent to the Committee statements of what they had seen and heard in Home's presence. The only one of these which can be said to possess scientific value is a report of a seance held with Lord Lindsay—now the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres—and Mrs. Honynwood, and two other persons. The report is as follows. It is written by Mrs. Honynwood, and Lord Lindsay adds a few words, his own personal testimony.

“I met Mr. Home at the house of a friend on the 17th March 1869. We sat down, five in number, at a round table in the back drawing-room. There was an oil lamp on a table in the front drawing-room, and fires in both grates. After a while Mr. Home became entranced, walked into the

front room, and stood on the hearth-rug. He began to dance slowly, raising first the one foot and then the other, his hands hanging loosely as I have read of Easterns and Indians, moving in time to music. He then knelt down, rubbing and clasping his hands together in front of the fire. I asked, 'Are you a fire worshipper?' He nodded and looked pleased. 'Are you a Persian?' He smiled and nodded assent, after which he rose and placed four chairs in a row near the folding doors, signing to us to sit there. He now went to the table on which stood the moderator lamp; taking off the globe, he placed it on the table, and deliberately grasped the chimney of the lamp with both hands; then, advancing to the lady of the house, he asked her to touch it, but she refused, knowing it was hot. Mr. Home said, 'Have you no faith? Will you not trust in Dan if he says it is cool?' She replied, 'Certainly,' and placed her finger on the glass, exclaiming, 'Oh, it is not at all hot!' This was corroborated by Lord Lindsay and myself, who in turn both laid our finger on the glass several times to test it. Mr. Home laughed and said, 'I will make it hot for you, old fellow,' and holding it towards Mr. —, he turned, apparently addressing some one, and said, in a sad tone of voice, 'It is necessary to confirm the faith of others that the glass should be made hot for him.' Mr. — now touched it, and exclaimed, 'You have indeed,' shaking his hand and showing me a red mark. So hot was the glass when a fourth person touched it, that it raised a blister, which I saw some days subsequently, peeling. I

leave it for the scientific to determine how the heat was re-imparted to the glass, after being withdrawn.

“Mr. Home now returned to the fireplace, and thrust the chimney into the red-hot coals, resting the end on the top bar; he left it there about four or five minutes, then, lifting it, he clasped it in both hands, went to the table, took a lucifer match from a box, and handing it to the lady of the house, desired her to touch the glass—the match instantly ignited; and having called our attention to this fact, he observed, ‘The tongue and lips are the most sensitive parts of the body,’ and thrust the heated glass into his mouth, applying, especially, his tongue to it. He once more returned to the fire, and again placed the chimney on the upper bar, the end of the glass resting amidst the red coals. He left it there and walked about the room, selected a small fern-leaf from a vase of flowers, and raising the chimney, placed it within, and replaced the chimney among the coals. After a few moments he told us to observe very carefully, as the experiment would be very pretty. Mr. Home now held up the glass, and we perceived the fern-leaf within apparently on fire. He replaced it after a few seconds, and holding it up again, exclaimed, ‘Is it not pretty?’ The fern appeared red-hot; each little leaf edged with gold, yet flameless, like clouds at sunset—rich glowing crimson tinged with molten gold. After we had all looked at it and admired it, he advanced to Mrs. ———, and laughingly shook it out on her muslin dress. I expected to see it crumble away; but no, it was still green, though dry and withered. Unfortunately it was not preserved.

“Again Mr. Home returned to the fire, and once more placed the glass on the coals, where he left it, and walked about the room; going to the lamp, he passed his hand slowly backwards and forwards through the flame, not an inch from the wick; returning to the fireplace, he lifted the chimney, and moving the coals about with his hand, selected a small flat red-hot coal, and placed it in the chimney—shook it up and down, and advancing to us, playfully said, ‘H——, here is a present for you,’ and threw out the coal on her muslin dress. Catching it up in dismay, she tossed it to Lord Lindsay, who, unable to retain it in his hand, threw it from palm to palm till he reached the grate and flung it in. While we were all looking at the muslin dress and wondering that it was neither soiled nor singed, Mr. Home approached, and in a hurt tone of voice said, ‘No, no, you will not find a mark; did you think that we would hurt your dress.’ Mr. Home then selected a small spray of white flower, and going to the lamp, he passed it two or three times through the flame, then carried it to the grate, and held it first in the flame and then in the smoke above the coals, moving it gently about. He now brought it back to us, asking us to look at it and smell it, calling our attention to the fact that the flower did not smell of smoke, and that it was unchanged by the heat and flame of lamp and fire. He then bid us notice that his hand which held the flower smelt of smoke, while the flower remained uninjured. Then addressing us, he said, ‘The spirit now speaking through Dan, and that has enabled him to show you these curious fire-

tests, in which he hopes you have all felt interested, is the spirit of an Asiatic fire-worshipper, who was anxious to come here to-night, as he had heard of seances held here. He now bids you farewell, as he will return no more.'

"After this Mr. Home awoke.

"BARBARA HONYWOOD."

"I was present at this seance, and can corroborate the truth of the above statement.

"LINDSAY."<sup>1</sup>

[NOW EARL OF CRAWFORD AND BALCARRES.]

#### TESTIMONY OF THE EARL OF DUNRAVEN.

Lord Dunraven—then Lord Adare—had a number of sittings with Home. He printed a small volume—for private circulation only—under the title of "Experiences in Spiritualism with Mr. D. D. Home." This volume is exceedingly scarce.

#### AN INQUIRY BY PROFESSOR W. F. BARRETT, F.R.S., AND MR. F. W. H. MYERS.

In the year 1889, Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers undertook an "Inquiry into the Evidence for the Mediumship of D. D. Home." They collected the testimony of a large number of persons who were witnesses of the Home phenomena, carefully examined its evidential value, and summarised it in a Joint Report. This was printed in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research for July 1889.<sup>2</sup> It is to be regretted that the

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee of the London Dialectical Society, pp. 360-363.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iv. pp. 101-136.



Society has not seen its way to publish this Report in a form accessible to the general public. It is true that in his great work, "Human Personality, and its Survival of Bodily Death," Mr. Myers gives a brief summary of the Report; but he condenses the thirty-six pages of the original Report and its appendices into four pages of "Human Personality," which are quite insufficient to convey an adequate idea of the Report itself. Also, the cost of Mr. Myers' book debars from it the mass of readers. This Report was followed up a little later by a brief article by Mr. Myers, forming an important supplement.<sup>1</sup>

In the Report itself its joint authors say: "We propose the question—Have Home's phenomena ever been plausibly explained as conjuring tricks, or in accordance with known laws of nature? And we answer—No; they have not been so explained, nor can we so explain them."<sup>2</sup> In commenting on the Joint Report, by Professor Barrett and himself, Mr. Myers puts the problem as to Home in this form: "There is thus a considerable body of evidence as to Home, which enables us to discuss the three questions: (1) Was he ever convicted of fraud? (2) Did he satisfy any trained observer in a series of experiments selected by the observer and not by himself? (3) Were the phenomena entirely beyond the scope of the conjurer's art?"<sup>3</sup>

In the Joint Report the writers say—(1) As to fraud: "We have found no allegations of fraud on

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 249-252.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>3</sup> "Human Personality," vol. ii. p. 579.

which we should be justified in laying much stress. Mr. Robert Browning has told to one of us the circumstances which mainly led to that opinion of Home which was expressed in 'Mr. Sludge, the Medium.' It appears that a lady (since dead) repeated to Mr. Browning a statement made to her by a lady and gentleman (since dead), as to their finding Home in the act of experimenting with phosphorus on the production of 'spirit lights,' which, so far as Mr. Browning remembers, were to be rubbed round the walls of the room, near the ceiling, so as to appear when the room was darkened. This piece of evidence powerfully impressed Mr. Browning; but it comes to us at third-hand, without written record, and at a distance of nearly forty years.

"We have received one other account from a gentleman of character and ability, of a seance in very poor light, when the 'spirit-hand' moved in such a way as to seem dependent on the action of Home's arms and legs. This account is subjoined [in the Report] as Appendix D. We may add that few, if any, of the lights seen at Home's seances could (as they are described to us) have been contrived by the aid of phosphorus.

"There is also a frequently repeated story that Home was found at the Tuilleries (or at Compiègne, or at Biarritz) to be using a stuffed hand, and was consequently forbidden the Imperial Court. We have tried in France to get at the fountain-head of this story, but without success."<sup>1</sup>

(2) "With regard to our second question—

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 102,

whether his powers were tested by competent observers"—Mr. Myers says: "Home in this respect stands pre-eminent; since we have the evidence of Sir William Crookes, corroborated by the testimony of the Master of Lindsay (now Earl of Crawford and Balcarres), himself a *savant* of some distinction, and the privately printed series of careful observations by the present and the late Lords Dunraven."<sup>1</sup>

(3) "As to our third question—whether the phenomena could have been produced by conjuring"—Mr. Myers says: "Many of them, especially the fire-tests, and the movements of large untouched objects in good light, seem inexplicable by this supposition. The hypothesis of collective hallucination on the part of the sitters seems very improbable, because, in most cases, all those present saw the same thing; and often without receiving from Home any audible suggestion as to what was about to happen."<sup>2</sup>

In the Joint Report by Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers, a considerable space is devoted to a discussion as to conjuring being the explanation of the Home manifestations. It is dismissed as utterly inadequate. In conclusion, the authors of the Report say: "And we find that experts in conjuring (several of whom we have consulted), however little they may believe in Home's pretensions, are disposed rather to reject wholesale than to explain in detail the more remarkable records."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Human Personality," vol. ii. pp. 580-581.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 581.

<sup>3</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 107.

Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers proceed to quote thirty-five cases of the identification of alleged communicating spirits from Madame Home's book, entitled "D. D. Home, His Life and Mission." They remark, "This list of identifications is a long one, and quite unique in the history of Spiritualism."<sup>1</sup> After analysing this list of cases, they say near the conclusion of their Report, as implying their final verdict: "If our readers ask us—'Do you advise us to go on experimenting in these matters as though Home's phenomena were genuine?'—we answer, 'Yes.'"<sup>2</sup> In the supplementary article above referred to sixteen more cases of identification are added to the thirty-five.

In Appendix E to the Report is given some striking testimony to the reality of the "fire-test." The following letter from Mr. W. M. Wilkinson, the well-known solicitor, is included:—

"As you ask me to write to you of what occurred at our house at Kilburn, where we were living in 1869, with reference to the handling of red-hot coal, I will merely say that one Sunday evening in the winter of that year, I saw Mr. Home take out of our drawing-room fire a red-hot coal a little less in size than a cricket ball, and carry it up and down the drawing-room. He said to Lord Adare, now Lord Dunraven, who was present, 'Will you take it from me? It will not hurt you.' Lord Adare took it from him, and held it in his hand for about half a minute, and before he threw it back in the fire I put my hand pretty close to it, and

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 115.



felt the heat to be like that of a live coal.—  
Yours very truly, W. M. WILKINSON.<sup>1</sup>

44 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS,  
LONDON, W.C., *February 7, 1869.*"

Appendix M to the Report consists of some particulars verbally given to Mr. Myers by Mrs. Honynwood, of 52 Warwick Square, London, in further explanation of her printed testimony to phenomena she had witnessed in Home's presence. She was well acquainted with him for twenty-five years, attended many seances, and took notes of them at the time. In the early part of this chapter, a statement she sent to the Dialectical Society has already been quoted. She told Mr. Myers that most of her friends were complete disbelievers in Spiritualism, and that they frequently repeated to her rumours to the discredit of Home. But she never heard any first-hand account of any kind of trickery on his part. She considered him a man of open childlike nature, thoroughly honest and truthful, and that in her opinion his utterances in the trance state were much superior in thought and diction to his ordinary talk. She said she should like to give Mr. Myers a few additional details with regard to the fire phenomena reported in Madame Home's book, "D. D. Home, His Life and Mission," on her authority. Madame Home's secretary, she said, had slightly abbreviated her words in a way which made the occurrences seem rather less wonderful than they actually were. Mr. Myers gives the

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 122.



following, as having been signed "BARBARA HONYWOOD, June 1889."

"As to the burning coal placed in my hand. I saw Mr. Home take this coal from the fire, moving his hands freely among the coals. It was about the size of a coffee cup, blazing at the top, and red-hot at the bottom. While I held it in my hand the actual flame died down, but it continued to crackle, and to be partially red-hot. I felt it like an ordinary stone, neither hot nor cold. Mr. Home then pushed it off my hand with one finger on to a double sheet of cartridge paper, which it at once set on fire. I am quite certain that I was in my usual condition at the time. . . .

"As to the hot lamp-chimney which I touched. There was a row of four or five persons sitting side by side, and Mr. Home asked us each in turn to touch the glass. When I touched it, I felt as though a wave of heat were receding before me. . . .

"I have repeatedly taken Mr. Home in my own carriage to the houses of friends of mine who were strangers to him, and have there seen the furniture at once violently moved in rooms which I knew that he had never entered till that moment. I have seen heavy furniture moved; for instance, a heavy sofa in my own drawing-room, with myself upon it, and a heavy centre table, moved several feet away from Home, and then back again, in the light, while his hands and feet were visible. Not horse-hairs, but ropes, would often have been necessary to pull the furniture about as I have seen it pulled."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S. P. R.*, vol. iv. pp. 135-136.

A brief reference must now be made to what is perhaps the most sensational alleged event in Home's mediumistic career, the one which is most frequently spoken of by the general public, with more or less forcible expressions of scornful incredulity; his "levitation" out of the window of a room at a great height from the ground, and in at a window of the next room on the same story. In the Report by Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers, no detailed account of this is given. The Report says: "Lords Lindsay and Adare had printed a statement that Home floated out of the window and in at another in Ashley Place (Victoria Street), S.W., 16th December 1868."<sup>1</sup> At a meeting of the Committee of the Dialectical Society, held on 6th July 1869, a paper was read from Lord Lindsay, describing some of his personal experiences with Home. This paper makes no reference to the above case of levitation. But at the same meeting of the Committee, Lord Lindsay and others gave evidence as witnesses, and Lord Lindsay thus described this particular case:—

"I saw the levitations in Victoria Street, when Home floated out of the window; he first went into a trance, and walked about uneasily; he then went into the hall; while he was away, I heard a voice whisper in my ear, 'He will go out of one window and in at another.' I was alarmed and shocked at the idea of so dangerous an experiment. I told the company what I had heard, and we then waited for Home's return. Shortly after he entered the room, I heard the window go up, but I could not see it, for I sat with my back to it. I, how-

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 108.

ever, saw his shadow on the opposite wall; he went out of the window in a horizontal position, and I saw him outside the other window (that in the next room) floating in the air. It was eighty-five feet from the ground. There was no balcony along the windows, merely a strong course an inch and a half wide; each window had a small plant stand, but there was no connection between them. I have no theory to explain these things. I have tried to find out how they are done, but the more I studied them, the more satisfied was I that they could not be explained by mere mechanical trick.”<sup>1</sup>

There is one episode in the career of D. D. Home which, although it does not affect the reality of the phenomena alleged to have taken place in his presence, claims a brief mention. The gift to Home by Mrs. Lyon of a large sum of money, the subsequent lawsuit, and the judgment in accordance with which the money was returned to its original owner, excited much attention at the time. Public opinion frequently takes up sensational occurrences in a most illogical and unscientific manner. But a permanent effect may thus be produced, which is extremely difficult to eradicate, even if shown to be unjustifiable. This episode with Mrs. Lyon has probably had more effect than any other circumstance in causing the feeling of aversion with which large numbers of people regard Home and all his doings. He is looked upon, and spoken of, as if he were an unprincipled adventurer, convicted of fraud, and of obtaining money under false pretences.

