

JOURNAL

OF THE

SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

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THOUGHT TRANSFERENCE.—PRIZE COMPETITION.

Mr. Malcolm Guthrie, J.P., of Liverpool, has issued the following leaflet. Perhaps some of our members may be induced to become competitors.

Between certain persons, and specially among the members of a family or persons who are constant companions, there has been found to exist sometimes the faculty of the direct transference of impressions from one mind to another without the intervention of the ordinary channels of sense. To ascertain to what extent this faculty exists the above prizes are offered.

Those who wish to compete are recommended to commence the experiments as a pastime, as this method conduces best to success. Let one person be blindfolded and touch hands with another person who is steadfastly looking at some object, and presently, if he or she possesses the faculty in question, the image of the object so regarded may gradually emerge into peculiar distinctness. The objects to be experimented with should be simple in shape and distinct in colour, such as pieces of coloured ribbon or paper cut into a variety of shapes, letters, or playing-cards, &c. They should be exhibited on a plain white or black background, well illuminated, and should be so placed as not to be seen with other things at the same time.

When it is discovered that any one possesses the power, then the experiment should be repeated without contact, and, if still successful, conditions should be imposed which absolutely exclude the possibility of even unconscious perception of the object through any recognised channel of sense. The most perfect experiment, and that insisted upon for the prize competition, is thus arranged. The percipient is seated on a chair, blindfolded, all mirrors or reflecting surfaces being

removed or covered up. The agent or operator leaves the room and draws very distinctly in black crayon upon a piece of paper, say 6 by 4, an outline or diagram of not too complex a character, and, bringing it into the room enclosed in a small folio, places it upon a screen behind the percipient. The operator then takes his seat in front of the diagram, which is now exposed to view, and announces that he is ready. Silence is maintained while the willer or agent concentrates his gaze upon the diagram, until the percipient announces that he or she thinks the correct impression has been received. Upon this the folio is closed, the percipient is freed from the blindfolding, and supplied with a piece of paper and crayon pencil, with which the impression produced on the mind is recorded.

The result may afford adequate evidence of thought-transference without being an exact reproduction; sometimes the reproduction is transposed from right to left, or sometimes, if the diagram is complex, part only is produced or the parts are put together differently. Whatever the result may be, a memorandum should be made on the drawings of the conditions of the experiment,—date, names of experimenters, with or without contact, length of time, &c., and also of any remarks made by the percipient during the experiment. The agent should maintain silence, but if he should say anything this also should be recorded. Corresponding numbers should be placed upon the original and reproduction. If different distances are tried, these also should be recorded.

The experiments should not be so long continued nor so frequently repeated as to cause fatigue.

It is desirable that some scientific friend should be called in early in the case of successful experiments, so as to secure that no essential condition is overlooked.

No public use will be made of the names of the competitors without consent.

Prizes of £10 each will be given for the 10 best sets of 10 drawings, produced as described, in one or two sittings; but it is an essential condition that the competitors should show the same ability to the satisfaction of one or two gentlemen who will be appointed to test the capacity of the competitors. Should less than 20 persons compete, the number of prizes given will be reduced to one-half the number of the competitors.

The drawings must be sent in by July 15th, and will be adjudicated upon before August 1st.

Address, ALPHA, R. WATSON'S Advertising Offices,
150, Fleet-street, LONDON.

CASES RECEIVED BY THE LITERARY COMMITTEE.

G.—178.

From Mrs. B., of Eastbourne, known to F. P.

1885.

It was in the year 1870, in the month of February, that I took as a furnished house No. 4, —square, Brighton. I occupied it with my widowed friend, Mrs. F——t, and three children of my own, four, five, and six years respectively.

Mrs. F——t slept in the top front bedroom (second floor), and after she had occupied the room for two or three months, she complained of being annoyed by a feeling of some one leaning over her bed, and breathing close to her, which caused her to wake up suddenly and put out her hand to see if any one was there. The child, too, who slept with her later on, and who of course was put to bed early, used to wake from her sleep crying bitterly and declaring that she saw "angels" and heard "rattlings." The child told me this when I went up to comfort her one evening. My friend, Mrs. F——t, too (who is a woman of strong physique and good common-sense), told me that she was annoyed in passing upstairs in the dusk (there was *no gas* in the upper part of the house) by feeling herself frequently pushed forcibly aside by some one or some thing, for whom she had to make way. At last she became so nervous from disturbed nights and broken sleep, that she gave up sleeping in that bedroom, and came down and slept with me in the room below, and the child was put to sleep with one of the servants, and the room was only used by Mrs. F——t as a dressing-room. About this time, while I was away from home, Mrs. F——t was disturbed by hearing sounds as if the servants were entertaining some friends in the drawing-room below, laughter and clatter of forks, &c. She said nothing to me, as she did not wish to make mischief, and left me to find them out for myself. On my return we were sleeping together in the room below (on the first floor), when we were awoke almost simultaneously between 12 and 1 p.m. by a great noise proceeding from the drawing-room below, on the ground floor—sounds of talking and laughter, the jingling of glasses, the rattling of plates, and of chairs being moved about, as if the servants were entertaining a supper-party, which in fact was what we thought. The sounds were most distinct, and we could not be mistaken; they certainly did not proceed from the next house. We put on our dressing-gowns in haste and went down stairs together, to find the drawing-room in darkness and solitude as we left it! About the same time Mrs. F——t and I were sitting one evening in the back drawing-room, on a still summer evening, with the window (*not* a casement) open, and not a breath of air stirring, when it was suddenly and violently shaken, the noise produced being very considerable.* We looked at one another in astonishment, and left the room at once to see if the servants were in the room above or below, but found them sitting in the front kitchen, having heard nothing. The road at the back was at some distance from the house.

