

PROCEEDINGS OF THE GENERAL MEETING ON

November 28, 1884.

The tenth General Meeting of the Society was held at the Rooms of the Society of British Artists, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, on Friday, November 28, 1884.

PROFESSOR W. F. BARRETT, VICE-PRESIDENT, IN THE CHAIR.

The Chairman, in his opening address, described a recent visit to Canada and the United States, in the course of which he had devoted much time and trouble to spreading a knowledge of the Society's work. He had met with many indications of a genuine interest in Psychical Research, and he spoke hopefully of the prospect that allied societies might before long be formed at several important centres.

I.

ON A TELEPATHIC EXPLANATION OF SOME SO-CALLED
SPIRITUALISTIC PHENOMENA.

By F. W. H. MYERS.

PART I.

It is an obvious fact, but it is nevertheless a fact which we must repeat as often as possible, that in no way can psychical research be better aided than by constant and varied experiments on Thought-transference in every form. We have got, as we hold, a definite fact to start from, a fact of immense and unknown significance. If, as we believe, we can truly say "mind acts on mind otherwise than by the recognised organs of sense," this is probably a statement far more pregnant with consequences than the statements, "rubbed amber attracts straw," or, "the loadstone attracts iron." And it must be our business to turn our new fact over in every direction, to speculate upon it in every way, or rather in every way which can possibly suggest a new form of experiment. We must remember that the experimental cases which we have already collected are probably only what Bacon calls "ostensive instances;" "instances," as he expressed it, "which show the nature under investigation naked, in an

exalted condition, or in the highest degree of power";—and which are, so to speak, mere emergent summits from a great ocean, which lies beyond our present reach of observation, and perhaps even beneath the level of our consciousness.

And our investigation, in the case of a power so novel and obscure, must take two different, though converging lines. We must, in the first place, vary our actual deliberate experiments as widely as possible; in turn introducing and excluding as many separate conditions as seem likely to have a bearing on the result. And we must, in the second place, scan the whole range of psychical phenomena already alleged to occur (though interpreted on some different principle) with telepathy in our minds as a new *vera causa*, which will probably be found to be the real solution of many problems hitherto in dispute.

And in this form of *fishing interrogatory*, or survey from a new standpoint of a wide and miscellaneous field, we shall do best to begin with a few definite groups of phenomena, and to disentangle them as distinctly as may be from any dubious theory with which they may have become involved, and to look at them in the light of telepathy so as to give that theory the chance of explaining them.

In this process we shall probably, in some directions, press the theory of telepathy farther than subsequent knowledge will justify. But it is only by endeavouring to ascertain how many phenomena, inexplicable by generally recognised laws of nature, may be explained by this new *vera causa* that we shall learn at what point other, yet unknown, causes (if any) begin to intervene.

We have already begun to make one survey from the telepathic standpoint of previously-recorded phenomena—namely, our inquiry into the nature of *apparitions* and other (auditory or tactile) phantasms of living persons. We have seen reason to connect many of these with telepathy; and we are pressing that explanation as far as it will go, though without prejudice to any other explanation which certain apparitions may hereafter seem to require.

In the same way I now propose, in a series of two or three papers, to consider how far the already recorded phenomena of automatic writing and the like may be explained by telepathy, but without prejudice to any other yet unknown causes which may afterwards show claim to acceptance.

I have selected *automatic writing* as the subject for inquiry in great measure because of its direct bearing on one of the most interesting of telepathic problems,—viz., the relation of *consciousness* to telepathy; the extent to which the hypothetical impact is consciously present, whether as will, thought, emotion, or sensation in either mind. Throughout all these investigations we must keep *unconscious cerebration* steadily in view, and we shall, I think, find ourselves confronted with many of its

results, and be induced continually to enlarge its field of action. We shall, I venture to say, come to regard this term less and less as expressing a *subsidiary*, more and more as expressing a *substantive and primary* operation of our intelligence; and we shall come, perhaps, to find *super-conscious* as necessary a term as *sub-conscious*, if we would indicate the true relation to each other of the processes in which our being consists.

And it is to my mind one of the chief interests in telepathy that it seems sometimes to reveal our unconscious to our conscious selves; that it acts like the strong inwardly-directed ray of light which enables the surgeon to see reflected in a mirror some obscure recess of his own inward structure.

With these possibilities in our mind, let us first consider how the question of *consciousness* stands in the cases of telepathy which we have already collected. And, for the sake of simplicity, we will, in this first paper, take the *percipient's* consciousness alone into account.

In our recorded *experiments* on telepathy with percipients in the normal state the percipient has necessarily been conscious of the impact, inasmuch as it has been by his description, or his voluntary representation of the impact, (as by drawing a picture which he feels to be telepathically presented to his mind's eye), that the success of the experiment has been tested. No argument can be drawn from these cases, however, as to the *necessary* emergence of the telepathic impact in consciousness. For here consciousness was voluntarily concentrated on the reception of that impact; all competing impressions being, as far as possible, excluded.