<sup>1</sup> Report of the Committee of the Dialectical Society, p. 214.

The remarks at the end of this chapter are based mainly upon Appendix III. to the Report by Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers, and which deals with the case of *Lyon v. Home*.<sup>1</sup> The Appendix commences thus: "Our colleague, Mr. H. Arthur Smith [barrister-at-law], author of 'Principles of Equity,' has kindly furnished us with the following review of the case of *Lyon v. Home*." The following are a few extracts from this review:—

"I have looked carefully into the case of *Lyon v. Home* as reported in the Law Reports (6 Equity, 655), . . . and perhaps the following comments may be useful to you.

"It is certainly the fact that the judge discredited the evidence of Mrs. Lyon. He said: 'Reliance cannot be placed on her testimony. . . . It would be unjust to found on it a decree against any man, save in so far as what she has sworn to may be corroborated by written documents, or unimpeached witnesses, or incontrovertible facts.'

"Having, then, eventually decided against Home, it follows that the judge must have considered that her evidence was corroborated in some or other of the ways mentioned."

Mr. H. Arthur Smith further says: "There was also an admitted letter from Mrs. Lyon to Home, in which she stated that she presented him with the £24,000 as an '*entirely free gift*.' This, she said, was written by her at Home's dictation, under magnetic influence."

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 117-119.



Mr. H. Arthur Smith proceeds to discuss the "corroborative evidence which led to the judge's final opinion." He then remarks:—

"Now it must, I think, be admitted that considering the extraordinary character of Mrs. Lyon's conduct, and the swiftness with which she reached her decision to transfer her property to Home, such evidence as the above may reasonably be deemed corroborative of her assertion that she was induced to act as she did by the effects of Home's spiritualistic pretensions. . . . There was sufficient . . . in my opinion, to establish the plaintiff's case. It is not then true that 'Home was made to restore the money, because, being a professed medium, it was likely that he should have induced her in the way he did.' The Court held the law to be that such transactions as those in question cannot be upheld, 'unless the Court is quite satisfied that they are acts of pure volition uninfluenced.' . . . There was evidence of considerable weight, that as a matter of fact . . . Home did work on the mind of Mrs. Lyon by means of spiritualistic devices, and further that he did so by suggesting communications from her deceased husband. Whether this is to Home's discredit or not of course will be decided according to one's belief in Spiritualism and the reality of her husband's interference. . . .

H. ARTHUR SMITH.

1 NEW SQUARE, LINCOLN'S INN,  
*October 19, 1888."*

In order that this episode should have its rightful effect, and no more, it is needful that several things



should be borne in mind. In the first place, the action was in a Court of Equity. It was not a prosecution in a Criminal Court. The decision of the Court was not a verdict of guilty against a prisoner, to be followed by punishment for wrongdoing, but an order to refund certain money. In ordinary circumstances a judgment of this kind does not brand a man with infamy, nor affect his character and position in the eyes of society. Again, after the judgment of the Court, Home promptly repaid the money. He had not appropriated or expended any part of it. What more could he have done?

Mr. Myers' remark in "Human Personality"—"The most serious blot on Home's character was that revealed by the Lyon case"<sup>1</sup>—seems, therefore, rather severe under the circumstances. Especially as Mr. Myers has expressed himself so strongly in favour of the reality of the Home phenomena, and has said, in conjunction with Professor Barrett, that they found no allegations of fraud on which they were justified in laying much stress. Much more to the purpose is Mr. H. Arthur Smith's comment: "Whether this is to Home's discredit or not of course will be decided according to one's belief in Spiritualism and the reality of her husband's interference."

Had this Report of Professor Barrett's and Mr. Myers', with its Appendices, been placed before the public, it might have mitigated the prejudice which hangs about the name of D. D. Home in the minds of so many. The unique position which Home

<sup>1</sup> "Human Personality," vol. ii. p. 580.

occupies in regard to the Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism seems a sufficient reason for dwelling somewhat fully on this episode as it affects his character as a man.

## CHAPTER VI

### PHYSICAL PHENOMENA ALLEGED TO HAVE OCCURRED IN THE PRESENCE OF WILLIAM STANTON MOSES

IT is mainly due to the labours of Mr. F. W. H. Myers, after Mr. Stainton Moses' death, that the Physical Phenomena alleged to have occurred in his presence can be included among those for which evidence of a scientific character is claimed. It is much to be regretted that, during Mr. Stainton Moses' lifetime, although phenomena of a very varied character were alleged to have occurred with great frequency during many years, no scientific man of eminence appears to have joined in the seances, except on one or two occasions. Perhaps the primary reason for this was that Mr. Stainton Moses' own attitude of mind towards the subject did not court critical and scientific investigation of the phenomena. But even during the last ten years of his life, subsequent to the formation of the Society for Psychical Research, of which he was an original member, and not only that, but for nearly five years a Vice-President and a member of the Council, so far as I know, no sittings were held with him on behalf of the Society, and no first-hand

authentic records of the alleged phenomena in earlier years were placed before it. One reason for this probably was that the Council of the Society informally adopted a sort of understanding that its earlier investigations should not be directed towards "Spiritualism," but mainly towards those branches of the great subject which were, so to speak, just outside the field of recognised scientific inquiry—such, for instance, as Thought-Transference and Hypnotism. In this course there was doubtless a certain amount of wisdom, but to it was due the apathy and the ultimate secession of a few members who took great interest in the formation of the Society. Chief among these was W. Stainton Moses himself. In November 1886 he withdrew from the Society, considering that the evidence of phenomena of the genuine character of which he had satisfied himself beyond doubt, was not being properly entertained or fairly treated.

Mr. W. Stainton Moses entrusted by will his unpublished MSS. to two friends as literary executors, Mr. Charles C. Massey and Mr. Alaric A. Watts. At the earnest request of Mr. Myers, these gentlemen permitted him to see a large number of them. Thirty-one note-books were placed in his hands. Permission was further given to Mr. Myers to make selections from these note-books for publication in the *Proceedings* of the Society. These selections form the substance of two long articles.<sup>1</sup> The thirty-one books comprise twenty-four of Automatic

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 245–352, and vol. xi. pp. 24–113. Reference should also be made to an obituary notice of Mr. Stainton Moses by Mr. Myers, in *Proceedings*, vol. viii. pp. 597–601.

Writing, four Records of Physical Phenomena, and three of retrospect and summary. Two of these recapitulate physical phenomena, with reflections.

Mr. Stainton Moses' most intimate friends were Dr. and Mrs. Stanhope T. Speer. They, with the occasional attendance of another intimate friend, Mr. F. W. Percival, barrister-at-law, and Examiner in the Education Department, were generally the only members of the small group who witnessed the phenomena. Mr. Stainton Moses' note-books had been kept extremely private. It seems probable that no one had seen them until they were placed in Mr. Myers' hands. Two note-books and other MSS. by Dr. Speer were also handed to Mr. Myers, which he says contained independent contemporary records of much evidential value. With regard to Dr. and Mrs. Speer, Mr. Myers says: "Their importance as witnesses of the phenomena is so great, that I must be pardoned for inserting a 'testimonial' to the late Dr. Speer (M.D., Edinburgh), which shall not, however, be in my own words, but in those of Dr. Marshall Hall, F.R.S., one of the best-known physicians of the middle of this century. Writing on 18th March 1849, Dr. Marshall Hall says (in a printed collection of similar testimonials now before me): 'I have great satisfaction in bearing my testimony to the talents and acquirements of Dr. Stanhope Templeman Speer. Dr. Speer has had unusual advantages in having been at the medical schools, not only of London and Edinburgh, but of Paris and MontPELLIER, and he has availed himself of these advantages with extraordinary diligence and talent. He ranks among our most distinguished



rising physicians.'"<sup>1</sup> Dr. Speer practised as a physician at Cheltenham and in London, and at different times held various important hospital posts. He had scientific and artistic tastes, and being possessed of private means, he quitted professional work at the age of thirty-four, and spent his subsequent life in studious retirement. Mr. Myers says that his "cast of mind was strongly materialistic, and it is remarkable that his interest in Mr. Moses' phenomena was from first to last of a purely scientific, as contrasted with an emotional or religious nature."<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Stanhope Speer also kept careful records of the sittings. Over sixty instalments were published in the weekly journal, *Light*, under the title of "Records of Private Seances, from Notes taken at the time of each Sitting."

Mr. Stainton Moses was born in Lincolnshire in 1839. He studied at Oxford, and was ordained as a clergyman of the Church of England. After a few years of active life as a parish clergyman, he was offered a Mastership in University College School, London, which post he held until about three years before his death, which took place in 1892. As to the "fundamental questions of sanity and probity," Mr. Myers says: "Neither I myself, nor, so far as I know, any person acquainted with Mr. Moses, has ever entertained any doubt."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Charles C. Massey says: "However perplexed for an explanation, the crassest prejudice has recoiled from ever suggesting a doubt of the truth and

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 247-248.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 247.



honesty of Stainton Moses.”<sup>1</sup> Mr. H. J. Hood, barrister-at-law, who knew him for many years, writes: “I believe that he was wholly incapable of deceit.”<sup>1</sup> The principal published works of Mr. Stainton Moses are—“Researches in Spiritualism,” issued in *Human Nature*, a periodical now extinct; “Spirit Identity” (1879), recently republished; “Spirit Teachings” (1883), of which a new edition has lately appeared with a biography by Mr. Charles Speer (son of Dr. S. T. Speer). Mr. Stainton Moses was also Editor of *Light* during its earlier years.

It has seemed important, in view of what is to follow, that the reader should be in possession of this somewhat explicit account of Mr. Stainton Moses, his life, his work, and his intimate friends.

Having briefly treated of these external matters in the first of his two articles in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.*, Mr. Myers goes on to say:—

“But now our narrative must pass at a bound from the commonplace and the credible to bewildering and inconceivable things. With the even tenour of this straightforward and reputable life was interwoven a chain of mysteries which, as I have before said, in whatever way soever they be explained, make that life one of the most extraordinary which our century has seen. For Stainton Moses’ true history lies, not in the everyday events thus far recorded, but in that series of physical manifestations which began in 1872, and lasted for some eight years, and that series of automatic writings and trance-utterances which began in 1873, received

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 247.

a record for some ten years, and did not, as is believed, cease altogether until the earthly end was near.”<sup>1</sup>

### THE PHYSICAL PHENOMENA.

This inquiry concerns physical phenomena only. The wealth of material to select from is enormous. It is proposed to give one or two examples of each of the important classes of physical phenomena. In doing so such examples only will be quoted as have been selected by Mr. Myers to include in his articles in the *Proceedings of the S.P.R.* The reader will therefore know that the following records have been under Mr. Myers' scrutiny, and have been considered by him as of evidential value. This will also simplify references, as it will be needful to refer only to Mr. Myers' articles which are easily accessible, and not to the original sources.

### MOVEMENTS WITHOUT CONTACT.

After recording some movements of a table, Mr. Stainton Moses says : “ All that I have described occurs readily when the table is untouched. Indeed, when the force is developed, we have found it better to remove the hands and leave the table to its own devices. The tilting above noticed has been even more marked when the sitters have been removed from it to a distance of about two feet. It has rapped on the chair and on the floor, inclined so as to play into a hand placed on the carpet, and has been restored to its normal position when no hand has touched it. The actual force required to per-

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 252.

form this would be represented by very considerable muscular exertion in a man of ordinary strength.”<sup>1</sup>

The following account, besides being a record of physical phenomenon, is a curious illustration of the result of not following alleged instructions. Mr. Stainton Moses writes:—

“ We had ventured on one occasion, contrary to direction, to add to our circle a strange member. Some trivial phenomena occurred, but the usual controlling spirit did not appear. When next we sat he came; and probably none of us will easily forget the sledge-hammer blows with which he smote the table. The noise was distinctly audible in the room below, and gave one the idea that the table would be broken to pieces. In vain we withdrew from the table, hoping to diminish the power. The heavy blows increased in intensity, and the whole room shook with their force. The direst penalties were threatened if we again interfered with the development by bringing in new sitters. We have not ventured to do so again; and I do not think we shall easily be persuaded to risk another similar objurgation.”<sup>2</sup>

The following account of some impromptu occurrences is written by Mr. Serjeant Cox, and is quoted by Mr. Myers from the second volume of Serjeant Cox's work, “What am I?” The scene was also orally described to Mr. Myers by Serjeant Cox, who, as Mr. Myers remarks, was not himself a “Spiritualist,” but ascribed these and similar phenomena to a power innate in the medium's own being.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 259.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

“On Tuesday, 2nd June 1873, a personal friend [Mr. Stainton Moses] came to my residence in Russell Square to dress for a dinner party to which we were invited. He had previously exhibited considerable power as a Psychic. Having half an hour to spare, we went into the dining-room. It was just six o'clock, and of course broad daylight. I was opening letters; he was reading the *Times*. My dining-table is of mahogany, very heavy, old-fashioned, six feet wide, nine feet long. It stands on a Turkey carpet, which much increases the difficulty of moving it. A subsequent trial showed that the united efforts of two strong men standing were required to move it one inch. There was no cloth upon it, and the light fell full under it. No person was in the room but my friend and myself. Suddenly, as we were sitting thus, frequent and loud rappings came upon the table. My friend was then sitting holding the newspaper with both hands, one arm resting on the table, the other on the back of a chair, and turned sideways from the table, so that his legs and feet were not under the table, but at the side of it. Presently the solid table quivered as with an ague fit. Then it swayed to and fro so violently as almost to dislocate the big pillar-like legs, of which there are eight. Then it moved forward about three inches. I looked under it to be sure it was not touched; but still it moved, and still the blows were loud upon it.

“This sudden access of the Force at such a time, and in such a place, with none present but myself and my friend, and with no thought then of invoking it, caused the utmost astonishment in both



of us. My friend said that nothing like it had ever before occurred to him. I then suggested that it would be an invaluable opportunity, with so great a power in action, to make trial of *motion without contact*, the presence of two persons only, the daylight, the place, the size and weight of the table, making the experiment a crucial one. Accordingly we stood upright, he on one side of the table, I on the other side of it. We stood two feet from it, and held our hands eight inches above it. In one minute it rocked violently. Then it moved over the carpet a distance of seven inches. Then it rose three inches from the floor on the side on which my friend was standing. Then it rose equally on my side. Finally my friend held his hands four inches over the end of the table, and asked that it would rise and touch his hand three times. It did so; and then in accordance with the like request, it rose to my hand held at the other end to the same height above it and in the same manner.”<sup>1</sup>

LEVITATION.—The wonderful phenomenon of levitation must be included in the category of “movements without contact”! Some of Mr. Stainton Moses’ experiences of this kind are much more explicitly and circumstantially described than those alleged to have occurred with D. D. Home. Mr. Stainton Moses gives the following account of his first personal experience of this nature:—

“My first personal experience of levitation was about five months after my introduction to spiritualism. Physical phenomena of a very powerful description had been developed with great rapidity.