* Mrs. B. illustrated the noise by shaking the window in her sitting-room forcibly with her hands.—F. P.

I must now tell you that there was a small room at the top of the house—second floor front—which the proprietor of it had locked up. And as an old friend and school-fellow was coming to stay with me in June, and be married from my house, I needed every available room, and applied to my landlady for the use of it. *She demurred very much*, saying she had boxes stored there, and needed the room; but after much pressing, she was obliged to give way. To our astonishment, when we unlocked the room, we found it *empty*, save for one or two old trunks which occupied no space whatever. The wedding took place in due time, &c., and afterwards (in September or October, I think) my friend, Mrs. F——t, went away on a visit, leaving me alone in the house with the servants and children. It was while my friend was absent that I was going upstairs one night to bed, with candle in my hand, when standing in the open doorway in front of me (which led into the bedroom beside mine and immediately under the shut room) I saw distinctly a man standing looking at me. The only light was from my candle; the square was very badly lighted so that no light came through the window. He was a tall, dark man, dressed in a grey suit, with heavy dark beard and moustache; and at first I thought that he was some strange man who had been surreptitiously introduced by the servants, and my first expression was, I am afraid, not ladylike, for I exclaimed, “*Hulloa!*” and walked straight up to him, intending to ask him who he was and what he was doing there. He never moved, and by some unaccountable impulse *I walked straight through him*, into the room. When I turned and looked, he was gone! and I found myself trembling from head to foot. I sat down on the bed to recover myself and to consider what had happened, and at first thought of calling the servants; but on consideration did not do so, as I thought they might laugh at me. I longed to go down for some brandy, but did not dare; and after a while I summoned up courage to creep into my room, which was next door. I then locked the door (contrary to my usual custom) and passed the night undisturbed, sleeping soundly. I am naturally a very courageous woman, and may say I hardly know what fear is, and my sensation was more one of astonishment, nor did I up till that time place the smallest belief in “ghosts.” When I woke next morning, and upon calm reflection considered what I had seen the night before, I began to think I must only have had an optical illusion. But I have never on any other occasion been the subject of a hallucination either of sight or sound. The next night I went up to bed as usual, when, to my surprise, I saw him again, standing where he stood the night before. This time I called the two servants from below, and they came up behind me, and I asked them if they saw anything there, but they answered, “No!” I saw the figure, however, the whole time. Saying no more to them, I sent them down stairs again, and passed right by him, leaving him standing in the doorway, into my room, and locked the door behind me. Each night for a whole week I saw him at the same door, till I became quite accustomed to him, and felt inclined to speak, and ask him what he wanted, but dreaded lest he should raise his arm. The figure never moved, however. After this he disappeared, and I myself never saw him again, although we remained in the house six months after or more. When Mrs. F——t returned, I told her what I had seen, and we agreed to keep it quite

quiet and not tell any of our friends, for fear of being laughed at. But after further discussion we determined to tell the landlady that we *knew* her house to be haunted. So on going next time to pay the rent, a friend went with me, and we agreed to watch the effect of the tidings upon the landlady. So after a few preliminary remarks, I said, "I think, Miss P., you should have told me that your house was *haunted*," and she started visibly, and exclaimed, "Oh! so you have seen him, have you?" She further said that if she had told anyone she would never have let the house, and said that if we had kept that room locked we should not have been troubled. We had a friend, Mrs. F——r, living at No. 7, three doors off from us, with whom we were very intimate, and we told her about all we had seen and heard, when she remarked immediately, "Why, that's *my* ghost!" and told us that she and her children and servants had all seen precisely the same man. They seemed to be quite familiar with him. This puzzled us much; but we soon learnt—I can't now remember from whom I heard this—that the four houses at the top end of the square had originally been one; that the square had once had a *very bad name*, and that the block of houses had once belonged to the Rothschilds, and that grass had grown, through neglect, in the middle of the square.