But in one class of our experiments a singular difference occurs. Thought-transference is one of the characteristic phenomena of the mesmeric trance or *sleep-waking* state, where, although there seems to be a certain consciousness at the time, that consciousness, in most cases, leaves no trace whatever in the subject's normal memory. And, more than this, there seems reason to believe that in many cases of hysteria and similar affections where the subject is said to be *clairvoyante*, the phenomenon is in reality referable to thought-transference only. An interesting case, recently published by Dr. Taguet, of Bordeaux, affords a good instance of the confusion of thought at present prevalent on such subjects. His hysterical patient manifested during her *accès* an extraordinary hyperæsthesia of smell and hearing. Her eyes, meantime, were shut, or at any rate the eyeballs were completely upturned. But, nevertheless, she manifested what Dr. Taguet rather oddly describes as "hyperæsthesia of vision," under the following circumstances. Dr. Taguet stood completely behind her, and fixed his eyes on certain words in a book. A sheet of cardboard was held before her face, in such a position that, had it been a mirror, the book would have been reflected

therein. The girl then, in her trance, took the cardboard for a mirror, and spelt out the words which Dr. Taguet was reading, as though they were reflected in the cardboard before her. Now Dr. Taguet does not attempt to explain this, further than by calling it hyperæsthesia of vision. But he can hardly mean that she really saw the words reflected in the cardboard. Perhaps the only other solution which suggested itself to him was that she saw the words clairvoyantly, and this solution he did not like to adopt. And there is in fact no reason, as the facts are reported, for assuming clairvoyance. Thought-transference would amply suffice to explain the phenomenon. If, then, we find telepathy occurring in mesmeric trance and spontaneous trance, we may infer that it is not inseparably linked with the ordinary stream of normal consciousness. If it appears as an element of the consciousness or quasi-consciousness of abnormal states, which themselves form mere *lacunæ* in the main life-memory, it may be surmised to exist beneath the threshold of consciousness in normal states also.

It is, naturally, not very easy to get direct evidence of this. Amongst our phantasms of the living we have, no doubt, many instances where the supposed thought or impulse of the agent is represented very vaguely and imperfectly in the percipient's mind, and prompts, for instance, to some mistaken form of action. But this is not quite the same thing. *Something* comes into the percipient's consciousness, though it may be only an imperfect transcript of what the agent's mind contained, or attempted to transmit.

In a few cases, however, the impact seems to affect the percipient without exciting anything which can be called an *idea*. In these cases it is merely felt as a motor impulse, determining to some action whose purport is not consciously realised. We have elsewhere given the case of Mr. Skirving, who was irresistibly impelled to leave his work and go home—why, he knew not—at a moment when his wife was, in fact, calling for him in the distress of a serious accident. But we may give here one other illustrative case,—which no one, I think, who has accepted the general fact of telepathy will be disposed to regard as a mere coincidence; a case where consciousness is still *less* invaded by the telepathic impact, and where the motor impulse is described as having been as nearly *automatic* as any movements so prolonged and complex can easily be. The case comes from Mr. Morgan, of Nugent Hill, recommended to us by Dr. Paul Chapman as a most accurate and careful informant.

Nugent Hill, Bristol, *July 11th*, 1883.

DEAR SIR,—

The matter to which Dr. Chapman refers is as follows :—

On Monday, February 14th, 1853, I was listening to a lecture by the late Geo. Dawson, of Birmingham, in the Broadmead Rooms in Bristol. I frequently spent my evenings at lectures, concerts, &c., and often took a

little walk afterwards on my way home. I had lived nearly all my life (27 years) at home with my mother, whom I strongly resemble in face and in many characteristics. We were much attached to each other.

I was thoroughly interested in the lecture, and had so little intention of leaving before its conclusion, that I remember noticing a friend among the audience and making up my mind for a walk with him on my way home.

The lecture must have been more than half through—I was not tired, and had no reason to move—when I noticed, at the side of the platform farthest from the back entrance to the hall, a door which I had never seen before, flush with the panels, and it suddenly became the most natural thing that I should walk half the length of the room, and away from the main entrance, in order to see if this door would open. I turned the handle, passed through, closed the door gently behind me, and found myself in the dark among the wooden supports of the platform.

I clambered along towards a glimmer of light at the other end, passed round a side passage, crossed the end of the hall to the main entrance without any thought of the lecture, which was still going on, and walked home quietly without excitement and “impression” of any kind, and quite unconscious, till long after, that I had done anything unusual.

On opening my door with a latch-key I smelt fire, and found my mother in great alarm. She had also noticed the strong burning smell, had been over the house with her servant, and was longing for my return.

On going upstairs I saw flames issuing from a back window of the next house, immediately gave the alarm, removed my mother to a safe distance, and then had two or three hours’ struggle with the flames. The adjoining house was destroyed, but mine only slightly damaged.

The point which has seemed to me most striking whenever I have recalled this occurrence, is the entire absence of any presentiment or impression on my mind. I should probably have shaken off anything of the kind had I been aware of it, and refused obedience.

Neither was there on my mother’s part any intentional exertion of her will upon me, only a strong wish for my presence, which must have begun about the time I left my seat. I do not know that there is anything to add. If anything occurs to you as being worthy of further inquiry, I shall be happy to say what I can about it.

FREDK. MORGAN.

Mr. Morgan adds, in reply to our regular inquiry, that he has never had any other presentiment or impression of the kind.

He also sends a plan of the lecture-room, which shows that he walked in a dark passage round nearly three sides of the hall.

“But *going home*,” he adds, “was not in my thoughts when I moved.”

Well, then, let us consider whether there is any kind of minor automatic motion which we can hope to evoke experimentally by telepathic impact, without the invasion of the percipient’s consciousness by any definite *idea*? The movements practised in the “willing game”—finding of objects and the like—at once suggest themselves, and the writing of the numbers of bank-notes, &c., as practised in certain public performances. But, as we have so often remarked, any contact between

agent and percipient at once vitiates these as telepathic experiments; and even if we get the finding of objects, &c., without contact, it seems difficult to exclude all risk of *guessing*, where the possible modifications of movement are, comparatively speaking, so few. We want to find some class of movement which shall be readily capable of being performed *automatically*, and at the same time shall admit of a very large range of variations.

