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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
MEETINGS OF THE SOCIETY	285
REMARKS ON MR. PEIRCE'S REJOINDER. By Edmund Gurney	286
POSTSCRIPT TO MR. GURNEY'S REPLY TO PROFESSOR PEIRCE. By Frederic W. H. Myers	300
SECOND REPORT ON EXPERIMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY: UPON THE DIAGRAM TESTS. By Professor C. S. Minot	302
NOTE TO THE FOREGOING REPORT. By Professor W. James	317
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON MEDIUMISTIC PHENOMENA. By Dr. J. W. Warren	320
SOME EXPERIMENTS IN THOUGHT-TRANSMISSION. By Mr. and Mrs. John F. Brown	322
REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON PHANTASMS AND PRESENTIMENTS. By Professor J. Royce	350
APPENDIX TO THE REPORT ON PHANTASMS AND PRESENTIMENTS	429
COMMENTS ON THE CASES IN APPENDIX. By Professor J. Royce	516
ADDENDA TO CASES 24, 28, 36, 38	527
ON SOME OBJECTIONS TO THE THEORY OF TELEPATHY. By Richard Hodgson LL.D.	528
OPEN LETTER CONCERNING TELEPATHY. By Professor C. S. Minot	547
NOTES ON AUTOMATIC WRITING. By Professor W. James	548
NOTE ON TWO RECENTLY REPORTED CASES OF PATHOLOGICAL AND OTHER PSEUDO-PRESENTIMENTS. By Professor J. Royce	565
CONSTITUTION	568
LIST OF MEMBERS AND ASSOCIATES	571

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FOR SALE BY THE AMERICAN BRANCH OF THE
SOCIETY FOR PSYCHICAL RESEARCH,

5 BOYLSTON PLACE, BOSTON, MASS.

considered the probable error, which alone is the correct guide; the probability of a particular result is always enormously small in such experiments as have been made, but that probability is almost worthless as a measure of the value of the evidence until the probable error is known. In this respect the English Society have not yet given the demonstration of the value of their tests, which alone would justify the decided opinions they have published. The same requirement must be put upon the estimate of probabilities which you have made. In addition, you must remember that when two persons are experimenting with the thought-transference of diagrams, they both supply diagrams and exclude from repetition more diagrams than one person; your calculation needs to be rectified accordingly.

I am afraid this is not a very cordial letter in appearance; let me add that I appreciate your remarks and the manner in which you have made them. In replying, I hope to appear equally courteous in spite of being so very explicit. Will you excuse me if I do not enter into more detail? I think the readers of our *Proceedings* will have the material for decision so far as it is possible at present. The final judgment as to the reality of thought-transference will come when the future evidence is in. With cordial esteem, I remain.

Yours faithfully,

CHARLES SEDGWICK MINOT.

Boston, Feb. 28, 1889.

NOTES ON AUTOMATIC WRITING

MANY communications concerning experiences in automatic writing have been sent in to the Secretary during the past two years, and both he and the undersigned have witnessed the phenomenon in a number of instances. It is unquestionably a field from which a rich harvest of instruction may be hoped; but as professional occupations have prevented that steady experimental study of the matter which it deserves, I will content myself with jotting down a few points which may serve to stimulate the interest of the Society, postponing a more systematic paper to some later date. I must refer the reader to the important papers by Mr. Myers in Nos. VII., VIII., and XI. of the London Society's *Proceedings*, for a general introduction to the subject. I regret that the appeal to experiment with the planchette, which was made at the public meeting in the Spring of 1887, was followed by insignificant results. Planchettes can be obtained at the toy-shops, or (at cost) by writing to the Secretary of

the Society; and, possibly, the remainder of this paper may lead to a little wider trial amongst associates and members.

One phenomenon of which Mr. Hodgson and I have been witnesses is both new and important. The hand and the arm of the automatic writer are (in certain instances, at least) *anæsthetic*. As soon as I read M. Pierre Janet's admirable account of the double personality of his somnambulist, L.,¹ I resolved to look for this symptom in ordinary planchette writers. It will be remembered that the skin of the hysteric L. had been for many years entirely insensible to contact, but that when she took to writing automatically on being waked from the hypnotic trance, the hand which wrote (and which signed all its communications by the name of Adrienne) expressed an intelligence perfectly perceptive of those skin-sensations of which the usual intelligence, expressing itself by word of mouth, was ignorant. Might not, conversely, the usual intelligence of ordinary non-hysteric automatic writers be transiently ignorant of the sensations of the writing hand and arm?