A few months later this same lady let her house and came and lived with me for a month; and as she was accustomed to the ghost I gave her the room in which he had appeared, as a sitting-room. One evening, in the dusk, before the lamps were lit, in November, a young Australian gentleman* (Irish by birth), a friend of hers, called to see her; and as I occupied the drawing-room, I sent him up to her sitting-room to await her. He had not been there many minutes before he came running down to me in the drawing-room, looking as pale as a sheet, exclaiming, "For God's sake give me some brandy!" I said, "Why, what's up?" and he said, as he threw himself on the sofa, "I've seen your ghost." He said he had been up in the sitting-room waiting for the lady, and was leaning out of the window, drumming on the window-sill, when he felt a draught of cold air, and looking round he expected to see Mrs. B., when, to his surprise, he saw a man standing inside the doorway, dressed in grey, and with his head lowered forward and a horrid sneer upon his face. It disappeared directly, and he had then run downstairs in a great fright to me (as described). On another occasion, when I was away from home, Captain T., of the Guards, who was a mesmerist, and a great friend of Home (the Spiritualist), was calling on my friend, Mrs. F——r; they were sitting chatting in the drawing-room, when he turned suddenly pale and said, "I am sure there is a *spirit* in this house!" He had been told about the house. After I had left the house it was let to some people from Ryde, Isle of Wight, who only stayed in it six months because no one could sleep in the top room.† The lady who occupied the house three doors off, and who had also seen the same figure, told me she had seen it twice. On the first occasion she awoke on a bright moonlight night, feeling strange, and on sitting up in bed distinctly saw, reflected in a large cheval glass which faced her bed at the foot, the same figure as I did, but slightly

* Believed to be in Australia now.

† Mr. C. Godfrey went over the house in Christmas, 1883. The house was then a lodging-house, but no lodgers were in it.—F. P., 15th March, 1885.

stooping forward, with a sneering and malicious expression. The window was close to the head of the bed, and she immediately jumped out of bed, and drew aside the blind to see if anyone could be there. But nothing was to be seen, and the window was some height from the ground, with a deep kind of area and high wall at the back. On another occasion she had been having lunch in her dining-room on the ground floor, and on going upstairs she passed the drawing-room door, which was open, and saw apparently a gentleman in a grey suit of clothes sitting near the window, with his head half turned away. He had dark hair and beard, and seemed to be waiting. She went into her bedroom for a minute or two and then entered the drawing-room, expecting to see a visitor; but the room was perfectly empty, and on questioning the servant she found no one had called. The hall door could not be opened from the outside. An old servant who lived with her at one time said that she, like Mrs. F——t in my house, had met *something* on the stairs when going up or down in the dusk or early morning that she had to make way for. Another servant, a young widow, who slept in the basement, rushed up to her mistress's bedroom one night when the latter was going to bed, in her nightdress and half beside herself with fright. She declared she was kneeling up in bed, saying her prayers, with her hands clasped, in the dark, and someone took hold of her hands and tried to unclasp them, *twice*. She was then so terrified that she jumped out of bed and ran to the door, which was not previously locked, but on trying to open it it seemed to be held from the other side. She pulled at it in vain for a minute or two, but on her uttering a prayer it suddenly yielded and she rushed up to her mistress's room. She would not stay in the house a day longer. On another occasion, one of this lady's sons, a fine intelligent boy of about 12, was ill with measles; his mother was in the drawing-room, but had left the doors open so that she might hear if he called for anything. At last he called out loudly, and on his mother going up, he said, "Mother, do turn out that horrid man, he has been standing there sneering at me." The boy described the same figure we had both seen, and said he was leaning against the chest of drawers, rather stooping, and *sneering* at him. His mother did not see the figure on this occasion.

In answer to our inquiries, Mrs. B. adds:—

27th March, 1885.

I had the account of what she, her boy, and the servants saw, &c., from Mrs. F——r's own lips. Never said anything of it to her son or the servants.

From Mrs. F——t.

The sensations I am about to relate occurred to me when I was living with my friend Mrs. B., at No. 4, —square, Brighton, in the year 1870-71. I was given a room, which we called the front room, at the top of the house and it was next to the little room afterwards opened. I had been a widow nearly 20 months, but still there were times when I felt very lonely and disturbed, as I had been a constant nurse and companion to a sick husband both night and day, so that when I was first awakened by the feeling of some one breathing over me, and hearing a sort of whisper, I used to sit up and say "yes," calling my husband by name, and ask, "do you want anything?"