Probably the first action of this kind which will suggest itself to all of us is the act of *writing*. Handwriting is, in many ways, a kind of summary expression of a man's being. It is one of the best instances of an aptitude at once acquired and hereditary; of a manual dexterity which obeys limitations of idiosyncrasy as well as of will. John Smith cannot paint like Raphael. That, we say, is because Raphael's command of hand and eye is immensely greater than John Smith's. But it does not follow that Raphael can write like John Smith. Very probably no manual or mental superiority will give him the power of appropriating what is veritably idiosyncratic in the hurried scrawl with which John Smith signs his name, with scarcely a glance at the paper. Handwriting, that is to say, is a *deep-seated* thing. It is likely to have secrets to tell us.

First, let us consider what is the *rationale* of automatic writing from the ordinary physiological point of view. It is simply an extension of the tricks of unconscious action which, to some extent, are common to every one, and which in nervous and excitable persons often attain an extraordinary degree of complexity. It is, of course, well known that in moments of vivid emotion the surplus nervous energy escapes in involuntary channels, which often bear some traceable connection with the habitual modes of thought or action of the person concerned. To take a typical case, an accomplished pianist, if stirred by some sudden emotion while seated at the piano, will sometimes play a long passage without any consciousness of having done so; and, moreover, the passage thus unwittingly selected will be one which is in vague general harmony with the new current of emotion. Now the act of *writing* being one of the commonest of the more complex acquired acts, we shall naturally expect that many half-conscious or unconscious tricks will be connected with it.

And this is notoriously the case. Persons seated with pens or pencils in their hands round a table where discussion is going on will generally scrawl or sketch on the paper before them; while if that paper was suddenly withdrawn, and they were asked what words they had written thereon, most of them would be unable to reply. Students of *language* are, as might be expected, particularly liable to this trick; and many an odd Greek word, oozing its way, so to speak, from some recess of memory, has been unconsciously scribbled on the edge of

composition papers in the nervousness of examination. In this case it is the strong concentration of the current of attention elsewhere which allows the writing faculty to manifest itself automatically,—permits, that is to say, the unconscious cerebral action to discharge itself along the well-worn track which leads to the formation of written words. And something of the same kind takes place also when the current of attention, instead of being concentrated into a narrow channel, is choked in the sand; or (to vary the metaphor) when an explosion of the more complex brain elements (as in an epileptic fit) has left the less complex in possession of the field, and the actions are not guided, or not wholly guided, by conscious will. There are many varieties of this *morbid* automatism. Thus a patient of this kind may write a word, say, “horse,” without any consciousness of writing at all (as in some slight epileptiform seizures, where the act of writing is automatically *continued*); or he may write “cow” when he wishes to write “horse” and *not* perceive his error; or he may write “cow” for “horse,” although he perceives his error as he is in the act of committing it. Now, in both these classes of cases, in the graphic automatism of mental abstraction and the graphic automatism of cerebral disease, the passages written are usually very *short*; in the first case because the abstraction is transitory, in the second case because the writing impulse is feeble. The anxious classical honour-man could not scribble down a whole ode of Pindar without becoming aware of what he was doing. And in the morbid cases there is nothing but a residual impetus, soon exhausted, or a painful effort of the imperfect will. Let us consider, however, whether there are any cases which indicate that the unconscious graphic impulse may be prolonged and in a sense *systematic*. We find that precisely such cases are afforded by somnambulists, who not unfrequently write long compositions with much manual rapidity and accuracy. Sometimes these compositions are a kind of written dream, rambling and incoherent; sometimes they are on the level of waking thought; sometimes they seem to overpass it, as when the solution of a baffling problem is written out during sleep.

We see, then, that automatic writing is a phenomenon liable to be originated in various ways in the human organism. And we shall not, therefore, be surprised to find that certain human beings are very much more liable to its occurrence than their neighbours. For we are gradually learning, (what was, of course, antecedently probable), that the gamut of natural capacity is just as far-reaching when we deal with things trifling and useless, as when we deal with the most important and conspicuous things. The differences in human faculty were noted first in matters important to human welfare; but they exist quite as markedly in the obscurest corners of our constitution. There is the born muscle-reader just as surely as the born runner; there is the born

visualiser of numbers—to take one of Mr. Galton's instances—just as truly as the born painter or sculptor. We can set no definite limit beforehand to any of the veins of unexplored faculty which crop up at intervals from the subterranean realms of our being.

It will, therefore, by no means surprise us to learn that there are certain persons who occasionally feel an impulse to write automatically when they are merely sitting quiet with a pencil in their hands. This is not really much more odd than that there should be persons who occasionally feel an impulse to *imagine a tune* inwardly when they are merely sitting quiet with nothing to do. The imagined tune often externalises itself, so to speak, in rhythmical movements of the head and body, involving a good deal of muscular action, of which the subject is nearly or quite unconscious. The case of automatic writing, however, differs in this way from the dumbly-imagined tune,—in that the written words, falling immediately under the writer's eye, tend to arrest his attention and to evoke a *conscious* train of thought,—an anticipation of what is coming next, which strongly tends to check the automatic flow. The little instrument called *Planchette* is mainly useful in precluding this kind of interruption. It is, of course, simply a piece of board supported on three legs, one of which legs is a pencil, so that if a hand be placed flat on the board, and if that hand be then moved as though tracing letters, the board will move accordingly, and the pencil will rudely trace out the letters which the hand's movement figures. Of course it is perfectly easy to write *consciously* with a *Planchette*, and to be aware of the letters which the pencil is shaping. But the point is that *if* there is a tendency already existing to *automatic* writing, it is much easier to write automatically or unconsciously with the *Planchette* than without it. A slight tremor of the hand will set the *Planchette* running, and the scrawled characters are generally quite too rough and confused to catch the operator's eye, and suggest conscious anticipations.