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S. P. R.*, vol. ix. pp. 259–260.



We were new to the subject, and the phenomena were most interesting. . . . One day (30th August 1872) . . . I felt my chair drawn back from the table and turned into the corner near which I sat. It was so placed that my face was turned away from the circle to the angle made by the two walls. In this position the chair was raised from the floor to a distance of, I should judge, twelve or fourteen inches. My feet touched the top of the skirting-board, which would be about twelve inches in height. The chair remained suspended for a few moments, and I then felt myself going from it, higher and higher, with a very slow and easy movement. I had no sense of discomfort nor of apprehension. I was perfectly conscious of what was being done, and described the process to those who were sitting at the table. The movement was very steady, and occupied what seemed a long time before it was completed. I was close to the wall, so close that I was able to put a pencil firmly against my chest, and to mark the spot opposite to me on the wall-paper. That mark when measured afterwards was found to be rather more than six feet from the floor, and, from its position, it was clear that my head must have been in the very corner of the room, close to the ceiling. I do not think that I was in any way entranced. I was perfectly clear in my mind, quite alive to what was being done, and fully conscious of the curious phenomenon. I felt no pressure on any part of my body, only a sensation as of being in a lift, whilst objects seemed to be passing away from below me. I remember a slight difficulty in breathing, and a sensation of fulness in the chest, with a

general feeling of being lighter than the atmosphere. I was lowered down quite gently, and placed in the chair, which had settled in its old position. The measurements and observations were taken immediately, and the marks which I had made with my pencil were noted. My voice was said at the time to sound as if from the corner of the room, close to the ceiling.”<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Stainton Moses says that this experience was repeated, with variations, on nine other occasions. Once he suddenly found himself on the table—his chair being unmoved. This, “under ordinary circumstances,” he says, “is what we call impossible.” On another occasion he was placed on the table standing. But he discouraged these phenomena of levitation as much as possible, from a dislike to violent physical manifestations.

MOVEMENT OF OBJECTS IN A CLOSED ROOM, NO ONE BEING PRESENT.—I am not aware of any other well-attested instances of a curious phenomenon stated to have occurred when Mr. Stainton Moses was near but not present. He thus describes the “first startling manifestation” of this kind. It was on Sunday, 18th August 1872. Simple phenomena of raps and movements of the table commenced at breakfast-time. Mr. Stainton Moses went to church with his friend. On entering his bedroom afterwards, his attention was drawn by loud rappings which followed him round the room, to three articles so placed on the bed as to form an imperfect cross. While he was in the room another article was added. He called his friend whose

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 261.

guest he was. To avoid the possibility of children or servants playing tricks, in case anything more happened, they well searched the room—it contained no cupboard—bolted the window, locked the door on leaving, and the host put the key in his pocket. After lunch two more articles were found to be added. Another visit discovered other additions. This went on till 5 P.M., “when a complete cross extending the whole length of the bed was made entirely of little articles from the toilet-table.” The position of the room, and the whole circumstances, convinced Mr. Stainton Moses and Dr. and Mrs. Speer, with whom he was staying, beyond any doubt that human intervention was impossible. A very detailed account of this incident exists in the handwriting of Dr. Speer.<sup>1</sup>

THE CARRYING OF OBJECTS INTO A LOCKED ROOM, AND THE PASSAGE OF SOLID OBJECTS THROUGH MATERIAL OBSTACLES.—During the two or three weeks subsequent to the above, over fifty instances occurred in which objects from different parts of the house were placed upon the table round which Mr. Stainton Moses and Dr. and Mrs. Speer were sitting in a locked dark room. The gas was always left burning brightly in the adjoining dining-room, and in the hall outside, so that if either of the doors had been opened, even for a moment, a blaze of light would have been let into the room in which they sat. Mr. Stainton Moses remarks—“As this never happened, we have full assurance from what Dr. Carpenter considers the best authority, common sense, that the doors remained closed.” On one

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 263–266.

occasion a small edition of "Paradise Lost" was placed on the table, and at the same time the words "to convince" were spelt out by raps. This little book had been in the hands of all of them during the evening, and they could testify to the position on a bookshelf where it had been left. One evening seven objects in different rooms were brought in; among them a little bell from the dining-room. They heard it begin to ring, the sound approached the door, they were astonished soon to hear the sound in the room where they sat, round which the bell was carried, close to the faces of all, and finally placed on the table, having been ringing loudly all the time. A curious incident occurred at a later date, the circle of three sitting alone. A small Parian statuette from an upper room was placed upon the table. One of the party requested that a friend who usually communicates might be fetched. "We are doing so" was spelt out by raps. This was taken to be the complete answer, and they ceased to call over the alphabet. However, the alphabet was called for again, and "mething else" was spelt out. No idea could be formed as to the meaning of this. At request it was exactly repeated. After much puzzling it occurred to one of the party to join it on to the previous message—when the meaning became apparent. Mr. Stainton Moses sarcastically remarks—"What a clear case of 'un-conscious cerebration'!" "Very soon an odour like Tonquin bean was apparent to all of us. Something fell on the table, and light showed that a snuff-box which had contained Tonquin bean had been brought from Dr. Speer's dressing-room. The box



was closed, and the odour was remarked before any of us had the remotest idea that the box was in the room.”<sup>1</sup>

#### PERFUMES AND WAVES OF SCENT-LADEN AIR.

This phase of the phenomena must be passed rapidly over, though manifested to a much greater extent and in greater variety in Mr. Stainton Moses' case than in any other with which I am acquainted. In his circle music and singing were never introduced as a means of harmonising the conditions. Mr. Stainton Moses says: “In our circle this harmonising is effected by means of perfumes and waves of cool-scented air.” “If a new sitter is present, he or she is censed (if I may adopt the expression), and so initiated.” “If a new intelligence is to communicate, or special honour to be paid to a chief, the room is pervaded by perfumes which grow stronger as the spirit enters.” Sometimes the scent was in a liquid form, and apparently sprinkled down from the ceiling. Sometimes dry musk was thrown about in considerable quantities. A striking instance is given in the form of a statement from Mr. F. W. Percival, mentioned at the commencement of this article—a very occasional sitter. He says: “In compliance with your request, I will describe as briefly as possible what occurred at the dark seance held on the evening of 18th March 1874, when scent was produced so abundantly in the presence of Mrs. Speer and myself, while you [Mr. S. M.] were in a state of trance. The controlling spirit began by speaking through you at some length, and we were told

<sup>1</sup> See *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 266-267.



to expect unusual manifestations. They commenced with a strongly scented breeze, which passed softly round the circle, its course being marked by a pale light. In a few minutes it suddenly changed, and blew upon us with considerable force, as if a pair of bellows had been employed, and the temperature of the room was perceptibly lowered. After this liquid scent was sprinkled upon us several times; it appeared to come from the top of the room, and fell upon us in small drops. Finally we were told that a new manifestation would be attempted, and that we were to prepare for it by joining hands and holding the palms upwards. In this position we waited for two or three minutes, and then I felt a stream of liquid scent poured out, as it were from the spout of a teapot, which fell on one side of my left hand, and ran down upon the table. The same was done for Mrs. Speer; and to judge from our impressions at the time, and from the stains on the table, a very considerable quantity must have been produced. I may remark in conclusion that there was no scent in the room before the seance, and that we could distinguish several different perfumes which made the atmosphere so oppressive that we were glad to seek a purer air so soon as the seance came to an end.”<sup>1</sup>

#### LIGHTS WITHOUT APPARENT PHYSICAL CAUSE.

The phenomenon of Light without any apparent physical cause was a frequent one with Mr. Stainton Moses, and the manifestations were of a very varied

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 267-273.

character. Several of these were described in Chapter IV.

An account is now given of some remarkable phenomena which occurred at four consecutive seances on the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th of August 1873. Mr. Stainton Moses was on a holiday excursion with Dr. and Mrs. Speer in the North of Ireland. The days were spent in orthodox holiday fashion. The following is condensed from notes written in detail at the time by Dr. Speer:—

On the 10th of August, after some other phenomena had occurred, a large globe of light rose opposite to me, sailed up to the level of our faces, and then vanished. Several more followed. By request one was placed in the centre of the table. It was surrounded with drapery. A light came and stood on the table close to me. "Now I will show you my hand" was rapped out. A large very bright light then came up, and inside of it appeared the materialised hand of the spirit. The fingers moved about close to my face; the appearance was as distinct as can be conceived. I was told to write an exact account of what had been done. The next evening I placed the account I had written and a pencil on the table, and asked that the light might be brought down upon it. This was done. I then asked that if possible the spirit would append his signature. The spirit said he would try. After other lights had been produced, the hand appeared outside the drapery, I heard the pencil moving, and repeating his instruction of the previous evening, he departed, leaving on the paper a specimen of direct spirit caligraphy.

On these two evenings no other sitter was present but myself.<sup>1</sup>

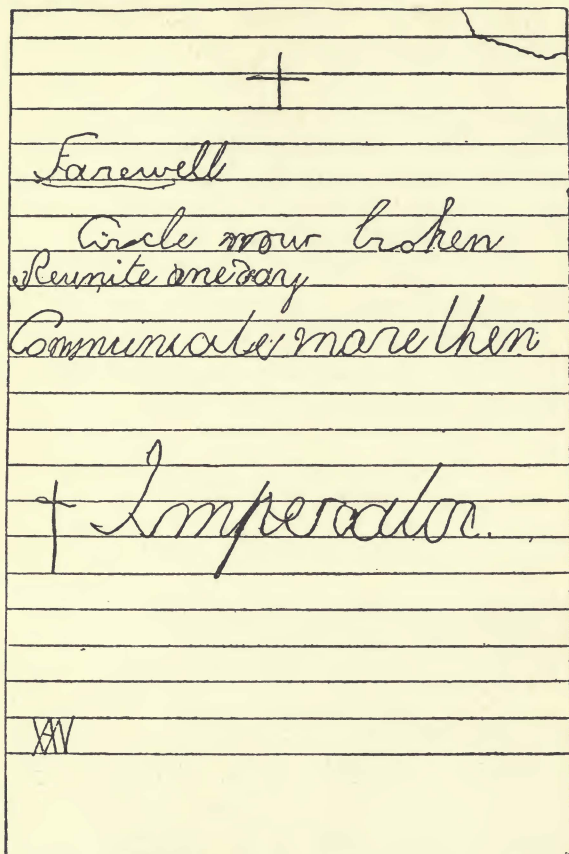
### DIRECT WRITING.

As has already been remarked, the wealth of material is so great that selection is a matter of difficulty. There is much more I should like to have included in this chapter, but it must be drawn to a close with a brief detailed account of a case of "Direct Writing." There is perhaps no phenomenon more incredible to the "beginner" in these studies, than that legible and intelligent writing should be produced without human agency, and yet there seems no other way of explaining the facts. The following is an account, by Mr. Stainton Moses himself, of a seance held on 19th September 1872, the last held before a break in the series during the autumn of that year. "Imperator" had recently announced himself as the leading guide or director of the phenomena.

"We darkened the seance room, leaving the gas burning brightly in the adjoining dining-room. Dr. and Mrs. Speer and I sat at the table. On the floor under the table we put a piece of ruled paper and a pencil. A corner of the paper I tore off, and handed it to Dr. Speer to identify the sheet of paper if necessary. Various raps, some objects brought in, and a noise rather like sawing wood. When light was called for, Mrs. Speer stooped down and picked up the paper. The upper surface was blank. Her endorsement on the back of the paper, afterwards written, reads: 'I took the paper from under

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 274-276.

the table with the writing downwards, i.e. on the



Facsimile reduced from original. The paper was blue, with faint blue lines. The corner at the top right hand was torn off for identification of the paper.

surface touching the carpet. Dr. Speer and I wrote and signed this endorsement: 'The above corner

was torn by me (S. M.) before the light was put out, and was given to Dr. S.' I (S. M.) afterwards put the two pieces together. They fit exactly, and are secured by a couple of halfpenny stamps, with the initials of Dr. S. and myself upon them. The message follows the rules exactly. A facsimile is appended, omitting only the initials of a deceased friend. It will be noticed that the writing is clearly and laboriously executed on the ruled lines. In no case are the lines deserted. I fancy the message is written backwards. Imperator's signature is of his usual decided type, very like what is automatically written by my hand. I suspect that the message was written by two hands."<sup>1</sup>

## CHAPTER VII

### "THE DIVINING ROD"

THE reality or otherwise of the pretensions of the "Divining Rod" come legitimately within the scope of the present inquiry. The physical results which, it is alleged, follow the use of the "Divining" or "Dowsing" Rod in certain hands are unexplained by recognised physical science. The main fact of the success of the Rod, as a means of finding water where all ordinary methods have failed, is, however, so widely acknowledged among intelligent persons, including many business men, that it will be unnecessary to devote much space to this chapter. I shall not do more than briefly refer to the scientific

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. pp. 284-286.



inquiry into the whole subject which has been made in recent years, and quote a few cases where success has attended the use of the Rod after other means had failed.

Here again we are mainly indebted to a member of the Society for Psychical Research for what has been done. In the early days of the Society, two or three members, especially the late Mr. E. Vaughan Jenkins, of Oxford, had assiduously collected the best testimony they could obtain as to the successful use of the Rod. This was placed at the disposal of the Society in 1884, and was amply sufficient to show that a strong *prima facie* case for fuller investigation existed.<sup>1</sup> In 1891, at the request of the Council of the Society, Professor W. F. Barrett, F.R.S., of Dublin, undertook to submit the whole subject to a thorough scientific and experimental research. The results of Professor Barrett's indefatigable industry over a number of years are embodied in two lengthy Reports, published in the *Proceedings* of the Society.<sup>2</sup> The following cases are quoted from Professor Barrett's records as examples of the work of different professional “dowsers.”

I. Mr. B. Tompkins, of Pipsmore Farm, Chippenham, Wilts, was the “diviner” in this case. Prior to 1890, Mr. Tompkins was a tenant farmer. Having been at some expense in endeavouring to obtain a good supply of water for his cattle, without success, he sent for Mr. Mullins, who came and found a spot where he said a plentiful supply of

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ii. pp. 79–107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. xiii. (Part XXXII.), pp. 2–282, and vol. xv. (Part XXXVI.), pp. 130–383.

water existed at a depth of less than 30 feet. A well was sunk, and at 15 feet deep a strong spring was tapped which has yielded an unfailing supply ever since. Mr. Tompkins finding that the forked twig moved in his own hands, tried some experiments on his own account which proved successful. He was then asked by Messrs. Smith and Marshall, of Chippenham, agents to the late Lord Methuen, to try and find a spring on Lord Methuen's estate, as a well already sunk had proved useless. After a long search the rod moved at a certain spot on a hillside where Mr. Tompkins predicted a good supply of water would be found. Nine feet of solid rock had to be blasted, but at 18 feet a spring was struck which rose 9 or 10 feet in the well. Messrs. Smith and Marshall subsequently wrote thus to Mr. Tompkins:—

“CHIPPENHAM, WILTS, and  
7 WHITEHALL PLACE, LONDON,  
*November 24, 1891.*

“The decision you arrived at was perfectly correct, and it is our opinion that if we had made the well 6 feet either way to the right or left of the spot you marked, we should have missed the water, which is now abundant.                   SMITH AND MARSHALL.”