Persons who have written with a planchette are apt to speak of a tingling or prickling in the hands. I have actually tested three automatic writers for *anæsthesia*. In one of them, examined between the acts of writing, no *anæsthesia* was observed, but the examination was superficial. In the two others, both of them men, the *anæsthesia* to pricking and pinching, and possibly to touch, seemed complete. The second of these cases is so interesting that I subjoin the facts in detail.

William L. Smith, of Concord, Mass., student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, age 21, perfectly healthy and exceptionally intelligent, whose sincerity it is impossible to suspect, has amused himself on various occasions during the past two years with planchette writing. Of his previous performances more anon. On Jan. 24, 1889, he sat with Mr. Hodgson and myself, with his right hand extended on the instrument, and his face averted and buried in the hollow of his left arm, which lay along the table. Care was taken not to suggest to him the aim of the inquiry.

The planchette began by illegible scrawling. After ten minutes I pricked the back of the right hand several times with a pin — no indication of feeling. Two pricks on the left hand were followed by withdrawal, and the question, "What did you do that for?" — to which I replied, "To find whether you were going to sleep." The first legible words which were written after this were, *You hurt me*.

¹ *Revue Philosophique*, XXII., 677; XXIII., 449. Mr. Myers gives an abstract of the case in the third of his articles above referred to, pp. 237-249.

A pencil in the right hand was then tried instead of the planchette. Here again the first legible words were, *No use [?] in trying to stop when you hurt me so.* Next: *Its no use trying to stop me writing by pricking.* These writings were deciphered aloud in the hearing of S., who seemed slow to connect them with the two pin-pricks on his left hand, which alone he had felt.

After some more or less illegible writing (some of it in Greek characters) and questions asked and answered, I pricked the right wrist and fingers several times again quite severely, with no sign of reaction on S.'s part. After an interval, however, the pencil wrote *Don't you prick me any more.* S. then said, "My right hand is pretty well asleep." I tested the two hands immediately by pinching and pricking, but found no difference between them, both apparently normal. S. then said that what he meant by "asleep" was the feeling of 'pins and needles' [which an insensible limb has when 'waking up'].

The last written sentence was then deciphered aloud. S. laughed, having been conscious only of the pricks on his left hand, and said, "It's working those two pin-pricks for all they are worth."

I then asked, "What have I been excited about to-day?" Ans. *Possibly examining.* "No, that was yesterday; try again." Ans. *May be correct don't know possibly sleepin.* "What do you mean by sleeping?" Ans. *I don't know (really?) You [distinct figure of a pin] me 19 times² and think I'll write for you.*

The sitting here ended. It was very inferior in legibility and variety to sittings of the same Subject a year previous. Two evenings later we had another sitting. S. had been most of the day in the open air, and had paddled a canoe ten miles. I immediately asked, "Are you still offended at my having pricked you?" Ans. *I'm(?)*. "Where did I prick you the other night?" Ans. *On the side of my hand.* "Didn't I prick you anywhere else?" Ans. *No.* "Which hand?" Ans. *This hand.* "Which hand?" Ans. *Right.*

After some remote questions and answers the pencil was changed to the left hand, to see if that also would write. It spontaneously wrote a good deal, quite unintelligibly. "Are you angry?" Ans. *Yes.* "Who pricked you? How many times?" Tell us all

¹ Q. Who is writing? Is it Smith himself? A. YES. Pencil can't go alone.
² What I had in mind was "building-plans." As a matter of fact, however, I had been acutely suffering all day from loss of sleep, and had vainly sought to get a nap in the afternoon. There are claims of lucidity for Mr. Smith's past planchette writing, and this answer may (possibly) not have been a mere coincidence. It is true that I am a chronically bad sleeper, and Mr. S. may have heard of the fact.

³ I unfortunately hadn't counted the times. Nineteen is a plausible number.

about it." Ans. *19 times on the other hand.* No further writing came on this evening. Shortly after the last answer I pinched four times, severely, the skin of the left hand between my nails. S.'s eyes were closed, but his face was visible, and I thought I detected a very subtle facial and respiratory reaction upon the pinching. He, however, on being questioned some minutes later, denied that he had been pricked or pinched during this evening. Later still, whilst the left hand still held the pencil, I pinched his right hand once, whereupon he started and said he didn't "need to be waked up." No more writing taking place after a quarter of an hour or more, I compared the two hands and found that they had equal and normal sensibility. S. is still ignorant of what interested us in these sittings. He is, unfortunately, too busy to sit again for many weeks.