Now suppose I am writing with a *Planchette*. Let us consider what theories are logically possible as to the source of what I write. The words which I am writing may conceivably be :—

1. Consciously written in the ordinary way, and chosen by my deliberate will.
2. Automatically written, and supplied by my own unconscious cerebration, as in dreams.
3. Automatically written, but supplied by some higher unconscious intelligence or faculty of my own, as in clairvoyance.
4. Automatically written, but supplied by telepathic impact from other minds.
5. Automatically written, and supplied by "spirits" or extra-human intelligences.

Now as to hypothesis (1) of course, we are all agreed. It is per-

fectly easy to write consciously with Planchette, and to look as if you were writing unconsciously. The *proof* (to others than the actual writer) that the writing is automatic can only lie in the production of names or facts unknown to the writer. But it is easy for competent observers, under certain circumstances, to satisfy themselves that what they write, although containing no facts new to them, has *not* passed through their consciousness. I am speaking at present, of course, of cases where one person alone is writing, either with or without Planchette.

The first incipient stage of automatism is described in the following account by Mr. H. Arthur Smith, author of "The Principles of Equity," and a member of the Council of the Society for Psychical Research.

In experimenting alone, since, I have not succeeded in getting any motion out of the instrument *aliunde*; but I think I have observed that when my hand rested on it, the wrist being grasped by the other hand, a word, on which I concentrated my attention, was written without any conscious volitional effort. I am doubtful as to this, as it is a difficult thing to be sure of the absence of volition, but such is my decided impression.

Next we have the experience of Mr. A. (a friend of the writer's), who can often write words by mere attention without any voluntary muscular action whatever. He fixes his mind on a word, and his hand writes it with energy,—as though by an involuntary spasm or true *cacoethes scribendi*,—while he is studiously avoiding all intentional impulse. This experience is interesting, as being precisely what might have been anticipated, as an intermediate step between writing which is wholly voluntary and writing which is wholly automatic. It seems probable that there might be a point at which consciousness extended to the idea related with the movement, but not to the movement itself, at which there was still *attention*, but not voluntary muscular action. We have next to find an example of writing wholly automatic, indicating if possible by its very substance that it has not consciously passed through the writer's mind. It is naturally not very easy to fix on written matter of which we can affirm both that it is such as the writer's *unconscious* cerebration might have produced, and that it is such as his *conscious* cerebration had no share in modifying. There are frequent cases in which the writer affirms that he is not aware of the letters which he is writing until he is in the act of writing them; or sometimes until they are written. In such cases the nervous process which causes the act of writing would seem to be unconscious; although the mental act required to produce the formation of a letter is so simple and rapid that it is hard to be sure that there was not a semi-consciousness of it almost immediately forgotten. Sometimes however, in the midst of

writing of this kind the result of the involuntary movement of the pen is altogether puzzling to the writer,—is something which he has to make out with difficulty as if it were the product of another brain ;—and in such cases we have, I think, to suppose that a rather complex process of unconscious cerebration has taken place. An excellent instance of this kind has been sent to the Society by the above-mentioned Mr. A., on whose accuracy we believe that we can thoroughly rely. We give it in full because it is a good instance of the capricious half-nonsense which believers in Spiritualism often unhesitatingly refer to the agency of spirits, but which every intelligent Spiritualist would surely be glad to be able to explain in some other way.

The indisputable evidence for complex unconscious cerebration which this case seems to me to furnish lies in the fact that here the Planchette writes not only unintelligible abbreviations but absolute anagrams of sentences ; anagrams, indeed, of the crudest kind, consisting of mere transpositions of letters, but still *puzzles* which the writer had to set himself to decipher *ab extra*. The chances against drawing a group of letters *at random* which will form several definite words and leave no letters over, are, of course, very great indeed.

CLELIA, OR UNCONSCIOUS CEREBRATION.

The following experiment will be regarded by some as a beautiful proof of unconscious cerebration ; by others as an indubitable proof of the existence of spirits. Others, again, will, like myself, remain halting between the two opinions, with a decided leaning to the scientifically more orthodox. I wished to know if I were myself an automatic writer, or so-called writing medium. The experiment was made Easter, 1883, upon one day, and after an interval of a week, continued upon three consecutive days ; upon four days in all. Upon the first day I became seriously interested ; on the second puzzled ; on the third I seemed to be entering upon entirely novel experiences, half awful and half romantic ; upon the fourth the sublime ended very painfully in the ridiculous.

FIRST DAY.

Q. 1. Upon what conditions may I learn from the unseen ?

A. 1.

My hand immediately moved, though not to a very satisfying issue. But, as my expectation of the answer had been that the condition was a strict adherence to the absolute rule of right, holiness in short, I took this answer to be at any rate consistent with my expectation, and continued :

Q. 2. *What* is it that *now* moves my pen ?

A. 2. Religion.

Q. 3. What moves my pen to write *that* answer ?

A. 3. Conscience.

NOTE TO PAGE 226.