This is by way of introduction to case 99 in Professor Barrett's Report.

“No. 99. Mr. Charles Maggs, who is a Wiltshire county magistrate, and proprietor of the Melksham Dairy Company, required a large supply of pure water for his butter factory, and, after ineffectual attempts to obtain it, wrote to Mr. Tompkins to come over and try the divining rod. This was

done, and subsequently Mr. Maggs writes to Mr. Tompkins as follows :—

“ ‘ MELKSHAM DAIRY COMPANY,  
November 10, 1890.

“ ‘ We found water at 30 feet, as stated by you at time of finding the spring—a very strong spring. Our hopes had almost gone, and faith was all but spent. . . .  
CHARLES MAGGS.’ ”

Professor Barrett wrote to Mr. Maggs, and received the following interesting letter in reply :—

“ BOWERHILL LODGE, MELKSHAM,  
March 8, 1897.

“ Briefly the facts are :—I sunk a well to find water for my dairy and found none. Then I wrote to Mr. Tompkins, who came the following day. He cut a forked stick out of the hedge, and having placed it over the well, said, ‘ There is no water here,’ but found a slight spring within 10 feet, too small to be of any service, he reported. He walked all over the field, and said he had not come across any spring at all. However, in the extreme corner of the field, a bunch of nettles was growing, and he entered this, and instantly exclaimed—‘ Here it is; and a good head of water, too ! Not running away, but just ready for tapping, and as soon as you strike it, it will come surging up.’ ‘ How deep ? ’ ‘ Not over 25 feet.’ He cut out a turf to indicate the spot, and we commenced sinking next day. The person employed was an old well-sinker, and he came to me two or three times whilst engaged in sinking, showing specimens of the soil or marl,

assuring me there never was water where such existed, and it was worse than useless to go further. I told him to go on if he had to get to New Zealand—it was my money, and he need not regard me nor my pocket. When he had gone about 22 feet, his pickaxe tapped the spring and the water came up like a fountain, and at such a rate he feared he should be drowned before he could get pulled up—his mates being away! The water rose rapidly to within 12 or 15 inches of the surface. We put in pumps and kept the water down whilst he went a little deeper, but the rush of water was such that we had to desist going lower. Since then we have had a splendid supply. . . . CHAS. MAGGS.”<sup>1</sup>

II. Mr. John Mullins and Mr. H. W. Mullins, father and son, Colerne, Chippenham, Wilts.

Mr. Mullins, sen., who died rather more than ten years ago, was for thirty years engaged all over Great Britain and Ireland in finding water by means of the divining rod. He was a professional well-sinker. His sons carry on their father’s business. One of them, Mr. H. W. Mullins, inherits his father’s faculty.

Cases Nos. 62 and 63 in Professor Barrett’s Report illustrate the powers of both father and son.

Mr. E. G. Allen writes:—

“HIGHFIELD, METHERINGHAM  
LINCOLN, March 25, 1893.

“Having frequently availed myself of Mr. John Mullins’ services during the last twenty years, I can say I have never known him to fail. I

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 145–148.

have sunk six wells, two on a heath farm about 30 feet deep (surrounding wells measuring about 70 feet) in limestone rock, thus saving a great expense in sinking. I took him one morning to a farm which was at that time farmed by the owner, the Right Hon. H. Chaplin, M.P. The well in the yard (nearly always dry) was about 30 feet deep. In a few minutes, Mullins, carrying in his hand his twig, found a good spring a very short distance from the old well. A new well was sunk, and at 10 feet a splendid supply of water was found. It has never failed, and has supplied the yards, &c., with water ever since.

“Being in want of water for a large grass field, called ‘Catley Abbey Field,’ I went with Mullins, who placed down a peg to denote a spring. We sunk a well, and bored 70 feet obtaining a good supply of water. Being struck with a peculiarity in its taste, it was submitted to Professor Attfield, Ph.D., who pronounced it to be the only natural seltzer spring in the kingdom. E. G. ALLEN.”<sup>1</sup>

The next case in Professor Barrett’s collection, No. 63, forms an interesting sequel to the above. The following is abridged from a long report, in the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* of 8th June 1895, of a visit of Mr. H. W. Mullins, son of Mr. John Mullins, to Catley Abbey:—

“The object of the Catley Abbey Company in sending for Mr. Mullins was to secure a well of pure water for bottle-washing. A well on the adjoining

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 88–89.



farm of Mr. Allen had run dry, and recently the seltzer water had been used for the purpose of bottle-washing. Eight years ago, Mr. J. Mullins, the father of the family, located the spot at Catley, where now stands the only natural seltzer spring in Britain. . . . Proceeding to the site of the dried-up well, Mullins took out a V-shaped twig, the forks of which were each about a foot long, and walked slowly along the ground a short distance from the well. Suddenly the twig revolved . . . and Mullins confidently asserted that he was standing over a subterranean watercourse. Proceeding to the other side of the well, he traced, or professed to trace, the course of the hidden stream, and marked a spot contiguous to the buildings where he asserted a good spring would be tapped at a depth of from 120 to 130 feet, and he advised that a well should be sunk there.

"It was told to Mullins that his father asserted the seltzer spring flowed under a hedge on the other side of the field in which we were then standing, and he was asked to indicate the place. Starting at one end of the field, he walked close by the hedge side. He had gone about 100 yards when the twig began to play, and digging his heel in the ground, he thus marked the spot. Mr. Allen, who was present when Mullins, sen., also located the spring, sent a man for a spade, and a stake was dug up which eight years ago was driven in by Mr. Allen to mark the place. Mullins, jun., had touched the spot exactly."

The same newspaper of 23rd August 1895 announces the result of digging in the spot indicated as follows:—

“Our readers will remember that a few weeks ago our columns contained an article relative to the finding of water at Catley Abbey by means of hazel twigs in the hands of Mr. Mullins, the eminent ‘dowser.’ We are now able to state that a well having been sunk in the position indicated by Mr. Mullins, a valuable supply of water has been obtained, and that at a depth of about 5 feet less than that mentioned by him.”

Professor Barrett says: “I sent Mr. Allen the foregoing account, and asked if it were correct. He replies that it is perfectly accurate, the facts being most interesting, and occurred as stated in the letter and newspaper report.”<sup>1</sup>

III. Mr. Leicester Gataker, Crescent Gardens, Bath, who is a gentleman by birth and education, soon after leaving Bath College, discovered to his surprise that a forked twig revolved in his hands in the same way as it did with a local “diviner.” The following is Case 123 in Professor Barrett’s Report:—

“Mr. Gataker states that, being engaged by Messrs Ruscombe Poole & Son, the well-known solicitors of Bridgwater, he found a spring less than 14 feet deep, and within 3 or 4 yards of a useless well, 20 feet deep, sunk prior to his visit. In corroboration he encloses the following letter:—

“‘BRIDGWATER, SOMERSET, *July* 1896.

“‘We have sunk a well in the garden, and a copious spring has been found at 13 feet 6 inches, which amply verifies your prediction.

“‘J. RUSCOMBE POOLE & SON.’”

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. pp. 89–90.

Professor Barrett says : " I wrote to Mr. Ruscombe Poole, and asked him if Mr. Gataker's statements were correct, and he replies :—

“ BRIDGWATER, *January 15, 1897.*

“ We return the paper you sent us. As regards the statement that there was a well about 20 feet deep which was useless, this is perfectly true, because the water in it was foul and smelt badly. The supply found is a very much more copious one than the old well, which contained very little water.’ ” <sup>1</sup>

The Index to Professor Barrett's Reports enumerates between three and four hundred persons with whom experiments with the Divining Rod are described. A list of the names of "dowsers" is also given. This list includes the names of about seventy professional "dowsers," and of nearly as many amateur "dowsers." These figures show the extent to which the use of the rod prevails, and also the work which the preparation of the Reports involved. As a specimen of the kind of evidence presented by Professor Barrett from miscellaneous sources, the following may be quoted :—

"In the present Report numerous independent witnesses of unimpeachable integrity, and some with high scientific attainments, testify to the same class of facts, viz.:—(1) The automatic and apparently irresistible motion of the twig in the hands often of a complete novice; and (2) that,

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiii. p. 182.

when the forked twig does *not* move in a person's hands, if the dowser takes one link of the twig, or even places his hand on the wrist of the insensitive person, the previously inert twig now turns vigorously and often breaks in two in the effort to resist its motion. As regards (1), see the letter from the President of the Royal Geological Society of Cornwall on p. 219,<sup>1</sup> who states that the Clerk of his Parish Council, on finding the rod suddenly twist in his hands, called out—‘It is alive, sir, it is alive!’ Mr. Enys adds: ‘This exactly describes the sensation when the rod moves.’ . . . Mr. Bennett, of Oxford, on p. 176, refers to the frantic motion and the ultimate breaking of the twig ‘held firmly’ in the dowser's hands. . . . As regards (2), see Mr. Morton's letter to *The Engineer*, given on p. 172; Mr. Morton found the rod would not move in his hands, but when the late John Mullins, the dowser, ‘laid his hands on my wrists and grasped them firmly, then the twig instantly began to turn, and continued turning till he removed his hands. He never touched the twig while it was in my hands.’ Mr. Montague Price in his letter on p. 181 states: ‘I held one side of the forked rod myself and the diviner the other, and when we came to water [alleged underground water] the strain was so great on my fingers I was obliged to ask him to stop. From the position of the rod it was almost impossible for him to produce the pressure, which increased with the strength of the stream.’ . . .

“The usual practice, after watching a dowser at

<sup>1</sup> The pages in *this* paragraph refer to the present Report (*i.e.* *Proceedings S.P.R.*; vol. xv. pp. 130–383).



work, is for some of the onlookers to try if the forked twig will move in their hands. Generally speaking, one or more, out of perhaps ten or twelve persons, discover, to their astonishment, that the twig curls up in their hands—at the same places at which it did with the dowser. Here is such an experience. Mrs. Hollands writes to me as follows:—

“‘DENE PARK, TONBRIDGE, *October 9, 1899.*

“‘In answer to your note of inquiry about the divining rod, the whole thing is rather a long story, but the practical result of the water dowser’s visit was to find water which now supplies the house. One of my daughters found she had the strange power which moves the divining rod, and it works for her now quickly over any spring. It is most interesting, as you can feel the rod move if you take one side of it, and take one of her hands, she holding the other end of the rod—it struggles up, and would break off altogether if you did not allow it to move. My daughter has since found several springs on the estate, where we have sunk wells. They have stood us in very good stead these last dry seasons.

MINNIE HOLLANDS.’

“A similar experience is given by Miss M. Craigie Halkett, who published some excellent photographs of a dowser at work in *Sketch* for 23rd August 1899. Miss Halkett writes to me as follows:—

LAURISTON, NEW ELTHAM, KENT,  
*September 8, 1899.*

“The man depicted in the photographs is not a water-finder by profession. He is a tenant



farmer residing at Catcott, a village near Bridgwater, and merely exercises the art to oblige his neighbours. Several of the country people in this neighbourhood (Somerset) have the gift. It has never been known to fail. Personally I was rather sceptical on the subject, but was converted by the stick turning in my hands when standing over a spring. There were about six persons present at the time; all tried it, but it would turn for no one excepting the man in the picture and myself. I experienced a sort of tingling sensation in my arms and wrists, but otherwise was quite unaware when the forked stick began to turn, it seemed to go over so quickly.

“ MAUDE CRAIGIE HALKETT.”

“ Miss Halkett does not say how she knew she was ‘standing over a spring’ when the twig turned in her hands; this statement is very characteristic of many others that have reached me.”<sup>1</sup>

Professor Barrett’s views as to the source of the power which moves the rod are entitled to more attention than those of any one else. In a chapter on “Theoretical Conclusions” in the first of his two Reports, he says: “Few will dispute the proposition that the motion of the forked twig is due to unconscious muscular action.” He then gives a summary of the causes which, he believes, determine that action. Among these he enumerates, impressions from without unconsciously made upon the dowser’s mind from his own trained observation and practice, and from bystanders. He also believed

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xv. pp. 279–281.

that in some cases an impression appears to be gained through Thought-Transference. He did not, however, think this covered the whole ground. A peculiar pathological effect is produced on the dowser; but to what this is due can only be ascertained by persevering and unbiassed investigation.

Professor Barrett's second Report contains a long and interesting discussion of this problem. His views had undergone some modification. He adheres to his previous view that the "curious phenomena attending the *motion* of the so-called divining rod are capable of explanation by causes known to science" (*e.g.* involuntary muscular action). But he has become more impressed with the view that the suggestion may arise "from some kind of transcendental discernment possessed by the dowser's subconscious self." And he further says: "For my own part, I am disposed to think that this cause, though less acceptable to science, will be found to be a truer explanation of the more striking successes of a good dowser." In conclusion Professor Barrett says still more definitely: "This subconscious perceptive power, commonly called 'clairvoyance,' may provisionally be taken as the explanation of those successes of the dowser which are inexplicable on any grounds at present known to science."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xv. p. 314. See also the whole discussion of which this page is the conclusion.

## CHAPTER VIII

## THOUGHT-TRANSFERENCE DRAWINGS

THERE is one, and perhaps only one phase of the great subject of Thought-Transference or Telepathy the manifestations of which can legitimately be included among physical phenomena. Involuntary drawing or scribbling is a phenomenon of very common occurrence. But when such an involuntary drawing turns out to be a more or less exact copy of a drawing which the involuntary draughtsman has never seen; and still further when it turns out that the original drawing has been drawn by another person with the deliberate purpose of impressing it on the mind of the involuntary draughtsman, the subject assumes an entirely new interest. This, however, is the history of those series of "Thought-Transference Drawings" which have been published by the Society for Psychical Research. They are scattered through several volumes of its publications. Through the kindness of the Council of that Society I am able to put before the reader the largest selection of these drawings which has appeared. The drawings are the results of several different groups of experimenters in different parts of the country; and the selection has been made from as many groups as possible. In all cases facsimiles of the original drawing and of the reproduction are given. The earlier series done under the auspices of a Committee of the Society do not represent successes picked out of a large number of failures, but include

all the attempts made at the time. The number that can be considered total failures in any of the trials is exceedingly small. Any conceivable chance or coincidence is entirely inadequate to account for the similarity in the great majority of cases.

The "First Report on Thought-Reading" was written by Professor W. F. Barrett, Mr. Gurney, and Mr. Myers, and was read at the first General Meeting of the Society on 17th July 1882. In order to illustrate the then state of scientific opinion, the writers say: "The present state of scientific opinion throughout the world is not only hostile to any belief in the possibility of transmitting a single mental concept except through the ordinary channels of sensations, but, generally speaking, it is hostile even to any inquiry upon the matter. Every leading physiologist and psychologist down to the present time has relegated what, for want of a better term, has been called "Thought-Reading" to the limbo of explored fallacies."<sup>1</sup> A second Report by the same writers was read at a meeting of the Society in the same year. In this Report the first series of "Thought-Transference Drawings" was described.