then when I was quite awake I felt I must push something away that was leaning over me, a dark mass—then or afterwards I never saw any distinct object. This went on for some two months or so, then I began to get ill, out of sorts, as I never went to bed without feeling I should not get a good night's rest, but I put it all down to the unhappy state of my mind. At last I could stand it no longer, so told Mrs. B. I could not sleep by myself, and it was then I used to go down to her bed every night. In April, I think it was, Mrs. B. went to stay with an old schoolfellow, and she left her children, servants, and house in my charge. After a little while the youngest child took cold, and I had her downstairs in Mrs. B.'s room to nurse. For three days she was in danger, and I never left her, and used to go to bed soon after 9 o'clock, so as to have the room shut up, and not to disturb the child. As I was very tired I fell off to sleep with the child in my arms, when suddenly I was awoken by loud talking, and the clatter of plates, knives and forks. I turned to look at the clock, and saw it was nearly 12. The servants ought to have been in bed an hour before, but as the child was sleeping, I did not move. Again, when the child was nearly well, the same noise was repeated about the same time of night. I thought to myself that I must tell Mrs. B. when she comes home that her servants have been taking advantage of her absence. However, when she did return, I changed my mind, for both the servants had been very attentive to me, and had helped me in every way in nursing the little girl. It was after Mrs. B.'s return that the little room was opened. I was away for months on and off, but when I returned in the following January, in a very happy state of mind at the idea of our all being together again, I was taking some of my small belongings up to the top front room, when on reaching the last flight of stairs I had to push past a mass of heaviness, and was stopped by knocking my nose against the wall, at which I laughed and thought myself very stupid. The next sensation was when I was sleeping with my friend, and we both awoke at the same moment, when she said, "Did you hear?" and I said, "Yes, it's those servants again, let us go down and catch them." We went down, as my friend has related, and saw nothing; we only looked at one another and returned upstairs and got into bed without speaking, to the best of my recollection. The only other time I can mention was when I brought an old lady friend from London who wanted a change, and as I knew Mrs. B. was away from home, and would have no objection, I asked her to come down with me, which she did, but on condition that I would sleep in the next room to her, which happened to be the very room in which the grey man, as we afterwards called him, was seen by Mrs. B. some months later. I can truly say I never went to sleep in that little room until 4 or 5 in the morning, though at that time no one, to our knowledge, knew that the house was haunted. I always, during the 10 nights I occupied that room, felt as if I should be smothered if I did go to sleep. After that time I stayed a great deal with friends in London and elsewhere, and it was during that time that my friend wrote and told me that she had seen a ghost, and when we met in September I told her for the first time of all my sensations. We did not use the top front room after that time, but turned a sitting-room into a bedroom, so that I and Mrs. B. slept on the same floor, being the two rooms over the

dining and drawing rooms. The little girl, though wishing to sleep with me when I used the top front room, always began to cry and say, "May I stop with the others until auntie comes up to bed?" and when the room was unoccupied, in the twilight the two eldest children used to say, "Do come upstairs and see Katie's angels and coloured lights," but we could never get anything out of the little one, but that she did not like to be in the room by herself because there were lights on the ceiling, and the windows used to shake. I remember there was a horrid old brindled cat in the house, and it used to fly about the place and never go out beyond the yard with a very high wall all round; it never made friends with any of us, and after the little room at the top of the house was opened it disappeared altogether. It used to sit and moan on the stairs and behave as I never heard or saw a cat before or since.

CAROLINE F—T.

April 6th, 1885.

In answer to inquiries, Mrs. F—t stated that she had read Mrs. B.'s account (printed above) before writing her own. She declined to state whether she had experienced any other hallucination.

Mrs. B. stated that she had not experienced any other hallucination.

It is feared that it will not be possible to trace Mrs. F—r.

CORRESPONDENCE.

PROFESSIONAL MEDIUMSHIP.

To the Editor of the JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH.

SIR,—I wish to make a few remarks with regard to the possibility of investigation of "Phenomenal Spiritualism," and to point out (1) some difficulties that are likely to befall the scientific or serious inquirer, under the present circumstances, and with so few opportunities afforded to him; (2) some striking incongruities on the part of séance-room "spirits" in general; and (3) the incompetency of the average Spiritualist as regards the observation and verification of the various phenomena and usual occurrences which may be witnessed in the presence of mediums.

The recent controversy in the *Journal* on the subject of "Physical Phenomena" will, I think, induce many members of the Society to personally investigate these mysteries. It is especially to those that my remarks are addressed. I must confess that my experience was obtained almost exclusively in London, and that consequently I may have missed the opportunity of witnessing more conclusive phenomena which may occur in other localities. Whether my remarks will also apply to the "spirits" manifesting with mediums in other countries is more than I dare affirm just now; for, it may be that matters look different and brighter elsewhere. However, since the headquarters of the Society for Psychical Research are, like the majority of its members, established in London, the principal work of systematic research will have to be carried out within a radius of seven miles from Charing Cross. It may, perhaps, be of some advantage that for this very reason my evidence is likely to be more readily verifiable.

There may be some difficulty just at present for the inquirer to get admission to séances for physical manifestations, because at the few séances now held in London only confirmed believers are admitted. In most cases, however, the inquirer will be welcome if introduced by a Spiritualist known to the medium, upon his declaration that he is prepared to believe in the reality of the phenomena which occur in the medium's presence. But even when admitted, the inquirer has no alternative but to either allow himself to be converted, on the spot, or to submit himself to considerable loss of time and other annoyances. There are two ways open to him : to believe from the literature on the subject that may have come into his hands or from the statements made by Spiritualists ; or to patiently wait until he has accumulated sufficient evidence to judge for himself. He cannot, as a neophyte, propose tests and experiments because he is supposed not to entertain any doubts as regards the nature and origin of the phenomena. Should he succeed in gaining the confidence of the medium and circle, and, after his more or less regular attendance at these séances, be allowed to introduce a test experiment, conducted upon common-sense principles, he will find that the results do but partly satisfy his object in view, or that the experiment fails *in toto*.