It should be stated here that besides the anagrams given in the text, Mr. A. obtained also other anagrams; as *wfvs yoitet* (Testify! vow!); *ieb iov ogf wle* (I go, vow belief!); and in reply to the question "How shall I believe?" *neb 16 vbliy ev 86e earf ee* (Believe by fear even, 1866). How unlikely it is that all this was due to mere accident may be seen by anyone who will take letters, (the vowels and consonants roughly proportioned to the frequency of their actual use,) and try to make up a series of handfuls *completely* into words possessing any grammatical coherence or intelligible meaning. Now in Mr. A.'s case all the *professed* anagrams (when legible) were found to be *real* anagrams, (with one error of i for e); some of the sentences were real answers to the questions; and not even the absurdest sentences were wholly meaningless.

Q. 4. What is religion ?

A. 4. Worship.

Here arose a difficulty. Although I did not *expect* either of these three answers, yet when the first few letters had been written I expected the remainder of the word. This might vitiate the result. Cons—, for instance, might have ended as consciousness, had I thought of that word instead of thinking of conscience. As if to meet the difficulty, just as if an intelligence wished to prove by the manner of answering that the answer could be due to *it* alone, and in no way and in no part to mere expectancy, my next question received a singular reply.

Q. 5. Worship of what ?

A. 5. wwbwbwbwb—

Q. 6. What is the meaning of wb ?

A. 6. Win, buy.

Q. 7. What ?

A. 7. Know (ledge).

Here I knew the letters which were to follow, and the pen made a sudden jerk, as if it were useless to continue.

Q. 8. How ?

A. 8. _____

Here I was referred to the first answer. Although startled by the fifth and seventh answers, which *at first sight* seemed to show an independent will and intelligence, yet, as I had learnt nothing new, I concluded the whole to be due to unconscious cerebration and expectancy. Having, then, put a few questions as to matters of fact unknown to me, but easily discoverable, and the replies being either illegible or wrong, I was confirmed as to the complete-naturalness of the phenomena.

SECOND DAY.

Q. 1. What is man ? (*i.e.*, What is the nature of his being ?)

A. 1. Flise.

My pen was at first very violently agitated, which had not been the case upon the first day. It was quite a minute before it wrote as above. Upon the analogy of *wb*, I proceeded.

Q. 2. What does F stand for ?

A. 2. Fesi.

Q. 3. l ?

A. 3. le.

Q. 4. i ?

A. 4. i v y.

Q. 5. s ?

A. 5. sir.

Q. 6. e ?

A. 6. e y e.

Fesi le ivy sir eye.

Q. 7. Is this an anagram ?

A. 7. Yes.

Q. 8. How many words in the answer ?

A. 8. 4.

I tried for a few minutes to solve it without success. Not caring to spend much time in trying to solve what might have no solution, I gave it up.

THIRD DAY.

Q. 1. (rep.) What is man ?

A. 1. Tefi Hasl Eble Lies.

This answer was written right off.

Q. 2. Is this an anagram ?

A. 2. Yes.

Q. 3. How many words in the answer ?

A. 3. V (i.e., 5).

Q. 4. What is the first word ?

A. 4. See.

Q. 5. What is the second word ?

A. 5. Eeeeeee—

Q. 6. See ? Must I interpret it myself ?

A. 6. Try.

Presently I got out

“Life is the less able.”

Next I tried the anagram given upon the previous day, and at last obtained

“Every life is yes.”

But my pen signified that it preferred the following order of words,

“Every life yes is.”

Some remarks concerning the probable genesis of these oracular sentences will be made in the sequel. I do not know whether any other interpretations can be given to the letters. But these fulfil the requirements as to the number of words ; and the action of the pen, assisting in the process of interpretation, pointing to the letters, accepting these and rejecting those combinations, left no doubt in my mind that I had hit the meaning.

But now I was so astonished at the apparently independent will and intellect manifested in forming the above anagrams that, for the nonce, I became a complete convert to Spiritualism ; and it was not without something of awe, that I put :—

Q. 7. Who art thou ?

A. 7. *Clelia* !!

Q. 8. Thou art a woman ?

A. 8. Yes.

Q. 9. Hast thou ever lived upon the earth ?

A. 9. No.

- Q. 10. Wilt thou ?
 A. 10. Yes.
 Q. 11. When ?
 A. 11. Six years.
 Q. 12. Wherefore dost thou speak with me ?
 A. 12. E if Clelia e l.

It has been already said that when I experimented I had a certain fever of speculative pessimism upon me. It was, therefore, with increasing excitement that I perceived as an interpretation

“ I Clelia feel.”

But upon my asking whether this was right “ Clelia ” wrote again thus

“ E if Clelia e l.”

20

- Q. 13. Is 20 your age ?
 A. 13. ∞. (She was eternal.)
 Q. 14. Then 20 what ?
 A. 14. Words.

I was obliged to reserve the reception of these till the morrow. I am writing not a tale of Edgar Poe, but a scientific narration of fact. Therefore, nothing shall be said of my feelings and ideas upon this occasion. It was evident that I was in communication with a—beautiful?—spirit of romantic name, who in six years time was to be born upon the earth. My snatches of sleep that night were few and far between.

FOURTH DAY.

I began my questioning in the same exalted mood, but, to my surprise, did not get the same answer.

- Q. 1. Wherefore dost thou speak with me ?
 A. 1. [Wavy line. Repetition and emphasis : Wherefore dost *thou* speak with *me* ?]

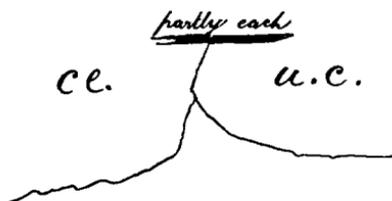
However, I thought this “ a solemn and piercing rejoinder,” and proceeded to consider my motives, and purify them from all earthly and unspiritual alloy. Then—

- Q. 2. Wherefore dost thou answer me ?
 A. 2. [Wavy line. Wherefore dost *thou* answer *me* ?]
 Q. 3. Do I answer myself ?
 A. 3. Yes.
 Q. 4. Is Clelia here ?
 A. 4. No.
 Q. 5. Who is it, then, now here ?
 A. 5. Nobody.
 Q. 6. Does Clelia exist ?
 A. 6. No.