The method of proceeding was as follows:—A. makes an outline sketch of a geometrical figure, or of something a little more elaborate. B. sees this sketch, and carrying it in his mind goes and stands behind C., who sits with a pencil and paper before him and draws the impression which arises in his mind. Precautions are taken against the conveyance of information by any ordinary means. Except in a few of the earliest trials no contact between any of

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. i. p. 13.



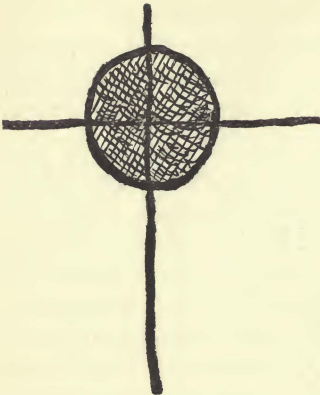
the parties was permitted. B. and C. are called respectively "transmitter" and "receiver."

In December 1882, Mr. Myers and Mr. Gurney paid a visit to Brighton to personally investigate some joint experiments of Mr. Douglas Blackburn and Mr. G. Albert Smith. Both Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Smith were then, or soon after became, members of the Society for Psychical Research. The experiments were made in Mr. Myers' and Mr. Gurney's own lodgings. The following plan, arranged in regard to some experiments made on 4th December, is thus described by Mr. Myers: "One of us completely out of sight of S. [Mr. Smith] drew some figure at random, the figure being of such a character that its shape could not be easily conveyed in words. . . . The figure, drawn by us, was then shown to B. [Mr. Blackburn] for a few moments, S. being seated all the time with his back to us, and blindfolded, in a distant part of the same room, and subsequently in an adjoining room. B. looked at the figure drawn; then held S.'s hand for a while; then released it. After being released, S. (who remained blindfolded) drew the impression of a figure which he had received. . . . In no case was there the smallest possibility that S. could have seen the original figure; and in no case did B. touch S., even in the slightest manner, while the figure was being drawn."

The whole series of drawings done in this way, on that occasion, is given in the Report in the *S.P.R. Proceedings*. They were nine in number. We have selected two, Nos. 5 and 9.

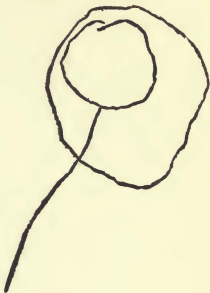
No. 5 calls for no special remark.



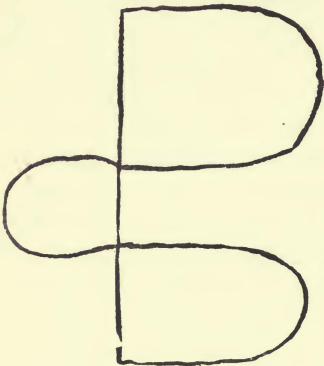


ORIGINAL

No. 5.

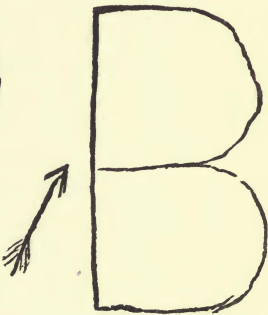


REPRODUCTION



ORIGINAL

No. 9.



REPRODUCTION

When the reproduction of No. 9 was drawn, Mr. S. touched the spot to which the arrow points, and said: "There is something more there, but I cannot tell what it is."

In the experiments made subsequently to these, the conditions were still more stringent, and no contact whatever was allowed between Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Smith; and it will be seen that striking and successful results were obtained.

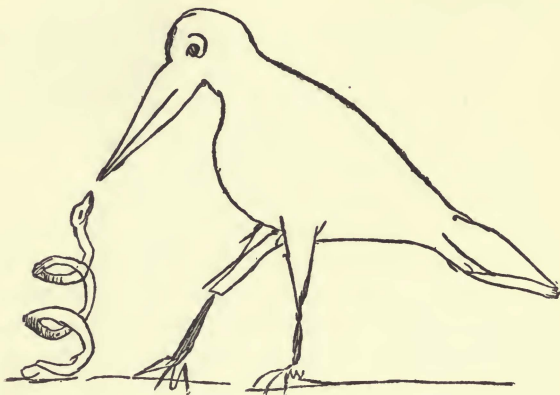
A few weeks later, in January 1883, at the invitation of the Committee of the Society for Psychical Research, Mr. Blackburn and Mr. Smith came from Brighton, and a series of experiments was conducted at the Rooms the Society then occupied in Dean's Yard, Westminster. For the Report embodying the results of these experiments, Mr. Myers, Mr. Gurney, and Professor Barrett are specially responsible. Two drawings, Nos. 10 and 11, are selected from a series of twenty-two made on this occasion.

As to No. 10, Mr. S. had no idea that the original was not a geometrical diagram. Nor had he any clue given him as to the character of No. 11. He added the line marked *b* some time after he had drawn the line marked *a*, saying that he saw "a line parallel to another somewhere."

The authors of this Report say: "It is almost needless to point out that in these observations so foreign to our common experience, it is indispensable to be minutely careful and conscientious in recording the exact conditions of each experiment." The reader is referred to the Report itself to show how this was carried out; and also to show how exhaustively every possibility was considered by

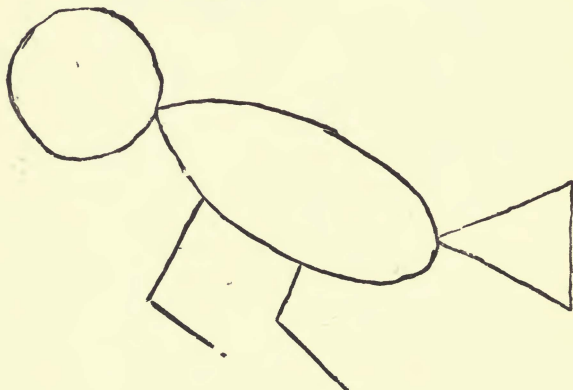
means of which information could be conceived to be conveyed through any recognised channel.

No 10.



ORIGINAL

No. 10.



REPRODUCTION

Mr. Smith had no idea that the original was not a geometrical diagram.

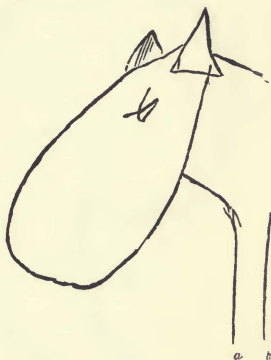
An entirely different group of experimenters set to work in Liverpool. Mr. Malcolm Guthrie, J.P., was a partner in one of the large drapery establishments, and Mr. James Birchall was the Hon. Secretary of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool. Their interest was aroused in the subject of Thought-Transference, and they carried

No. II.



ORIGINAL

No. II.



REPRODUCTION

Mr. Smith had no idea that the original was not a geometrical diagram. He added line *b* some time after he had drawn line *a*, "seeing a line parallel to another somewhere."

out a very large number of experiments with some of the young ladies employed in Mr. Guthrie's establishment, who, "amusing themselves after business hours, found that certain of their number, when blindfolded, were able to name very correctly figures selected from an almanack suspended on the wall of the room, when their companions having

hold of their hands, fixed their attention on some particular day of the month." This led to serious experiments, including about one hundred and fifty Thought-Transference Drawings. The conditions were carefully guarded, and in the majority of cases no contact was permitted. There were many failures, but a large number of successes. Assistance as

No. 2.



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION

Mr. Guthrie and Miss E. no contact.

"transmitter" was also given by Mr. F. S. Hughes, a member of the Society for Psychical Research. In a report by Mr. Guthrie, published in the *Proceedings* of the Society, sixteen of these drawings are given. Nos. 2 and 15 are selected. In neither of these was any contact between "transmitter" and "receiver" permitted. In No. 2, Mr. Guthrie was



"transmitter" and Miss Edwards "receiver." In No. 15, Mr. F. S. Hughes was "transmitter" and Miss Edwards "receiver." With regard to the second, Miss Edwards said, "It is like a mask at a pantomime," and immediately drew the reproduction.

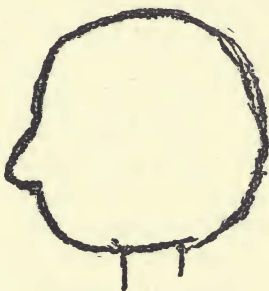
Mr. Malcolm remarks in his Report: "The drawings must speak for themselves. The principal facts to be borne in mind are that they have been

No. 15.



ORIGINAL

Mr. Hughes and Miss E. no contact.



REPRODUCTION

Miss E. said, "It is like a mask at a pantomime," and immediately drew as above.

executed through the instrumentality as agents [transmitters] of persons of unquestioned probity, and that the responsibility for them is spread over a considerable group of such persons, while the conditions to be observed were so simple—for they amounted really to nothing more than taking care that the original should not be seen by the subject [receiver]—that it is extremely difficult to suppose them to have been eluded."

Mr. Guthrie, having satisfied himself as to the reality of the phenomena of Thought-Transference, as manifested by the drawings, and in other ways, endeavoured to interest the scientific men of Liverpool. He naturally appealed among others to Sir Oliver Lodge, who was then Professor of Physics in University College, Liverpool. He accepted the invitation, and subsequently gave "An Account of Some Experiments in Thought-Transference" to the Society for Psychical Research, of which he was already an unofficial member, and which account is published in the Society's *Proceedings*.

The Report commences with a tribute, "since it bears on the questions of responsibility and genuineness," to the important position Mr. Guthrie held in Liverpool, as an active member of the governing bodies of several public institutions, including the University College. Sir Oliver Lodge then says:—

"After Mr. Guthrie had laboriously carried out a long series of experiments . . . he set about endeavouring to convince such students of science as he could lay his hands upon in Liverpool; and with this object he appealed to me, among others, to come and witness, and within limits modify, the experiments in such a way as would satisfy me of their genuineness and perfect good faith. Yielding to his entreaty, I consented, and have been, I suppose, at some dozen sittings, at first simply looking on so as to grasp the phenomena, but afterwards taking charge of the experiments. . . . In this way I had every opportunity of examining and varying the minute conditions of the phenomena, so as to satisfy myself of their genuine and

objective character, in the same way as one is accustomed to satisfy oneself as to the truth and genuineness of any ordinary physical fact.

"I did not feel at liberty to modify the experiments very largely, in other words to try essentially new ones. . . . I only regarded it as my business to satisfy myself as to the genuineness and authenticity of the phenomena already described by Mr. Guthrie. If I had merely witnessed facts as a passive spectator I should most certainly not publicly report upon them. So long as one is bound to accept imposed conditions and merely witness what goes on, I have no confidence in my own penetration, and am perfectly sure that a conjurer could impose upon me, possibly even to the extent of making me think that he was not imposing on me; but when one has the control of the circumstances, can change them at will, and arrange one's own experiments, one gradually acquires a belief in the phenomena observed quite comparable to that induced by the repetition of ordinary physical experiments."

Sir Oliver Lodge then describes in detail the method of procedure, in the course of which he says:—

"We have many times succeeded with agents ['transmitters'] quite disconnected with the percipient ['receiver'] in ordinary life and sometimes complete strangers to them. Mr. Birchall, the headmaster of the Birkdale Industrial School, frequently acted; and the house physician at the Eye and Ear Hospital, Dr. Shears, had a successful experiment, acting alone, on his first and only visit. All suspicion of a pre-arranged code is thus ren-

dered impossible even to outsiders who are unable to witness the obvious fairness of all the experiments."

Sir Oliver Lodge then gives the details of twenty-seven experiments. From these four are selected. Descriptions, in Sir O. Lodge's own words, are condensed.

(1) "Mr. Birchall, agent—Miss R., percipient, holding hands. No one else present except myself. A drawing of a Union Jack pattern. As usual in drawing experiments, Miss R. remained silent for perhaps a minute; then she said, 'Now I am ready.' I hid the object; she took off the handkerchief and

No. 1.



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION

proceeded to draw on paper placed ready in front of her. She this time drew all the lines of the figure except the horizontal middle one. She was obviously much tempted to draw this, and indeed began it two or three times faintly, but ultimately said, 'No, I'm not sure,' and stopped."

(2) "Double object. I arranged the double object between Miss R——d and Miss E., who happened to be sitting nearly facing one another. Miss R——d and Miss E. both acting as agents. The drawing was a square on one side of the paper, and a cross on the other. Miss R——d looked at the side with the square on it, Miss E. looked at the side with the cross. Neither knew what the other was looking at—nor did the percipient know that

anything unusual was being tried. There was no contact. Very soon, Miss R. (percipient) said, 'I see things moving about. . . . I seem to see two things. . . . I see first one up there and then one down there. . . . I can't see either distinctly.' 'Well, anyhow, draw what you have seen.' She

No. 2.



ORIGINAL

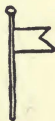


REPRODUCTION

took off the bandage and drew first a square, and then said, 'Then there was the other thing as well, . . . afterwards they seemed to go into one,' and she drew a cross inside the square from corner to corner, adding afterwards, 'I don't know what made me put it inside.'"

(3) "Object—a drawing of the outline of a flag. Miss R. as percipient, in contact with Miss E. as agent. Very quickly Miss R. said, 'It's a little flag.' And when asked to draw, she drew it fairly

No. 3.



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION

well but perverted. I showed her the flag (as usual after a success), and then took it away to the drawing place to fetch something else. I made another drawing, but instead of bringing it I brought the flag back again and set it up in the same place as



before, but inverted. There was no contact this time. Miss R——d and Miss E. were acting as agents. After some time Miss R. said, 'No, I can't see anything this time. I still see that flag. . . . The flag keeps bothering me. . . . I shan't do it this time.' Presently I said, 'Well, draw what you saw anyway.' She said, 'I only saw the same flag, but perhaps it had a cross on it.' So she drew a flag in the same position as before, but added a cross to it."

(4) "Object—a teapot cut out of silver paper. Present—Dr. Herdman, Miss R——d, and Miss R. Miss E. percipient. Miss R. holding percipient's hands, but all thinking of the object. Told nothing. She said, 'Something light. . . . No colour. . . . Looks like a duck. . . . Like a silver duck. . . . Something oval. . . . Head at one end and tail at the other.' . . . The object being rather large, was then moved further back, so that it might be more

No. 4.



ORIGINAL



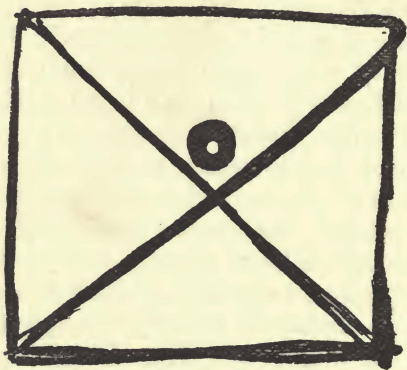
REPRODUCTION

easily grasped by the agents as a whole, but percipient persisted that it was like a duck. On being told to unbandage and draw, she drew a rude and perverted copy of the teapot, but didn't know what it was unless it was a duck. Dr. Herdman then explained that he had been thinking all the time how like a duck the original teapot was, and in fact had been thinking more of ducks than teapots."