As a rule, the excuses made by the circle are to the effect that probably the conditions were unfavourable, or that the medium was not very well that evening, or the "power" was used up. A promise is given that the inquirer's request will be attended to on a future occasion. He is kept in prolonged suspense until at some remote period the rigid test is actually repeated. If it succeeds to some extent—(for it never succeeds in all respects to *prove the intervention of spirits of deceased human beings*)—more experiments are necessary ; but no matter how often a test may be introduced, there will be always some discrepancy one way or another. In most cases, however, the results are *nil* or they point in the direction of trickery. I know of not a single case where results obtained were of a convincing nature unless the experimenter was at least a little on his way to become a believer in the Spiritualist's theories. Here, it will be seen, lies a very grave difficulty which entirely blocks the avenue to conviction upon reasonable terms. The experiment fails—and the failure is attributed to the inquirer's sceptical or antagonistic attitude. The scientific investigator wishes to be convinced of the truth of the assertion that the phenomena are real and produced by, or through the intervention of, "spirits," and for this he requires absolute demonstrable facts ; yet he cannot obtain the facts because his mind is so constituted as to entertain no reasonable ground for a belief in either the "spirits" or the facts ! This may seem an anomaly, but in the investigation of spiritualistic phenomena it is nevertheless a truism that success depends upon faith. It is much to be regretted that, under such circumstances, Spiritualists should ever have called upon "Science" to prove their assertions or demonstrate the truth of their theories.

What seems to be an important clue to the explanation of some of the phenomena is, that they are not affected by any supposed counteracting influence if the medium and circle are unaware that a certain amount of scepticism is lurking in the mind of a neophyte present. The necessity of

"harmony," as an induction to good results, should be well taken into consideration by any newly-introduced investigator. Doubts as to the possible intentions of the latter, arising in the minds of the circle or, more directly, in the minds of the medium, will not only interrupt the proceedings but almost invariably bring the séance to a sudden termination; for, it would appear that the medium, in order to allow the "spirits" to act through his organism, must assume a condition somewhat analogous to that of self-induced trance, or a submission to the operator's ("spirit's") will, as in the case of a "subject" in hypnotic sleep. If not comfortable and confident, the medium will naturally counteract the influence, or decline to submit himself to it altogether. Hence, if there is no trance, none of the phenomena can follow because these latter are mostly produced automatically by the medium himself when in the condition called trance. I will deal with this point more fully in the records of my observations of "materialised forms" and pass on to my general remarks. At séances held in private, *viz.*, where the medium is a friend or member of the family and not a paid medium engaged for the occasion, the inquirer, if admitted at all, will find little that can instruct him. The members of private circles show no disposition to submit their "spirits" or their medium to scientific scrutiny or cross-examination. Besides, in but few of such meetings would he (the inquirer) discover any objective phenomena except "table-tilting." Perhaps he might, occasionally, meet with cases of moving luminosities or "spirit-lights," so-called, or of raps and movements of objects occurring without visible contact. But much as the investigator may be struck or puzzled by these phenomena, he cannot discuss them in scientific terms, still less try their reality by experiment.

I feel also bound to state that, in my opinion, and as far as my experience goes, the records of phenomena said to have occurred at private circles are grossly exaggerated; that, furthermore, most of the remarkable phenomena were obtained with paid mediums engaged for the evening. Consequently there exists no reasonable ground to assume, as most Spiritualists are wont to do, that the spiritual manifestations to be witnessed at private séances are in any way of a more powerful or more exalting nature than the usual "occurrences" characteristic to heterogeneous or public séances at "so much" per head. The difference in quality of manifestations witnessed at either the one or the other class of meetings appears to be simply this: at private meetings messages of a private nature are rapped out or given by tilts, and "forms" appearing are generally said to have been recognised as spirits of deceased relatives; whilst the "forms" appearing with public mediums are only "John Kings," "Peters," "Charlies," &c., but who will, if an opportunity is afforded them, *personate* spirits of deceased relatives. At the public séances the programme includes the exhibition of fun, which chiefly consists in a rather rough behaviour on the part of the "spirits" present, who seem to delight in throwing furniture about the room, or whose principal occupation is to fly the "fairy bells," &c. Private "physical mediums," *viz.*, persons through whose agency or organisation the usual séance-room phenomena are produced, and which consist in materialisations of spirits, levitation, or the passage of matter through matter, do not, so far as I am aware, exist in London at the present moment; or they are kept in

profound seclusion—at any rate, they are inaccessible to those who take a real interest in the subject. There are, however, persons who claim to possess physical mediumship, but my personal experience is that the phenomena occurring in their presence are limited to table tilts, rappings, and “spirit voices,” so-called (the latter being especially unverifiable), and that the more decided spirit manifestations, as understood by the Spiritualists themselves, do not occur at their sésances.