- Q. 7. With whom did I speak yesterday ?
 A. 7. No one.
 Q. 8. Why didst thou lie ?
 A. 8. [Wavy line. Why didst *thou* lie ?]
 Q. 9. Do souls exist in another world ?
 A. 9. m b.
 Q. 10. What does m b mean ?
 A. 10. May be.
 Q. 11. What was that last answer of yesterday again ?
 A. 11. Eif Clelia o el,
 i.e., I feel no Clelia ;
 or, the original may have been
 “ I Clelia flee.”

And the 20 meant *no*, negating my interpretation.

My pen now became altogether wild, sometimes affirming and sometimes denying the existence of Clelia, and finally performed as follows :—



I wrote *ce*, and *u.c.*, and placed my pen in the middle between them. It refused to point to either, but upon my writing “partly each” above, my pen underlined the words.

POSSIBLE SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION.

The desire for an answer was sufficient in the first place to put brain and muscles in motion.

A desire soon arose to avoid the effect of expectancy. To meet this desire the brain unconsciously formed anagrams ; one of these anagrams, “Life is the less able,” is a sentiment only too frequently met with in the spiritualistic literature which I had been lately reading.

The other, “Every life is yes,” is similarly derived from Spinoza, whom I had just been reading. He has much about all existence being affirmation of the Deity.

Thus both these expressions were imbedded in my brain by late reading, and this fact supports the supposition of *u.c.* being the agent.

With regard to “Clelia,” I had written *cl* when the rest of the word flashed upon me, and this may have vitiated the answer through expectancy ; and all that followed about Clelia may have been a structure upon a false foundation ; which, therefore, my brain having unconsciously considered during the night, proceeded upon the next day to demolish.

POSSIBLE SPIRITUALISTIC INTERPRETATION.

That upon the first day it was perhaps u. c. acting for the most part.

But on the second day, the great agitation of the hand, the complicated intellectual process, the insistence ("See," "Try") would point to a spirit's operating upon the cerebral particles.

That this spirit chose to call herself Clelia, and that having manifested herself she fled, leaving me upon the fourth day to the unassisted operation of u. cerebration.

Although as I have said, I incline strongly to the scientific explanation, that inclination does not rise to absolute belief. But I must confess I should not expect myself to be able to hit upon the right explanation, and it is with the hope that some psychologist may clearly explain it that I wish to call attention to it. There is another reason, more singular, for my calling attention to it, namely, that the automatic power has left me, and almost the last anagram I received was

Wvfs yoitet — testify, vow.

SCIENTIFIC EXPLANATION OF WHY THE POWER HAS CEASED.

The ever present desire not to write a letter which I expect beforehand, acts as a neutraliser to all power of writing. Seeing myself about to form a letter, say o, I fear that I have expected it, thereupon the pen at once stops, or sometimes, between the opposing tendencies, describes a curve. This fear was not thought of in the first experiment, and reasoning upon the phenomena has since paralysed the power of producing them.

SPIRITUALISTIC INTERPRETATION.

The spirit is weary of my unbelief, and I am weary of her coquetry.

Note 1. I simply took a pen into my hand. Since, I have tried with the Planchette, but without any success.

Note 2. I have never known any one named Clelia.

Note 3. I have not been in the habit of writing anagrams, though I have done so in boyhood.

It will be observed that Mr. A., though quite alive to the mode of interpretation which we have here adopted, retains himself some little doubt as to the intervention at one point of an external agency. This seems mainly owing to the subjective sensation of an *agitation* or *insistance*, which seemed to him too powerful to have existed in his own mind entirely below the threshold of consciousness. Were such agitation never more marked than in the present case, it need not, perhaps, interpose much difficulty; but we shall come to instances where it becomes dominant and violent to a perplexing extent. At present we must merely notice that the stream of automatism does not always run smoothly on.

We now come to the case where several persons, with their hands

united on the Planchette, obtain answers which are not consciously present to the minds of any one of them.

But here we must first ask ourselves: Is this in reality a new case? Will it not be simpler to suppose that one agent alone is concerned, and that the rest are merely passive?

Undoubtedly this would be simpler; and this would be what we might have expected. But actual experiment seems to show that there are cases where motion does not ensue when either A or B places his hand on Planchette, but does ensue when both so place their hands. If the motion which ensues is of a merely random kind—no definite words being written—we may refer it to a mere summation of two ordinary unconscious muscular actions, either of which actions singly was unable to move the machine. But if definite words are written it is hard to explain this by a mere *summation* either of physical or psychical influences. Why should the same word arise in both minds? Why should both hands move automatically in the same direction? If A's hand will not write a word when he alone touches the Planchette, why should the superposition of B's finger—equally powerless alone—lead to the production of rapid sentences?

It may still be suggested that B's finger may contribute just the *initial shove* which A needs in order to set his own more complex automatism going. But this supposition would hardly meet the cases where Planchette will write *for no one but A, and for A only just so long as B touches it also*; stopping short in its vigorous career the instant that B's finger is removed. Here the first shove has long since been given; the writing has begun; yet B's withdrawal stops it, although B can get no writing *himself*, either alone or with C, D, &c.