In the autumn of 1891 Sir Oliver Lodge was staying for a fortnight in the house of Herr von Lyro at Portschach am See, Carinthia. While there he found that the two adult daughters of his host were adepts in the so-called "willing game." The speed and accuracy with which the willed action was performed left little doubt in his mind that there was some genuine thought-transference power. He obtained permission to make a series of test experiments, the two sisters acting as agent and percipient alternately. He hoped gradually to secure the phenomena without contact of any kind. But unfortunately contact seemed essential, though of the slightest description, for instance through the backs of the knuckles. Sir Oliver Lodge says: "It was interesting and new to me to see how clearly the effect seemed to depend on contact, and how abruptly it ceased when contact was broken. While guessing through a pack of cards, for instance, rapidly and continuously, I sometimes allowed contact, and sometimes stopped it; and the guesses changed, from frequently correct to quite wild, directly the knuckles or finger tips, or any part of the skin of the two hands ceased to touch. It was almost like breaking an electric circuit."

As Sir Oliver Lodge remarks, it is obvious how strongly this suggests the idea of a code, and that therefore this flaw prevents these experiments from having any value as tests, or as establishing *de novo* the existence of the genuine power. But apart from the moral conviction that unfair practices were extremely unlikely, Sir Oliver Lodge says that there was a sufficient amount of internal evidence derived

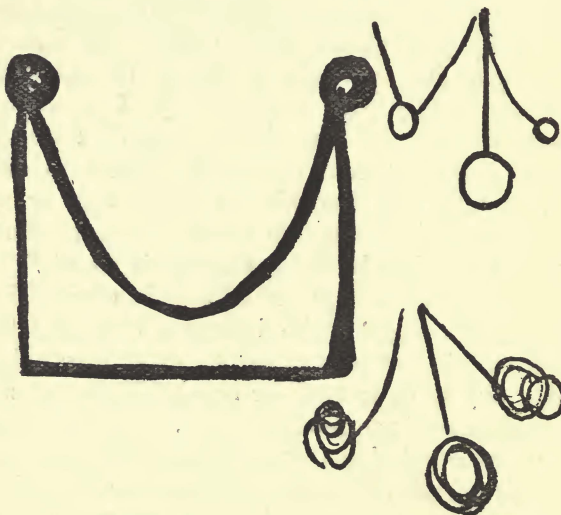
from the facts themselves to satisfy him that no code was used. As examples, two from a series of twelve drawings are given.



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION



ORIGINAL

REPRODUCTIONS

In 1894, Mr. Henry G. Rawson, barrister-at-law, made a long and interesting series of experiments in Thought-Transference, a Report of which was published in vol. xi. of the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. The Report includes fifteen originals and reproductions of drawings. Two sisters, Mrs. L. and Mrs. B., were the operators ; and on the



ORIGINAL

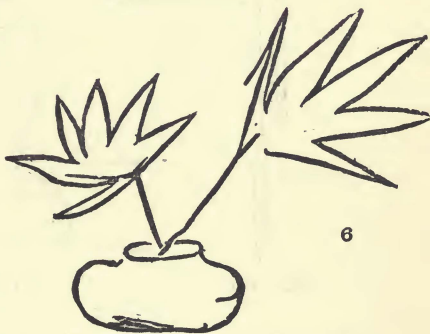


REPRODUCTION

5



ORIGINAL



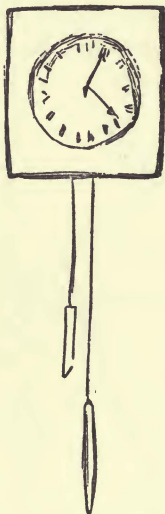
REPRODUCTION

6

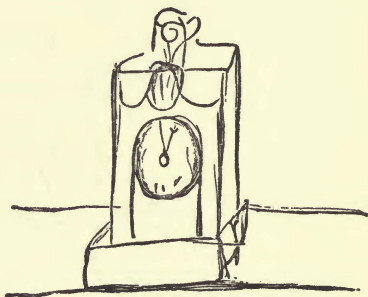
two evenings when the two series of drawings were executed, from which the accompanying selections are made, Mr. Rawson was the only other person present. On both occasions, Mrs. L. sat on a chair near the fire, Mrs. R. sat at a table many feet off, with her back to Mrs. L., and Mr. Rawson stood or sat where he could see both ladies.

Nos. 5 and 6 of the first series are here reproduced.

The following selection is from the second series. Mr. Rawson says respecting it: "Mrs. L. began drawing within ten to fifteen seconds, and presently said, 'I am drawing something I can see.'"



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION

The clock was in front of her on the mantelpiece." It would seem as though the idea of a clock was thought-transferred at once; but that the working out of the idea in the mind was modified by what the percipient happened to see before her.

A final selection of Thought-Transference Drawings will be taken from the records of several series of experiments of different kinds made in 1897 and 1898 by Professor A. P. Chattock, of University

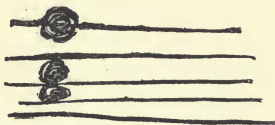


College, Bristol. The drawings were made with two old students of Professor Chattock's, Mr. Wedmore and Mr. Clinker.

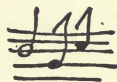
No. 6 of a series done at Harrow, September 1897. Agents, Professor Chattock and R. C. Clinker. Percipient, E. B. Wedmore. E. B. W. about three yards from agents, with lamp and table between. To reproduction (1) these words are added: "I thought of these, and then suggested we should try three musical notes." And to reproduction (2) these words are added: "Got this result."

No. 1 of a series done in London, a little later.

No. 6.



ORIGINAL

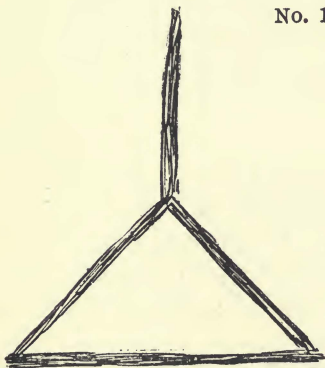


REPRODUCTION (1).



REPRODUCTION (2).

No. 1.



ORIGINAL



REPRODUCTION

Agent, E. B. Wedmore. Percipient, R. Wedmore.

The reproduction was drawn in about one and a half minutes after the sitting commenced.

The Report of the various series of experiments is printed in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research for November 1898.

Instead of giving detailed references to all the quotations in the descriptions of these various Thought-Transference Drawings, a list of the several Reports is appended. They can be referred to for further information.<sup>1</sup>

Second Report of the S.P.R. Committee. *Proceedings*, vol. i., part ii., 1882. See p. 92.

Third Report of the S.P.R. Committee. *Proceedings*, vol. i., part iii., 1883. See pp. 94, 95.

Experiments in Thought-Transference, by Malcolm Guthrie. *Proceedings*, vol. ii., part v., 1884. See pp. 96, 97.

Experiments in Thought-Transference, by Oliver J. Lodge, D.Sc. *Proceedings*, vol. ii., part vi., 1884. See pp. 100-102.

Some Recent Thought-Transference Experiments, by Oliver J. Lodge. *Proceedings*, vol. vii., part xx., 1891. See p. 104.

Experiments in Thought-Transference, by Henry G. Rawson. *Proceedings*, vol. xi., part xxvii., 1894. See pp. 105, 106.

Experiments in Thought-Transference, by Professor A. P. Chattock. *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. xiii., No. 153, Nov. 1898. See p. 107.

During the last few years no important addition appears to have been made to the series of Thought-Transference Drawings. A revival of similar experiments would be of great interest and value.

The question may fairly be asked, What have

<sup>1</sup> A list of all the publications of the Society for Psychical Research, with prices of the different volumes and parts, can be obtained from the Secretary, at the Society's Rooms, 20 Hanover Square, London, W.

these Thought-Transference Drawings to do with the Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism? A reply is easily given. The reader is referred to a passage in the concluding chapter, quoted from Mr. Myers, in which he claims an exalted position for Telepathy, as almost the fundamental doctrine of Spiritualistic Philosophy. He speaks of the beginning of Telepathy as a "quasi-mechanical transference of ideas and images from one to another brain." The Thought-Transference Drawings constitute the primary evidence of this. They may be looked upon as constituting the physical basis of a belief in Thought-Transference, and therefore as the physical basis of a belief in Telepathy, the action of which, as Mr. Myers says, "was traced across a gulf greater than any space of earth or ocean—it bridged the interval between spirits incarnate and discarnate." Thus we may look upon these Thought-Transference Drawings as supplying the chief—perhaps the only—physical basis for a belief in one of the main doctrines of spiritualism. Hence they legitimately find a place in the present examination.

## CHAPTER IX

### MATERIALISATIONS

By "materialisation," in this chapter, is not meant the production of more or less complete portions of the human body—generally hands—a phenomenon alleged to be frequent in spiritualistic circles. A

“materialisation” of the whole figure is meant, the production of a figure which to the spectator appears as a new human being, so to speak, occasionally exhibiting signs of independent organic life. Such a phenomenon would be the most astounding that can well be imagined. I am not in a position to offer any scientific evidence in its support. By far the majority of the accounts which have been published of full form “materialisations” are destitute of any evidential value, and in many cases the circumstantial evidence for fraud is strong. Were it not for a small number of cases which present *prima facie* evidence of a different character, the question of the reality of this phase of “mediumship” would be scarcely worth raising. But the existence of even a small amount of evidence of such a kind raises the question into a different position, to one which reasonably demands the searching investigation of scientific men. I propose to give one illustration only of this better class of evidence, but it is one in which common-sense precautions against deception seem to have been carefully taken.

The following extracts are from a report made by Mr. J. Slater, and published in *The Two Worlds* of 15th February 1895:—

“IS MATERIALISATION A FACT? YES. SCIENTIFIC PROOF.

“After the recent suspicions and exposures of materialising mediums, I determined to take the first opportunity of applying further and more

stringent tests, which should absolutely preclude the possibility of deception. For this purpose I wrote to the Middlesbro' materialising medium, asking for a test sitting, and stating the conditions—which he readily accepted. . . .

“The conditions were that he should strip to the skin ‘naked as he was born,’ and in the presence of witnesses dress in clothes to be supplied by me. . . .

“I made him understand that after he had dressed in the clothes supplied by me, he must consider himself in my charge, and must not attempt to do or touch anything, or go anywhere except to the chair provided for him. He readily agreed to this, and imposed upon himself a still further test, viz. that as soon as the phenomena had ceased, he would instantly place himself in our charge, to be held fast until the light was turned up, and the company had retired to the next room, the same process of undressing being gone through.”

This was all carried out preliminary to a seance, and a final examination of the room was made.

“The light was then lowered so that we could just see each other—the company sang a hymn, a prayer was offered, and then came the crisis—to be or not to be? In less than a minute a form of exceeding whiteness appeared at the opening of the curtain. I should judge the height to be three feet six inches or a little more. We could not distinguish the face. The form appeared twice. Then a child form appeared, its raiment white, luminous and very distinct. Then came the well-known and



lively black child, opening the curtain with her small arms and bowing repeatedly to us. This child would be about two and a half feet in height. The folds of shining drapery hung from her head in gipsy fashion, which she opened for us to see her round black face. I was quite close to her, but did not pat her face and woolly head as I have done before. She climbed upon the medium's knee, and then came close to us again, and then disappeared. . . .

"The meeting then concluded with prayer and doxology. We then seized hold of the medium's hands, and held him until the company retired, and then went through the undressing and dressing process as before, every article of clothing being rigidly examined as removed. We then searched the corner as before, and found all intact, and not a sign anywhere of the abundance of drapery we had seen."

Sixteen ladies and gentlemen present at the meeting allowed their names to be published as a testimony to what they saw. The evidential value of the seance depends entirely on the honesty and truthfulness of Mr. Slater and of the two friends who assisted him in the carrying out of the precautions taken.

Mr. Slater had been in the York Post Office for over thirty years, and for nearly seven years before his death in 1902 had occupied the position of superintendent. Mr. Slater was a frequent contributor to the newspaper press of his own district, and also occasionally to other periodicals. He appears to have been a man of considerable in-

telligence and force of character, and to have been widely respected. I am informed by Mr. J. P. Slater, a son of Mr. J. Slater, and who is in the Post Office at York, that the name of the “Middlesbro’ medium” was Kenwin, and that he was an “ordinary working man” in some steel works. He died six or seven years ago.

## CHAPTER X

### “SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY”

FOR over thirty years photographs have been taken in London, on which, when they were developed, figures appeared for the presence of which there seemed to be no physical cause. They appeared both with professional photographers and in private studios. Two or three professional photographers laid themselves out to encourage such appearances. Others were annoyed by them. One in particular, whom I knew personally, was greatly annoyed in this way, fearing it might injure his business. Naturally, but unfortunately, the term “spirit photographs” was invented. Unfortunately, because, granting the reality and genuineness of some of the results, it by no means follows that a “spirit” stood or sat for its portrait, as a human sitter does. Naturally also, various explanations were soon alleged, two being, either that the plates had been used before, and had been imperfectly cleaned, or that the results were produced by deliberate artifice and fraud on the part of the photographer. There is no doubt that artificial results can be obtained

in a variety of ways, which are extremely difficult, if not impossible to distinguish from the professed genuine article. It may therefore be said that no examination of a professed "spirit photograph," or as we should prefer to call it, a "psychic photograph," is sufficient to determine its nature and origin. The true test must be sought for in the conditions under which the photograph was taken. Very few of those who have had to do with "spirit photography" have possessed the necessary technical knowledge, and also been sufficiently careful, in the various stages of the process. The result is that scarcely any of the photographs shown as "spirit photographs" possess any evidential value. In common with several other alleged phenomena, but little attention has been given to the subject by scientific men, or by trained experimenters.

The most notable exception to this which I am able to quote is that of the late Mr. J. Traill Taylor, who was for a considerable time the editor of the *British Journal of Photography*. The following quotations are from a paper on "Spirit Photography" by Mr. Taylor. It was originally read before the London and Provincial Photographic Association in March 1893, and was reprinted in the *British Journal of Photography* for 26th May 1904, shortly after Mr. Taylor's death.

"Spirit photography, so called, has of late been asserting its existence in such a manner and to such an extent as to warrant competent men in making an investigation, conducted under stringent test conditions, into the circumstances under which such photographs are produced, and exposing the

fraud should it prove to be such, instead of pooh-poohing it as insensate because we do not understand how it can be otherwise—a position that scarcely commends itself as intelligent or philosophical. If, in what follows, I call it ‘spirit photography’ instead of psychic photography, it is only in deference to a nomenclature that extensively prevails. . . . I approach the subject merely as a photographer.”