My experience of “private mediums” has induced me to arrive at the conclusion that they are “amateur mediums.” They write with planchette or hold impromptu addresses, and consider themselves guided by spirits or under direct “spiritual control.” The investigator into the realms of occult mystery can find nothing that will interest him at their sésances or meetings, except an occasional indication of telepathy between the circle and medium, the latter being invariably the recipient. Yet a mere suggestion, which might be made by the inquirer, as to the possibility of thought-transference being an explanation of the frequent “lucky hits” made by the medium (sometimes called the clairvoyant) would be treated with scorn. It should also be borne in mind that, as regards private mediums and their alleged phenomena, a good deal depends upon the definition of the term “private.” Spiritualists generally confine that term to all persons who obtain certain results in planchette-writing, trance-speaking, clairvoyant descriptions, and even to sensitives to mesmeric influence; or, what is somewhat exceptional, to certain persons suffering from certain forms of *hysteria*, insanity, &c., and who are considered to be possessed of some “evil” or “unruly” spirit. All such persons are considered private mediums so long as they do not offer themselves publicly as subjects for scientific experimentation or receive any honorarium for their services. Nevertheless, and this is a fact well known to Spiritualists, nearly all the now existing paid mediums were at one time “private,” and sésances held with them have been described as “private,” although no mention is made that these mediums were then what is termed developing for physical mediumship. The real fact is that paid mediums, during their novitiate, were by necessity compelled to “sit” with circles gratuitously because they could not then depend, with any amount of certainty, upon the production of any phenomena. The “occurrences,” if presenting themselves at all, were too imperfect and too coarse in their nature to allow such mediums to hold public sésances where success depends upon the regular production of certain characteristic phenomena.

Another kind of Spiritualistic sésances to which I will briefly allude is that where “friends” assemble for the purpose of holding what they consider to be communion with the spirits of deceased relatives, but where spiritual phenomena are conspicuous by their absence. There is usually a good deal of table-movement, and by the tilts messages are spelled out. Sometimes the “friends” assembled will speak a few words under “spirit influence.” Then this influence (or some other influence) will affect another friend present, who also holds a short address. I have noted down a few of these speeches as specimens, but prefer to keep them under cover because it is not my intention to trouble the inquirer with samples of productions of diseased minds. A scientific inquirer cannot, as a rule, get admission to

these places—which he need not regret—since the chief object of the circle is to converse with the spirits of their more intimate relatives and friends, chiefly about matters that cannot interest a stranger.

Having thus far dealt with the different kinds of localities where spirits are said to be present, I will now describe my experience as regards the supposed spirits themselves. The investigator's first difficulty will be to obtain satisfactory evidence of the identity of what I will call *séance*-room "spirits"—*e.g.*, those strange beings who are the regular attendants (guides) of the medium. By holding *séances* alternatively with medium A, B, and C, it will be noticed that spirits who are said to appear through the mediumship of A, B, and C, who claim to be the same individualities in each case, are, nevertheless, distinct beings (if beings), each belonging to a particular medium. For instance, the "John King," "Peter," and "Charlie" of medium A, profess to manifest likewise through medium B and C. Yet, after attending a series of *séances* with A, the investigator will discover, on attending a *séance* with B or C, that he is a perfect stranger to the "spirits" appearing there. To be more explicit I will give a few examples. The "John King," "Peter," and "Charlie" I had met a hundred times at *séances* with Mr. Husk as medium, did not recognise me when at a *séance* with Mr. Hearne, although the above-named "spirits" of Husk had often told me that they did regularly manifest through Hearne and other mediums. They had even promised to give me a test of their identity, should I ever be present at *séances* with these other mediums. At Mrs. Jencken's I received a written message from a "John King." The next day I met "John King" at Husk's. Asked whether he had met me the day before, his reply was in the negative. At Hearne's I met "John King," who said he knew me; but he, nevertheless, declined to reply to the questions I put to him. A few days afterwards the "John King" at Husk's informed me of my visit to Hearne, but gave no particulars of what happened there. N.B.—A gentleman present at Hearne's referred, in the presence of the medium's wife, to my regular visits to Husk. This at once led me to presume that the mediums had been in communication or that some one else had given certain information. At Hearne's I had intentionally declined to give my name, which was, besides, not known to the gentleman mentioned, who only knew me as a visitor at Husk's. The next day I returned to Hearne's *séance* and met "Charlie," who pretended to know me. Said "Charlie," "I did recognise you all the time but I felt such a delight in puzzling you." Asked whether he would tell my name the reply was: "Now then, there's a lark; well, you are Mr. Keelar" (*sic*). After "Charlie's" fiasco and "John King's" unwillingness to satisfy my curiosity, I felt no longer induced to continue my visits at Hearne's.

I am under the impression that, as a generality, "spirits" know no more of worldly matters than their mediums do, and that the knowledge they appear to possess with regard to the circle is in direct proportion to the information the mediums have succeeded in collecting. Still, it has, on the other hand, been my experience that mention was made by the "spirits" at the public *séance*-room of facts which the medium could not be supposed to have known; or that descriptions, even to the most minute details, were given of objects

and the colour of dress, &c., worn by those assembled at the séance, and which it would seem could hardly have been noticed by the medium. I do not state that it was absolutely impossible for the medium to have become acquainted with, or cognisant of, these quasi-secrets. My experience would rather lead to the conclusion that the "spirits" are ignorant of facts which the medium has had no opportunity to acquaint himself with in the ordinary way; but that a medium, when in the condition termed "trance," or when in some analogous state, may be endowed with higher powers of perception, and thus communicate unconsciously, such perceptions to the invisible beings (or "spirits") attached to him; or he may automatically act the part of the "spirit" under the latter's control, like a subject in the hypnotic trance will follow the suggestions of his agent—his "willer." But it appears that in most cases these conditions are either disturbed or totally absent, and that the medium is compelled to guess and try the best he can. I will quote an example which will, I think, fully demonstrate the truth of my assertion. At a séance, held in private but with a paid medium, the "spirits," who were heard moving about the room, only recognised those persons whom the medium knew to be present before the lights were extinguished. A stranger, who had been accidentally overlooked by the medium, was not only not found out by the "spirits," but his presence actually denied by them.