Here, as the reader will perceive, we have the consciousness of a subject split into two parts, one of which expresses itself through the mouth, and the other through the hand, whilst both are in communication with the ear. The mouth-consciousness is ignorant of all that the hand suffers or does; the hand-consciousness is ignorant of pin-pricks inflicted upon other parts of the body—and of what more remains to be ascertained. If we call this hand-consciousness the automatic consciousness, then we also perceive that the automatic consciousness may transfer itself from the right hand to the left, and carry its own peculiar store of memories with it. The left hand, writing automatically on the second evening, remembered the right hand's experiences on the first, and very likely (though this was not ascertained) knew nothing of its own.

These phenomena remind us of what the lamented Gurney described in his important paper "Peculiarities of Certain Post-hypnotic States," in Part XI. of the London Society's *Proceedings*. The facts there, it will be remembered, were these: An order to do something after waking was given to the subject during the trance. Of this order no apparent consciousness remained when the trance was over. But if, before the time of execution arrived, the subject's hand was placed upon a planchette, the writing which came was all about the order, showing that the latter was retained in a split-off portion of the consciousness, which was able to express itself automatically through the hand. This dissociation of the consciousness into mutually exclusive parts is evidently a phenomenon destined, when understood, to cast a light into the abysses of Psychology.

We owe to the kindness of Dr. C. W. Fillmore, of Providence, the report of a case of hystero-epilepsy which illustrates the same phe-

nomenon in an even more extraordinary manner.¹ The record begins in the nineteenth year of the patient's age, and continues for several years. It is filled with every conceivable species of suffering and disorder, but the entries which interest us in the present connection are the following:—

September 17, 1860. — Wild with delirium. Tears her hair, pillow-cases, bedclothes, both sheets, night-dress, all to pieces. Her right hand prevents her left hand, by seizing and holding it, from tearing out her hair; but she tears her clothes with her left hand and teeth. . . .

29th. — Complains of great pain in right arm, more and more intense when suddenly it falls down by her side. She looks at it in amazement. Thinks it belongs to some one else; positive it is not hers. Sees her right arm drawn around upon her spine. Cut it, prick it, do what you please to it, she takes no notice of it. Complains of great pain in the neck and back, which she now calls her shoulder and arm; no process of reasoning can convince her of the contrary. [To the present time, now nearly five years, the hallucination remains firm. She believes her spine is her right arm, and that her right arm is a foreign object and a nuisance. She believes it to be an arm and a hand, but treats it as if it had intelligence and might keep away from her. She bites it, pounds it, pricks it, and in many ways seeks to drive it from her. She calls it 'Stump; Old Stump.' Sometimes she is in great excitement and tears, pounding 'Old Stump.' Says 'Stump' has got this, that, or the other, that belongs to her.] The history of September is her daily and nightly history till October 25th. . . .

November 12. — From eleven to twelve at night sits up, apparently asleep, and writes, with her paper against the wall. After she awakes, seems to be unconscious of what she has written. . . .

From November 20 to January 1, 1861, raving delirium; pulls her hair nearly all out from the top of her head. . . . The right hand protects her against the left as much as possible. . . .

February 1 to 11. — Under the influence of magnetism writes poetry; personates different persons, mostly those who have long since passed away. When in the magnetic state, whatever she does and says is not remembered when she comes out of it. Commences a series of drawings with her right paralyzed hand, 'Old Stump.' Also writes poetry with it. Whatever 'Stump' writes, or draws, or does, she appears to take no interest in; says it is none of hers, and that she wants nothing to do with 'Stump' or 'Stump's.' I have sat by her bed and engaged her in conversation, and drawn her attention in various ways, while the writing and drawing has been uninterrupted. As she had never exhibited any taste for nor taken any lessons in drawing I exhibit here some specimens of her first attempt.²

March, 1861. — She became blind. . . .

¹ The report is by the late Dr. Ira Barrows, of Providence. The patient was Miss Anna Winsor. Her mother, brother, and Dr. Wilcox, Dr. B.'s former partner, bear corroborative testimony.

² These specimens we have never received. — W. J.

January 4, 1862. — Is still blind; sees as well with eyes closed as open; keeps them closed much of the time; reads and draws with them closed. Draws in the dark as well as in the light; is clairvoyant. Writes poetry, chiefly with the right hand, and often . . . while it is dark. The hand-writing differs greatly in different pieces. . . .