Mr. Traill Taylor then gives a history of the earlier manifestations of “Spirit Photography,” and goes on to explain how striking phenomena in photographing what is invisible to the eye may be produced by the agency of fluorescence. He quotes the demonstration by Dr. Gladstone, F.R.S., at the Bradford Meeting of the British Association in 1873, showing that invisible drawings on white cards have produced bold and clear photographs when no eye could see the drawings themselves. Hence, as Mr. Taylor says, the photographing of an invisible image is not scientifically impossible.

Mr. Taylor then proceeds to describe some personal experiments. He says: “For several years I have experienced a strong desire to ascertain by personal investigation the amount of truth in the ever-recurring allegation that figures other than those visually present in the room appeared on a sensitive plate. . . . Mr. D., of Glasgow, in whose presence psychic photographs have long been alleged to be obtained, was lately in London on a visit, and a mutual friend got him to consent to extend his stay in order that I might try to get a psychic photograph under test conditions. To this he



willingly agreed. My conditions were exceedingly simple, were courteously expressed to the host, and entirely acquiesced in. They were, that I for the nonce would assume them all to be tricksters, and to guard against fraud, should use my own camera and unopened packages of dry plates purchased from dealers of repute, and that I should be excused from allowing a plate to go out of my own hand till after development unless I felt otherwise disposed; but that as I was to treat them as under suspicion, so must they treat me, and that every act I performed must be in the presence of two witnesses; nay, that I would set a watch upon my own camera in the guise of a duplicate one of the same focus—in other words, I would use a binocular stereoscopic camera and dictate all the conditions of operation. . . .

“Dr. G. was the first sitter, and for a reason known to myself, I used a monocular camera. I myself took the plate out of a packet just previously ripped up under the surveillance of my two detectives. I placed the slide in my pocket, and exposed it by magnesium ribbon which I held in my own hand, keeping one eye, as it were, on the sitter, and the other on the camera. There was no background. I myself took the plate from the dark slide, and, under the eyes of the two detectives, placed it in the developing dish. Between the camera and the sitter a female figure was developed, rather in a more pronounced form than that of the sitter. . . . I submit this picture. . . . I do not recognise her or any of the other figures I obtained, as like any one I know. . . .

“Many experiments of like nature followed; on



some plates were abnormal appearances, on others none. All this time, Mr. D. the medium, during the exposure of the plates, was quite inactive. . . .

"The psychic figures behaved badly. Some were in focus. Others not so. Some were lighted from the right, while the sitter was so from the left; some were comely, . . . others not so. Some monopolised the major portion of the plate, quite obliterating the material sitters. Others were as if an atrociously-badly vignetted portrait . . . were held up behind the sitter. But here is the point:—Not one of these figures which came out so strongly in the negative, was visible in any form or shape to me during the time of exposure in the camera, and I vouch in the strongest manner for the fact that no one whatever had an opportunity of tampering with any plate anterior to its being placed in the dark slide or immediately preceding development. Pictorially they are vile, but how came they there?

"Now all this time, I imagine you are wondering how the stereoscopic camera was behaving itself as such. It is due to the psychic entities to say that whatever was produced on one half of the stereoscopic plates was produced on the other, alike good or bad in definition. But on a careful examination of one which was rather better than the other, . . . I deduce this fact, that the impressing of the spirit form was not consentaneous with that of the sitter. This I consider an important discovery. I carefully examined one in the stereoscope, and found that, while the two sitters were stereoscopic *per se*, the psychic figure was absolutely flat. I also found that the psychic figure was at least a millimetre

higher up in one than the other. Now, as both had been simultaneously exposed, it follows to demonstration that, although both were correctly placed vertically in relation to the particular sitter behind whom the figure appeared, and not so horizontally, this figure had not only not been impressed on the plate simultaneously with the two gentlemen forming the group, but had not been formed by the lens at all, and that therefore the psychic image might be produced without a camera. I think this is a fair deduction. But still the question obtrudes: How came these figures there? I again assert that the plates were not tampered with by either myself or any one present. Are they crystallisations of thought? Have lens and light really nothing to do with their formation? The whole subject was mysterious enough on the hypothesis of an invisible spirit, whether a thought projection or an actual spirit, being really there in the vicinity of the sitter, but it is now a thousand times more so. . . .

“In the foregoing I have confined myself as closely as possible to narrating how I conducted a photographic experiment open to every one to make, avoiding stating any hypothesis or belief of my own on the subject.”

Two years later, in May 1895, the spiritualists held a General Conference in London, the proceedings of which extended over several days. At one of the meetings Mr. Traill Taylor read a paper under the title—“Are Spirit Photographs necessarily the Photographs of Spirits?” An abstract of this paper appears in *Light* (18th May 1895), and it is

printed in full in *Borderland* (July 1895). At the commencement of the paper, Mr. Taylor explained that light is the agent in the production of an ordinary photograph; but he says: “I have ascertained, to my own satisfaction at any rate, that light so called, so far as concerns the experiments I have made, has nothing to do with the production of a psychic picture, and that the lens and camera of the photographer are consequently useless incumbrances.” Following this up, Mr. Taylor says: “It was the realisation of this that enabled me at a certain seance recently held, at which many cameras were in requisition, to obtain certain abnormal figures on my plates when all others failed to do so. After withdrawing the slide from the camera, I wrapped it up in the velvet focussing cloth and requested the medium to hold it in his hand, giving him no clue as to my reason for doing so. A general conversation favoured the delay in proceeding to the developing room for about five or more minutes, during which the medium still held the wrapped-up slide. I then relieved him of it, and in the presence of others applied the developer, which brought to view figures in addition to that of the sitter.”

In making a categorical reply to the question which forms the title of his paper, Mr. Taylor replies—“No”—and gives various “surmises” to account for recognisable likenesses having been obtained. At the end of his paper Mr. Taylor says:—

“The influence of the mind of the medium in the obtaining of psychographs might be deduced from the fact of pictures having been obtained of angels

with wings, a still popular belief of some, as ridiculous in its conception as it is false in its anatomy, but still no less true in its photo-pictorial outcome. This does not in the slightest degree impair the genuineness and honesty of the medium, but it inspires me, a disbeliever in the wing notion, with the belief that spirit-photographs are not necessarily photographs of spirits.

“A concluding word: A medium may, on passing through a picture gallery, become impressed by some picture which, although forgotten soon after, may yet make a persistent appearance on his negative on subsequent occasions. My caution is that if such be published as a spirit photograph, care must be taken that no copyright of such picture is infringed. I have cases of this nature in my mind’s eye, but time does not permit of this being enlarged upon, else I could have recited several instances.”

It would be extremely interesting if we could have had these “several instances” recited. At all events, what Mr. Traill Taylor says is suggestive, and is well worth being borne in mind by any one investigating the subject. Some careful experiments have been made of late years, mostly, so far as I have heard, with inconclusive, or discouraging results. But I am not aware of any serious sustained study of the question by any English photographer since Mr. Traill Taylor’s death.



## CHAPTER XI

## THE SUMMING UP OF THE WHOLE MATTER

IN the preceding chapters the chief endeavour has been to present the scientific evidence in favour of the reality of a mass of alleged phenomena, so far unrecognised by science as facts. The chief object is to arouse interest, and to excite inquiry and investigation. It is difficult to imagine a more attractive undiscovered country than that which lies just outside the realm of recognised science, in the direction of such phenomena as have been under consideration. It is a country teeming with wonders, and with miraculous occurrences of endless variety. Miraculous to us, inasmuch as they are not subject to any "Laws of Nature" which we have discovered. The marvel is that there is not a rush of explorers into fields incomparably more fascinating than North or South Pole can present, and containing more treasure than gold-fields or diamond mines can ever yield.

The two chapters devoted to phenomena occurring in the presence of D. D. Home and W. Stainton Moses demand special reference. It is difficult to imagine two men differing more widely in almost every respect. Mr. Myers describes the even tenour of Mr. Stainton Moses' "straightforward and reputable life" as "inwoven with a chain of mysteries, which . . . make that life one of the most extraordinary which our century has seen."<sup>1</sup> He was a

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. ix. p. 252.



scholar, a literary man, and a clergyman of the Church of England. He had no worldly ambition or fondness for what is called "Society." Mr. D. D. Home, on the contrary, does not appear to have been a man who could have been termed a religious character, or spiritually-minded, nor did he give evidence of intellectual talent. But he had gained access to some of the highest society in Europe. And yet both men were "mediums" for these curious phenomena, to a wonderful extent, both as regards the amount and the variety of the manifestations. Although the two men were so different, there is a parallelism in the phenomena in so many respects, that a similar origin or source seems inevitably suggested. There were peculiarities special to each, but untouched movements of heavy articles, "levitations," lights, and sounds, were phenomena common to both. From whence does this "chain of mysteries" come? Is the source to be sought for in undiscovered powers and faculties of the men themselves, or in the action of other intelligences? That is a problem which must be left. It is outside the scope of this inquiry, which deals solely with the establishment of physical facts. But where can any other field be found of equal interest? Difficulties and perplexities meet the explorer in abundance. But they exist in order to be overcome by the same steady persistence which has attained its reward in many another direction.

With regard to two other chapters I desire also to make a special remark—those on "Materialisations" and "Spirit Photography." Both are physical phenomena. But I desire to make it plain that no

claim is made of being able to present evidence with regard to either of these subjects which should satisfy the reasonable demands of science. It may be asked—Why then introduce them at all? For two reasons: (1) Because the evidence in favour of both is only just outside the boundary of scientific demonstration. (2) Because of the extreme interest of the phenomena themselves.

As to “Materialisations.” Out of an immense mass of testimony, most of it of no evidential value, one case has been selected where more than ordinary care seems to have been taken. But the phenomenon is so marvellous, especially in its more perfect alleged phases, when the “materialised” form is scarcely distinguishable from a living breathing human being, that the inquirer is bound to hold his judgment in suspense until the last possible moment.

Again as to “Spirit Photography.” The term “Psychic Photography” would be far preferable, as implying no theory. The experiences of Mr. J. Traill Taylor, which I have selected as the sole illustration, appear to leave no moral doubt but that under certain circumstances photographs are produced which known laws are unable to explain. Definite and recognisable human figures and faces are thus obtained. But this is a very long way from proving that “spirits” sit or stand before the camera for their photographs to be taken!

If some trained experimenter in scientific research, who possesses an unbiassed mind, would devote himself for two or three years to the study of either of these classes of phenomena, it is almost a certainty

that he would be richly rewarded. Is there no one who will enter upon the task?

There is one large group of evidence, embracing most of the phenomena which have been under consideration, from which I had hoped to make copious selections, with pleasure to myself, and with interest to the reader. No living scientist has bestowed so large an amount of study on "certain phenomena usually termed spiritualistic" as Sir William Crookes. As long ago as the year 1874, Sir William Crookes gave permission for the reprint of a limited number of copies of various articles which he had contributed to the periodical literature of the day. These, with some other original matter, were published under the title of "Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism." That volume has long been out of print. In 1890, an article by Sir William Crookes, under the title of "Notes of Seances with D. D. Home," was published in volume vi. of the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. He also referred to his experiences with D. D. Home, in two addresses delivered at meetings of the Society in 1894 and in 1899. These are reported in the *Journal* of the Society. Sir William Crookes also devoted a portion of his address, as President of the British Association in 1898, to a reference to the part he took many years before in psychical research. This portion of the address was reprinted in volume xiv. of the *Proceedings* of the Society.

Considerations, which cannot be entered into here, compel me, however, to be content with referring the reader to the publications mentioned,

a study of which will, I think, bring conviction that the scientific evidence they contain would, even if it stood alone, be amply sufficient to prove the reality of the alleged phenomena.<sup>1</sup>

We are now warranted in the assertion that we have arrived at this position: That the careful reader is compelled to admit that the evidence in favour of a variety of alleged physical phenomena being undoubted facts, is too strong to be resisted. We are accustomed to say in ordinary life, the proof of this or that is complete. The man of science is accustomed to say in his own sphere of inquiry, the proof of this or that is complete. Applying the same rules of evidence to physical phenomena generally called spiritualistic, we are bound to admit that in regard to many of them the proof of their reality is complete. Yet these facts are not recognised by the world of science, and are scarcely deemed worthy of any serious attention by the majority of intelligent people.

It may be worth while to consider for a few moments the mode in which new knowledge enters the mind. By new knowledge is meant not extension of existing knowledge, but facts of a new order, such, for instance, as the rising of a heavy dining table into the air without any recognised physical cause being apparent. The difficulty of admitting new facts of this kind to the mind is not

<sup>1</sup> The references to these contributions are: *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 98-127; *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. vi. pp. 341-345, and vol. ix. pp. 147-148; *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. pp. 2-5. "Researches in the Phenomena of Spiritualism" will be found in the Libraries of the Society for Psychical Research, and of the London Spiritualist Alliance.



confined to any one class of people. Indeed the difficulty appears to be greater in the case of highly educated people than among the comparatively uninformed. Sir Oliver Lodge has recently said: "What does a 'proof' mean? A proof means destroying the isolation of an observed fact or experience by linking it on with all pre-existent knowledge; it means the bringing it into its place in the system of knowledge; and it affords the same sort of gratification as finding the right place for a queer-shaped piece in a puzzle-map. Do not let these puzzle-maps go out of fashion; they afford a most useful psychological illustration; the foundation of every organised system of truth is bound up with them. . . . It is because a number of phenomena, such as clairvoyance, physical movement without contact, and other apparent abnormalities and unusualnesses, cannot at present be linked on with the rest of knowledge in a coherent stream—it is for that reason that they are not, as yet, generally recognised as true; they stand at present outside the realms of science; they will be presently incorporated into that kingdom, and annexed by the progress of discovery."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. F. C. S. Schiller, in an article in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research, expresses a similar thought in a different manner. He says:—

"A mind unwilling to believe, or even undesirous to be instructed, our weightiest evidence must ever fail to impress. It will insist on taking that evidence in bits, and rejecting it item by item. The

<sup>1</sup> "School Teaching and School Reform," by Sir Oliver Lodge, pp. 89, 90.



man therefore who announces his intention of waiting until a single absolutely conclusive bit of evidence turns up, is really a man *not* open to conviction, and if he is a logician, *he knows it*. For modern logic has made it plain that single facts can never be 'proved,' except by their coherence in a system. But as all the facts come singly, any one who dismisses them one by one, is destroying the conditions under which the conviction of new truth could arise in his mind."<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Myers, in summing up the evidence in the case of Mr. Stainton Moses, dwells on the importance of simple repetition. This, though practically effective, is scarcely a scientific consideration. A fact is none the less a fact on account of the rarity of its occurrence, any more than the existence of a rare animal or plant is rendered questionable by the fewness of the number of specimens which have been found.

An interesting chapter might be written under the title of "The History of the Growth in the Belief in Hypnotism during the last Twenty-five Years." One episode that would be included in such a history may be worth quoting here as illustrating the present subject. As recently as 1891, the British Medical Association appointed a Committee, consisting of eleven of its number, "to investigate the nature of the phenomena of hypnotism, its value as a therapeutic agent, and the propriety of using it." This Committee presented a Report at the Annual Meeting in the following year. In the first paragraph they solemnly stated that they "have satisfied themselves of the genuine-

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. p. 419.

ness of the hypnotic state " (!). They also expressed the " opinion that as a therapeutic agent hypnotism is frequently effective in relieving pain, procuring sleep, and alleviating many functional ailments " (!). They are also of opinion that its " employment for therapeutic purposes should be confined to qualified medical men."