I will now deal with the cases of recognitions, by the circle, of the "forms," viz., the presumed "materialised forms" of spirits, appearing at séances. Without wishing to misrepresent the position of Spiritualism, I feel bound to state that, so far as my experience goes, the capital tenet of its creed rests upon insufficient grounds. From what I have been able to discover, I cannot but unhesitatingly declare that all the so-called recognitions are delusions. The circumstances under which these "forms" appeared made it impossible for the persons present to observe any features whatsoever, or to recognise the voices of any of the "forms" which came, sometimes but partly, forward. To make myself well understood I will mention two typical cases which have come under my observation.

At private séances, held weekly, at the residence of a lady, a paid medium* being engaged, a "spirit" performs the rôle of the lady's deceased husband. This "spirit" I could readily recognise by the strange intonation of its voice. It only shows itself if the medium is allowed (or is directed by his "spirits") to sit apart. It never shows any features, as the head is invariably covered with drapery—the excuse made by the "spirit" for not uncovering its head being "that the face is but partly materialised and not fit to be exhibited" (*sic*). The spirit's voice, however, joins in the topical conversation, addresses the lady by her Christian name, and gives little bits of advice, if required. I have noticed that this particular "form" is just the size of the medium, but appears shorter on account of its somewhat bent and contracted attitude. The voice is apparently weak—which, like the attitude assumed, is—so the "spirit" declares—the result of its having died from a long and painful illness! Yet the lady recognises this "form" as her husband. But it so happens that the same medium holds séances at his own residence for Spiritualists and, to some extent, admits enquirers.

* The names and addresses are given in confidence to the editor.

At these séances the same "form," with its weak voice, appears somewhat irregularly, and performs the "spirit" of the deceased husband of another lady. In the earlier times of my visits at these séances this "form" attempted to pass itself off as one of my deceased brothers. Unfortunately for the "spirit," the would-be brother did not know my Christian name, nor his own, and to make things still more absurd, spoke in English, which my brother had never spoken. But to return to the widowed ladies, who each received visits from their departed husbands. Mrs. A. holds séances at her residence, and rarely visits the medium at his own house, while Mrs. B. invariably goes to the latter place. The ladies are strangers to each other. By accident, Mrs. A. once visited the medium at his public séances the very evening when Mrs. B. was there. It occurred to me that the "spirit" would this time get into difficulties. I was anxiously awaiting the solution of the problem, expecting either the discovery of fraud by, or a dispute between, the two ladies concerned. But the thing was cleverly managed after all, and both ladies received the customary visits of their respective husbands to their entire satisfaction. This is how it was arranged:—

First, Mrs. B. was favoured with the exhibition—by a sheet of luminous paper—of a "form" showing only part of the head, the face being covered with drapery, so arranged as to allow only Mrs. B. to see the forehead and eyes. To the remaining portion of the circle, with the exception of one or two persons sitting at her right side, the features were hidden. However, the "spirit" never uttered a sound, which was contrary to its habits, and disappeared without even wishing her his customary "Good-night, God bless you." As a sign of recognition, Mrs. B. exclaims the name of her dead husband! A few seconds after a spirit-voice (one of the "guides") addresses the circle, informing them that Mr. B. had appeared to his wife, but felt rather weak, and that hence he could not materialise a voice (*sic*). Towards the end of the séance, a soft, trembling voice was heard to whisper close to the ears of Mrs. A., another "spirit-voice" announcing the arrival of Mr. A. Silence was requested by the medium's wife, as the voice of Mr. A. was weak. The usual compliment was made, the invariable blessings invoked by *pseudo* Mr. A., when Mrs. A. expressed her surprise at not beholding her long-lost husband in the "materialised" form. Then the whispering spirit, by way of an explanation for his shortcomings, excused itself by stating that "power was getting exhausted" and that a materialisation of a body could not be accomplished without injury to the medium, but that she (Mrs. A.) might expect better results next time at her own circle! It should be noted that the "spirit," in order to avoid discrepancies, showed part of its face, without using its voice, when near Mrs. B., and that it used its whisper but did not show its form when addressing Mrs. A. It need not be mentioned that both the ladies failed to discover the trick, and that each left the séance-room under the pleasant satisfaction of having once more communed with her departed husband.