In cases like this where a novel effect is produced by the juxtaposition of two quantities whose simple summation is not antecedently seen to be capable of producing the said effect, two hypotheses suggest themselves. The summation of the two quantities may raise their actual volume to a point necessary for the appearance of some new force or quality, which may have been virtually or actually present in each quantity severally, though in a degree beneath our limit of observation. Or, again, the juxtaposition may in itself involve alteration as well as addition; the two bodies may influence each other and give rise to phenomena which neither of them could have originated alone.

The Spiritualist theory of Planchette-writing assumes the former of these two hypotheses,—something in this way. There is an external agency which desires that the word "Byron" should be written. It acts by possessing itself of a certain internal force, which varies in each individual. That force in A is insufficient to enable the "spirit" to write the word through A's hand. The same is the case with B.

But when the two hands can be used to guide the same pencil, the "spirit" uses the sum of both forces, and the pencil moves. More than two persons may be necessary. C's force and D's force may have to be added to A's and B's. On the other hand, E's force may be sufficient by itself to enable the external agency to write the word, either by means of Planchette, or by direction imposed upon the pen.

On the other hand, I shall, at present, prefer to conjecture that there may have been some development of a new energy of a telepathic character. In some unknown way, I would suggest, the two minds are acting on each other, and the writing is a resultant of their unconscious mutual play. Neither theory is at present capable of direct proof. They are merely of use to direct our observation to the important points in the cases submitted to us. Here is another from Mr. H. A. Smith, who has had the patience to analyse many of these communications, which, be it observed, are generally quite equally puerile whatever be the operator's own level of intelligence.

Mr. Smith and his nephew placed their hands on the Planchette, and a purely fantastic name was given as that of the communicating agency.

Mr. Smith asked :

"Where did you live?" A. "Wem." This name was quite unknown to any of us. I am sure it was to myself, and as sure of the word of the others as of that of any one I know.

Is it decided who is to be Archbishop of Canterbury? A. Yes.

Who? A. "Durham." As none of us remembered his name, we asked.

What is his name? A. "Lightfoot." Of course, how far the main statement is correct, I don't know. The curiosity at the time rested in the fact that the name was given which none of us could recall, but was found to be right.

Now, this is just one of the cases which a less wary observer might have brought forward as evidence of spirit agency. An identity, it would be said, manifested itself, and gave an address which none present had ever heard. But I venture to say that there cannot be any real proof that an educated person has never heard of Wem. A permanent recorded fact, like the name of a town which is to be found (for instance) in Bradshaw's Guide, may at any moment have been presented to Mr. Smith's eye, and have found an unobtrusive lodgment in his brain.

The phenomena of *dreams* should teach us to be slow to draw negative conclusions as to what facts may *not* have thus imprinted themselves unconsciously on the sensorium. For we find, by the accounts sent to us, that a class of dreams on which Abercrombie and others have laid stress, tends to recur pretty frequently at the present day. The type is this: A man has mislaid an

important letter. He looks in all likely places in vain; then dreams that it is in some special and very *unlikely* place; and finds it there when he wakes. Now here we must assume that he has put the letter in the unlikely place in what we call "a fit of absence"; but that the distraction of mind which has prevented the act from forming part of his current of normal memory has *not* prevented it from recording itself in his brain, and reappearing in sleep, when the correlated elements (so to say) in his brain have been excited by his fruitless search.

I hold, therefore, that the word "Wem" may have been already lodged in the mind of one of the writers, and may have presented itself at this particular moment by what is called *accident*; that is to say, by virtue of some still more *underground* form of that same sub-conscious action which often brings some well known but irrelevant name or word suddenly into our consciousness, especially in moments of inaction or drowsiness.

In the answers "Durham" and "Lightfoot," we have the same kind of *attempt to meet expectation* which we noticed in Mr. A's case. This reminds us of cases where in a dream we ask a question with vivid curiosity, and are astonished at the reply; which nevertheless proceeds from *ourselves* as undoubtedly as does the inquiry.

This preliminary discussion has, it may be hoped, left us with some notion of the kind of opportunity which Planchette-writing affords for telepathic action. We have, perhaps, formed the conception of an obscure ocean of sub-conscious mental action;—hidden waves whose shifting summits rise for a moment into our view and disappear. And we shall not be surprised to find that any influences which may habitually stream from one mind to another may manifest themselves here more *easily*, though perhaps more *confusedly*, than in the upper air of our full waking intelligence.

I will begin with a case where the intermingling of telepathy with ordinary unconscious cerebration is doubtful, but not impossible.

From Mr. H. Arthur Smith, 2, New Square, Lincoln's Inn, W.C.

Present—H. A. Smith (A), R. A. H. Bickford-Smith (B), another gentleman (C), and two ladies (D and E).

R. A. H. B.-S. having, on previous occasions, exhibited considerable aptitude for automatic writing with a Planchette, it was designed to apply this instrument as a means of testing the transference of thoughts. No exact record having been made at the time of the whole of the results obtained, it would be of little service now to record isolated instances of success. Sometimes names thought of were correctly reproduced, sometimes not; but the proportion of successes to failures cannot now be accurately stated. The following incident, however, very much struck us at the time, and seems worthy of record.