The Association referred this unanimous Report of its Committee back for further consideration. In 1893 the Committee presented it again, with the addition of an important Appendix, consisting of " some documentary evidence upon which the Report was based." On this occasion it was moved and seconded, that the Report should lie on the table. It was suggested that the amendment to this effect be so altered as to read that the Report be received only, and the Committee thanked for their services. Finally, a resolution to this effect was carried. The most strongly worded recommendation of the Report was that some legal restriction should be placed on public exhibitions of hypnotic phenomena. This was only twelve years ago, and was five or six years subsequent to the publication of some of Mr. Edmund Gurney's most important series of experiments in hypnotism in the *Proceedings* of the Society for Psychical Research. The " reception only " of the Report was also two or three years subsequent to a demonstration of hypnotic anæsthesia which Dr. J. Milne Bramwell gave at Leeds to a large gathering of medical men. One result of that gathering was that Dr. Bramwell decided to abandon general practice and devote himself to hypnotic work. Dr. Bramwell says :—

"As I was well aware of the fate that had awaited earlier pioneers in the same movement, I naturally expected to meet with opposition and misrepresentation. These have been encountered, it is true; but the friendly help and encouragement received have been immeasurably greater. I have also had many opportunities of placing my views before my professional brethren, both by writing and speaking;" to which Dr. Bramwell somewhat naively adds—"opportunities all the more valued, because almost always unsolicited."<sup>1</sup>

An incident which occurred in connection with the most sensational case of "levitation" recorded of D. D. Home, is very instructive as illustrating the great care that is needful in estimating the value of testimony regarding spiritualistic phenomena, even of statements made by persons of established reputation and position.

The Joint Report of Professor Barrett and Mr. Myers, from which extracts were made in Chapter V., says:—

"Lords Lindsay and Adare had printed a statement that Home floated out of the window, and in at another, in Ashley Place, S.W., 16th December 1868. A third person, Captain Wynne, was present at the time, but had written no separate account. Dr. Carpenter, in an article in the *Contemporary Review* for January 1876, thus commented on the incident:—

"The most diverse accounts of the *facts* of a seance will be given by a believer and a sceptic.

<sup>1</sup> See "Hypnotism: Its History, Practice, and Theory," by J. Milne Bramwell, M.B., C.M., 1903, pp. 36-39.

A whole party of believers will affirm that they saw Mr. Home float out of one window, and in at another, while a single honest sceptic declares that Mr. Home was sitting in his chair all the time. And in this last case we have an example of a fact, of which there is ample illustration, that during the prevalence of an epidemic delusion, the honest testimony of any number of individuals on one side, if given under a prepossession, is of no more weight than that of a single adverse witness—if so much.’

“This passage was of course quoted as implying that Captain Wynne had somewhere made a statement contradicting Lords Lindsay and Adare. Home wrote to him to inquire; and he replied . . . in the following terms:—

“‘I remember that Dr. Carpenter wrote some nonsense about that trip of yours along the side of the house in Ashley Place. I wrote to the *Medium* to say that I was present as a witness. Now I don’t think that any one who knows me would for one moment say that I was a victim to hallucination or any other humbug of the kind. The fact of your having gone out of the window and in at the other I can swear to.’”

“It seems, therefore, that the instance selected by Dr. Carpenter to prove the existence of a hallucination—by the exemption of one person present from the illusion—was of a very unfortunate kind; suggesting, indeed, that a controversialist thus driven to draw on his imagination for his facts must have been conscious of a weak case.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. pp. 108–109.



It may be interesting, in concluding this brief examination into one branch of the great subject of "Spiritualism," to bring together a few of the impressions produced on the minds of some of the leading investigators. It should not be forgotten that the branch of the subject which we have been studying may be looked upon as representing the lowest steps only of a great staircase which ascends, until, to our gaze, it is lost in unknown infinite heights. It is only the foot of a ladder, to use another simile, resting on the material earth, which we have been considering; at most the two or three lowest rungs. But to the eyes of some, even now and here, glimpses of angels ascending and descending are visible.

Five names stand out prominently before all others among the earlier investigators of the last thirty years—Sir William Crookes and Professor W. F. Barrett, who are still with us; and Professor Henry Sidgwick, Edmund Gurney, and F. W. H. Myers, who have gone. Sir William Crookes' work in other directions has been all-absorbing, so that all he has been able to tell us during the last few years, in relation to our present subject, is that he had nothing to add to, and nothing to retract from what he has said in the past. In his address as President of the British Association in 1898, Sir William Crookes said, after referring to his work of thirty years ago:—

"I think I see a little further now. I have glimpses of something like coherence among the strange elusive phenomena, of something like continuity between those unexplained forces, and



laws already known. . . . Were I now introducing for the first time these inquiries to the world of science, I should choose a starting-point different from that of old. It would be well to begin with Telepathy; with the fundamental law, as I believe it to be, that thoughts and images may be transferred from one mind to another without the agency of the recognised organs of sense—that knowledge may enter the human mind without being communicated in any hitherto known or recognised ways.”<sup>1</sup>

For Professor Barrett's present views the reader is referred to his address as President of the Society for Psychical Research delivered in January 1904.<sup>2</sup> It is full of interest, but is not easy to quote from. Speaking of “spiritualistic phenomena,” he says: “We must all agree that indiscriminate condemnation on the one hand, and ignorant credulity on the other, are the two most mischievous elements with which we are confronted in connection with this subject. It is because we, as a Society, feel that in the fearless pursuit of truth, it is the paramount duty of science to lead the way, that the scornful attitude of the scientific world towards even the investigation of these phenomena is so much to be deprecated. . . . I suppose we are all apt to fancy our own power of discernment and of sound judgment to be somewhat better than our neighbours. But after all, is it not the common-sense, the care, the patience, and the amount of uninterrupted attention we

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xiv. p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Part XLVIII., 1s. (included in vol. xviii. pp. 323–351).

bestow upon any psychical phenomena we are investigating, that gives value to the opinion at which we arrive, and not the particular cleverness or scepticism of the observer? The lesson we all need to learn is, that what even the humblest of men *affirm*, from their own experience, is always worth listening to, but what even the cleverest of men, in their ignorance, deny, is never worth a moment's attention."<sup>1</sup>

As regards Professor Sidgwick, the experimental work of the Society for Psychical Research soon convinced him that Thought-Transference, or Telepathy, was a fact. In an address in 1889, after speaking of the probabilities of testimony given being false, he says:—

"It is for this reason that I feel that a part of my grounds for believing in Telepathy, depending as it does on personal knowledge, cannot be communicated except in a weakened form to the ordinary reader of the printed statements which represent the evidence that has convinced me. Indeed I feel this so strongly that I have always made it my highest ambition as a psychical researcher to produce evidence which will drive my opponents to doubt my honesty or veracity; I think there are a very small minority who will not doubt them, and that if I can convince them I have done all that I can do: as regards the majority of my own acquaintances I should claim no more than an admission that they were considerably surprised to find me in the trick."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xviii. pp. 340-341.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vi. p. 5.

I am not aware that Professor Sidgwick ever expressed any opinion as to the reality of the ordinary physical spiritualistic manifestations. It is clear that he believed a large proportion to have been fraudulently produced. As to some psychical phenomena, his convictions were very strong. For instance, in the final paragraph of the "Report on Hallucinations," which occupies the whole of the tenth volume of the *Proceedings* of the Society, and to which he appended his name, these two sentences occur: "Between deaths and apparitions of the dying person a connection exists which is not due to chance alone. This we hold as a proved fact."<sup>1</sup> And Professor Sidgwick speaks of this as corroborating the conclusion already drawn by Mr. Gurney nearly ten years earlier.

Mr. Edmund Gurney's name stands next. His earthly work came to a sudden termination in 1888. "Phantasms of the Living" is his enduring memorial. Although two other names are associated with his on the title-page, the greater part of the two volumes was written by him alone. For most of the views expressed Mr. Gurney is solely responsible. In a chapter devoted to "The Theory of Chance-Coincidence" as an explanation of the order of natural phenomena to which "Phantasms of the Living" belong, Mr. Gurney says:—

"Figures, one is sometimes told, can be made to prove anything; but I confess I should be curious to see the figures by which the theory of chance-coincidence could here be proved adequate to the facts. Whatever group of phenomena be

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. x. p. 394.

selected, and whatever method of reckoning be adopted, probabilities are hopelessly and even ludicrously overpassed.”<sup>1</sup>

This is the conclusion referred to above by Professor Sidgwick. With exclusively physical phenomena Mr. Gurney did not much concern himself.

The last of the five names mentioned is that of Mr F. W. H. Myers. The written testimony he has left behind enables us to obtain a much clearer view of his conclusions as a whole, than is attainable in the case of Professor Sidgwick and Mr. Gurney. The convictions which he came to in regard to the two most notable “mediums” in the history of modern spiritualism—D. D. Home and W. Stainton Moses—are evidence that he believed in most of the alleged phenomena being proved realities. These convictions are so important from such a careful and competent student of the subject that it is best to quote them in his own words. Of D. D. Home he said: “If our readers ask us—‘Do you desire us to go on experimenting in these matters, as though Home’s phenomena were genuine?’—we answer ‘Yes.’”<sup>2</sup> Of the phenomena which occurred in the presence of W. Stainton Moses, Mr. Myers said: “That they were not produced fraudulently by Dr. Speer or other sitters I regard as proved both by moral considerations and by the fact that they are constantly reported as occurring when Mr. Moses was alone. That Mr. Moses should have himself fraudulently produced them, I regard as both

<sup>1</sup> “Phantasms of the Living,” vol. ii. p. 21.

<sup>2</sup> *Journal S.P.R.*, vol. iv. p. 115.



morally and physically incredible. That he should have prepared and produced them in a state of trance, I regard both as physically incredible, and also as entirely inconsistent with the tenour both of his own reports and of those of his friends. I therefore regard the reported phenomena as having actually occurred in a genuinely supernormal manner.”<sup>1</sup>

At the same time Mr. Myers believed in the existence of a large amount of conscious and wilful fraud, especially in professional mediumship.

There will be no fitter conclusion to this volume than a few passages from the last chapter, entitled “Epilogue,” of “Human Personality,” by Mr. F. W. H. Myers. To a large extent they are appropriate to the evidence presented in the preceding pages.

“The task which I proposed to myself at the beginning of this work, is now, after a fashion, accomplished. Following the successive steps of my programme, I have presented—not indeed all the evidence I possess, and which I would willingly present—but enough at least to illustrate a continuous exposition. . . . Such wider generalisations as I may now add, must needs be dangerously speculative; they must run the risk of alienating still further from this research many of the scientific minds which I am most anxious to influence. . . .

“The inquiry falls between the two stools of religion and science; it cannot claim support either from the ‘religious world’ or from the Royal Society. Yet even apart from the instinct of pure scientific

<sup>1</sup> *Proceedings S.P.R.*, vol. xi. pp. 24–25.



curiosity (which surely has seldom seen such a field opening before it), the mighty issues depending on these phenomena ought, I think, to constitute in themselves a strong, an exceptional appeal. I desire in this book to emphasise that appeal; not only to produce conviction, but also to attract co-operation. And actual converse with many persons has led me to believe that in order to attract such help, even from scientific men, some general view of the moral upshot of all the phenomena is needed. . . . The time is ripe for a study of unseen things as strenuous and sincere as that which Science has made familiar for the problems of earth."

Coming now to more definite considerations, Mr. Myers writes thus of Telepathy, lifting it on to an altogether higher plane: "In the infinite Universe man may now feel, for the first time, at home. The worst fear is over; the true security is won. The worst fear was the fear of spiritual extinction or spiritual solitude. The true security is in the telepathic law. Let me draw out my meaning at somewhat greater length. As we have dwelt successively on various aspects of Telepathy we have gradually felt the conception enlarge and deepen under our study. It began as a quasi-mechanical transference of ideas and images from one to another brain." This is illustrated by the series of Thought-Transference Drawings; almost the only telepathic manifestation which strictly comes within the scope of our inquiry into physical phenomena. "Presently we find it assuming a more varied and potent form, as though it were the veritable influence or invasion of a distant mind. Again, its action was traced

across a gulf greater than any space of earth or ocean, and it bridged the interval between spirits incarnate and discarnate, between the visible and the invisible world. There seemed no limit to the distance of its operation, or to the intimacy of its appeal. . . .

“Love . . . is no matter of carnal impulse or of emotional caprice. . . . Love is a kind of exalted but unspecialised Telepathy;—the simplest and most universal expression of that mutual gravitation or kinship of spirits which is the foundation of the telepathic law. This is the answer to the ancient fear; the fear lest man’s fellowships be the outward, and his solitude the inward thing. . . . Such fears vanish when we learn that it is the soul in man which links him with other souls; the body which dissevers even while it seems to unite. . . . Like atoms, like suns, like galaxies, our spirits are systems of forces which vibrate continually to each other’s attractive power.”

For the further working out of these thoughts the reader must be referred to Mr. Myers’ book itself. After a few pages Mr. Myers proceeds :—

“Our duty [the duty of *Psychical Researchers*] is not the founding of a new sect, nor even the establishment of a new science, but is rather the expansion of Science herself until she can satisfy those questions, which the human heart will rightly ask, but to which Religion alone has thus far attempted an answer. . . . I see our original programme completely justified. . . . I see all things coming to pass as we foresaw. What I do *not* see, alas! is an energy and capacity of our own, sufficient for our widening duty. . . . We invite

workers from each department of science, from every school of thought. With equal confidence we appeal for co-operation to *savant* and to saint.

“To the *savant* we point out that we are not trying to pick holes in the order of Nature, but rather by the scrutiny of residual phenomena, to get nearer to the origin and operation of Nature’s central mystery of Life. Men who realise that the ethereal environment was discovered yesterday, need not deem it impossible that a metethereal environment—yet another omnipresent system of cosmic law—should be discovered to-morrow. The only valid *a priori* presumption in the matter, is the presumption that the Universe is infinite in an infinite number of ways.

“To the Christian we can speak with a still more direct appeal. You believe—I would say—that a spiritual world exists, and that it acted on the material world two thousand years ago. Surely it is so acting still. Nay, you believe that it is so acting still, for you believe that prayer is heard and answered. To believe that prayer is heard is to believe in Telepathy—in the direct influence of mind on mind. To believe that prayer is answered is to believe that unembodied spirit does actually modify (even if not storm-cloud or plague-germ) at least the minds, and therefore the brains, of living men. From that belief the most advanced ‘psychical’ theories are easy corollaries.”

A few more lines in conclusion:—

“It may be that for some generations to come the truest faith will lie in the patient attempt to unravel from confused phenomena some trace of the supernal world;—to find thus at last ‘the substance

of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' I confess, indeed, that I have often felt as though this present age were even unduly favoured;—as though no future revelation and calm could equal the joy of this great struggle from doubt into certainty;—from the materialism or agnosticism which accompany the first advance of Science into the deeper scientific conviction that there is a deathless soul in man. I can imagine no other crisis of such deep delight."

THE END