A few days after, Mrs. B. again attended a séance at the medium's house, when, as might have been expected, a "spirit" claiming to be Mr. B. appeared to the lady. Up to that evening Mrs. B. had not put any questions to her supposed husband, but had satisfied herself with listening to what the "spirit"

said to her, or rather seemed to attempt to say to her, since, as Mrs. B. informed me herself, she did not very well understand what her husband said. I believe doubts as to the genuineness of the apparition began to arise in Mrs. B.'s mind. Whether some one had prompted her to try a test she did not say, but a test she did introduce, and a good one it turned out to be. Mrs. B.'s husband (her real husband) was a Belgian, and conversation between husband and wife was usually held in the French language. When the "form" appeared, Mrs. B. addresses it in French, asking—not without emphasis—"G., *as-tu à me dire quelque chose ?*" to which "Monsieur G.'s materialised spirit" replies with a series of monosyllabic utterances sounding like *boo-boo-boo*, and he terminates his reply by a repetition of the last word of the question, *chose*. (It will be noticed that this word would not have been likely to recur in an answer to the question.) A few days later on, a séance is given at the house of a Spiritualist, with the same medium, Mrs. B. being again present, and, at the "form" of her presumed husband making his usual appearance, she once more repeats the question and, needless to add, with exactly the same results. Yet, after all this worthless evidence, all these badly-played tricks, the *Medium and Daybreak*, a Spiritualistic newspaper, records the séance in its next appearing number, and quotes as a specially convincing event the fact that a French lady present met her deceased husband and actually *conversed* with him in her native tongue!

I have mentioned only these two cases out of many of a similar quality; in fact at almost every séance I was present such similar "recognitions" were the order of the evening. Not only did husbands, fathers, mothers appear to the circle, but even little "forms" were seen and "recognised" as the children of some of the members of the circle, although these "things" kept at the respective distance of many yards, and never ventured into the light, if such were allowed in the room, or used the luminous slates for their exhibition when the séance was a dark one.* Besides the "relatives" met at séances for physical manifestations I must also refer to the exhibition of periodical spirit-celebrities—like the Prince Imperial, Colonel Burnaby, General Gordon, some recently-executed criminal, all of whom are said to be recognised by the circle.

From what may be seen and experienced at these séances, it would appear that the obvious mistakes and unfounded recognitions on the part of the circle are caused by a combination of influences acting simultaneously, such as, for instance, fear, anxiety, expectation, firm belief in the possibility of spirit return, and trust in the assertions of other believers. Besides, it will be found that there is a marked deficiency in the powers of observation in all those persons who believe in having met a spirit-friend or relative *in the materialised condition*. Further, there are a great many Spiritualists, good observers, upon whose competency as leaders and advisers many inquirers

*On one occasion, however, a little form ran through the séance-room, exhibiting itself sufficiently to show that the proportions were those of a child. There were no children of so small proportions in the house where the séance, which was a private one, was held.

rely, who have not personally met with such cases, but who nevertheless confirm their reality because "all the other witnesses cannot be mistaken." I have reasons to believe that, under the circumstances prevailing at dark séances, weak-minded, credulous or emotional persons are ready victims to sensory hallucinations. In fact, if hallucinations come into play at all, or anywhere, it must be here in these very places. I will not quote such cases where the members of a circle, or some of them are obviously suffering from a peculiar form of insanity (though these sufferers appear to be more numerous than is generally supposed), and with whom the enquirer will often find himself obliged to mix—persons, I mean, who insist upon his unconditionally accepting all the miracles they will tell him of—who see a spirit behind everybody; who observe the "spirits" assisting Mr. Maskelyne at his entertainments, and of whose glaring absurdities the scientific investigator cannot, as a matter of course, take the slightest notice.

What I wished to direct special attention to is, that the very stronghold of modern Spiritualism rests upon no other foundations than the rash assertions on the part of unqualified recorders who are guided by infatuation rather than by reason. In all the cases of supposed recognised apparitions at séances where I happened to be present, the necessary conditions to discriminate between the genuine and the fraudulent were invariably disregarded. The medium was directed by the spirit-voice to sit away from the circle, and, consequently, there were no means to ascertain whether the "forms" appearing were being disconnected from the medium, or the medium himself acting under hypnotic impulse, or a fraud. Direct proof of a "form's" identity was not even required; it seemed sufficient for the "form" to merely answer the question, "Are you so-and-so?" in the affirmative. After this, the circle proclaimed unanimously the apparition of so-and-so. If, what occasionally happens, the "form" volunteered additional evidence, it was always the world's property, or previously "let out," i.e., offered to the "spirit" to help him along, by the circle itself.

But my object in alluding to the various ills of the present-day séance-room is not, as might be supposed, to warn the intended investigator against the subject of Spiritualism *in toto*. In how far all the usual occurrences are true or not true is a question which I must leave the inquirer to find out for himself. My opinion is, that (1) genuine spiritual phenomena occur sometimes; (2) that some of the occurrences are explicable by telepathy and "psychic-interaction" on the part of the circle and medium; and, lastly, that most of the "form presentations" are frauds for which the medium may not be entirely responsible. The facts I have quoted were mostly accidental discoveries made during long continued, patient, and vigorous investigation in all directions, and with every accessible medium, private or public, as circumstances permitted. I merely wished to have my remarks made public to save the intended inquirer—who may be a total stranger to the subject—much disappointment in the expectations he may perhaps entertain. To those likely to precipitate themselves into this dark abyss it may be useful to learn some of the results of my experience of nearly 400 séances, in the more compressed form of a few pages of letter-press.—I remain, Sir, yours obediently,

J. G. KEULEMANS.