Our method of procedure at the time was as follows:—C, sitting at one

end of the room, wrote down a name of an author, showing it to no one in the room ; B had his hands on the Planchette, no one else being in contact with him or it. C fixed his attention on the written name, and our design was to see whether that name would be written through the medium of the Planchette. The ladies were meanwhile sewing in silence, and taking no part in the experiments. It happened that one of the ladies had at the time, owing to some painful family circumstances, the name of a gentleman (not present) painfully impressed on her mind. The name was not a common one, and though all present knew something of the circumstances, they had not been mentioned during the evening, and no one had mentioned the name in question, which we will call "Bolton." C then wrote "Dickens" on his paper, and was "willing" B with all his might to write this, when, to the surprise of everyone, Planchette rapidly wrote "Bolton." This was not only surprising to us, but painful ; and no comments were made at the time, the subject being changed as rapidly as possible. It would appear from this that the effect of C's volitional concentration was overmatched by the intensity of the lady's thought, though not directed to the same object.

H. ARTHUR SMITH.

April 27th, 1883.

Now here I think that it is possible that the lady's mental action may have contributed, as Mr. Smith supposes, to the very result which she so little desired. Perhaps, however, the word written may have emanated from the unconscious cerebration of the *writer* alone.

In our next case, assuming the accuracy of the account, we are almost forced to adopt the telepathic hypothesis. The conditions are much the same as in our own recorded experiments ;—the minds of the agents, that is to say, are intently fixed on some word or picture, and the percipients (who are represented by the unconscious writers with the Planchette) reproduce a corresponding word or initial. The account is from Mrs. Alfred Moberly, Tynwald, Hythe, Kent, and it is corroborated, with some additional examples, by two other ladies present at the time.

May 9th, 1884.

The operators were placed out of sight of the rest of the company, who selected—in silence—a photograph, one of an albumful, and fixed their attention on it. We—the operators—were requested to keep our minds a blank as far as possible and follow the first involuntary motion of the Planchette. In three out of five cases it wrote the name or initial or some word descriptive of the selected portrait. We also obtained the signatures to letters selected in the same manner. We both knew perfectly well that *we* were writing—not the spirits, as the rest of the company persist to this day in believing—but had only the slightest idea what the words might prove to be.

We have tried it since, and generally with some curious result. A crucial test was offered by two gentlemen in the form of a question to which we couldn't possibly guess the answer. "Where's Toosey?" The

answer came "In Vauxhall Road." "Toosey," they explained, was a pet terrier who had disappeared; suspicion attaching to a plumber living in the road mentioned, who had been working at the house and whose departure coincided with Toosey's.

Of course, in the case of the inquiry after the lost dog, we may suppose that the answer given came from the questioner's own mind. Mrs. Moberly and her friends seem to have been quite aware of this; and were little likely to fall into the not uncommon error of asking Planchette, for instance, what horse will win the Derby, and staking, perhaps, some pecuniary consideration on the extremely illusory reply.

I shall devote the next case—the last which I shall cite at present—to the illustration of this special point, namely, the manner in which the questioner's own anticipation is reflected in the reply, even when that reply professes itself to come, or is supposed by the experimenters to come, from some independent source. And since it is always satisfactory if one can illustrate one's own view by a statement whose author intended it to prove a view directly *opposite*, I will take a case which was sent to Professor Barrett by a convinced Spiritualist, as a proof of the reality of intercourse with the departed. The names were stated; but as I am citing the narrative in a sense differing from that which its writer meant it to bear, I will not now give them, and will only say that all three persons concerned are of very good position.

March 22nd.

One evening, a few years ago, I had with me two young friends, Mademoiselle de P., now Lady S., and Mademoiselle de P——n, her cousin, who is Grande Gouvernante to the daughters of the Crown Prince of Germany, both complete unbelievers in Spiritualism. To amuse them, however, as I sometimes write under occult influence, I asked Mademoiselle de P., to fix her thoughts on some one I did not know, to see whether my hand would write something true concerning him or her. She did as I requested, and soon my hand wrote, "His life has been overshadowed by the act of another." She looked astonished and said that the person she was thinking of had had a brother to whom he was much attached, who had committed suicide.

She then asked if she could be told where she had met him for the first time. My hand wrote, "It was at the foot of a marble staircase splendidly illuminated by a July sun; as you went up he gazed after you as one gazes on the track of a dazzling meteor." This also was correct; she had met him, she said, for the first time at the foot of the staircase of the Ministère de la Guerre, in Paris, and her cousin added that he had been much struck with her. The only inaccuracies were that the staircase was not a marble but a stone one, and that it was a *September* sun that shone.

When I write in this way the ideas do not come (*consciously* at least) from my mind, and my hand seems to be gently moved by some external influence.

Now I confess that this description of the staircase, and the meteor, and so forth, suggests to me as its source, not so much a male spirit disembodied as a female spirit still in the flesh.

The romantic tone of the communication seems to reflect the mood of the persons present ; and the slight inaccuracies are just such as we have found to occur in the experimental transference of *words*, &c., from one mind to another.

But here I must, for the present, pause. We have reached a stage at which the nature of the problem presented to us is somewhat changing. Up to the present point we have been aiming mainly at two things. The operation of unconscious cerebration in automatic writing has been illustrated with some fulness ; and it has thus been shown that *some* of the effects which Spiritualists ascribe to spirits are referable to the unconscious action of the writer's own mind.

And we have seen unconscious cerebration begin to blend, as it were, into telepathic influence, and have noted certain cases where, judging by the analogy of our previous experiments, Thought-transference suggests itself as the most probable explanation.

In a second paper I hope to give some more strongly-marked cases of telepathic influence, showing itself through automatic writing and other unconscious muscular movements. It has been by tracking the writer's own unconscious cerebration as far as it would carry us that we have begun clearly to recognise a limit beyond which that explanation no longer holds good. We have next to explore the full extent of the field which telepathic communication covers, and to consider whether there is still a residuum of phenomena which need the intervention of intelligences other than the intelligences of living and breathing men.