January 10. — When her delirium is at its height, as well as at all other times, her right hand is rational, asking and answering questions in writing; giving directions; trying to prevent her tearing her clothes; when she pulls out her hair it seizes and holds her left hand. When she is asleep, it carries on conversation the same; writes poetry; never sleeps; acts the part of a nurse as far as it can; pulls the bedclothes over the patient, if it can reach them, when uncovered; raps on the head-board to awaken her mother (who always sleeps in the room) if anything occurs, as spasms, etc.

January, 1863. — At night, and during her sleep, 'Stump' writes letters, some of them very amusing; writes poetry, some pieces original. Writes 'Hasty Pudding,' by Barlow, in several cantos, which she had never read; all correctly written, but queerly arranged, as, e.g., one line belonging in one canto would be transposed with another line in another canto. She has no knowledge of Latin or French, yet 'Stump' produces the following rhyme of Latin and English:¹ —

Sed tempus recessit, and time was all over,
Cum illi successit, another gay rover;
Nam cum navigaret in his own cutter,
Portentum apparet, which made them all flutter.

Est horridus anguis which they behold,
Haud dubio sanguis within them ran cold.
Tringita pedes his head was upraised,
In corporis cedes in secret was placed.

Sic serpens manebat, so says the same joker,
Et sese ferebat as still as a poker;
Tergum fricabat against the old light-house,
Et sese liberabat of scaly detritus.

Tunc plumbo percussit thinking he hath him,
At serpens exsiluit full thirty fathom,
Exsiluit mare with pain and affright,
Conatus abnare as fast as he might.

Neque illi secuti? no, nothing so rash,
Terroris sunt muti he'd made such a splash;
Sed nunc adierunt the place to inspect,
Et squamas viderunt, the which they collect.

Quicumque non credat and doubtfully rails,
Ad locum accedat, they'll show him the scales;
Quas, sola trophea, they brought to the shore;
Et causa est ea, they couldn't get more.

¹ Does any reader recognize these verses? If so, will he please send them to the Secretary? It is important to ascertain whether their origin were not in the patient's memory.

'Stump' writes both asleep and awake, and the writing goes on while she is occupied with her left hand in other matters. Ask her what she is writing, she replies, "I am not writing; that is 'Stump' writing. I don't know what he is writing. I don't trouble myself with 'Stump's' doings." Reads with her book upside down, and sometimes when covered with the sheet, 'Stump' produces two bills of fare in French.

Upon this one subject of her right arm, she is monomaniac. Her right hand and arm are not hers. Attempt to reason with her and she holds up her left arm and says, "This is my left arm. I see and feel my right arm drawn behind me. You say this 'Stump' is my right arm. Then I have three arms and hands." In this arm the nerves of sensation are paralyzed, but the nerves of motion preserved. She has no will to move it. She has no knowledge of its motion. This arm appears to have a separate intelligence. When she sleeps, it writes or converses by signs. It never sleeps; watches over her when she sleeps; endeavors to prevent her from injuring herself or her clothing when she is raving. It seems to possess an independent life and, to some extent, foreknowledge.

Miss W. died in January, 1873. The record of her last ten years is not given. It would appear, from certain passages of the record in our possession, that 'old Stump' used to write of Miss W. in the third person, as Anna. This seems to be the rule in automatic utterances.

Certain other peculiarities which I have never seen quoted together deserve mention. Thus the planchette-writer often tends to fall into a drowsy condition whilst writing, and to become abstracted from the outer world. Sometimes he even passes into a state of genuine sleep or trance—I have no data thus far for distinguishing which. The writing is often preceded by peculiar sensations in the arm, and the latter is apt to be animated by involuntary spasmodic movements before the writing regularly begins.

I was witness a year ago, in Mr. Smith's case, of a phenomenon which has been described since Braid's time as 'exaltation of the muscular sense,' but, so far as I know, only recorded of hypnotic subjects.¹ Mr. Smith wrote on large sheets of brown wrapping-paper, his right arm extended, his face on a level with the table, buried in the hollow of his left elbow,—a position which made vision of the surface of the paper a physical impossibility. Nevertheless, two or three times in my presence on one evening, after covering a sheet with writing (the pencil never being raised, so that the words ran into each other), he returned to the top of the sheet and proceeded downwards, dotting each *i* and crossing each *t* with

¹ See, for example, Carpenter's *Mental Physiology*, § 123.

absolute precision and great rapidity. On another evening, whilst sitting in the same position, he drew the entire outline of a grotesque human figure in such a way that the pencil ended at the point where it began, and that it is now impossible to tell, from inspection of the perfectly continuous outline, just where the point in question lay. Such feats would seem quite impossible to one in the normal waking state.

Another often noted idiosyncrasy of these writings is the *freakiness* of their execution. Mirror-script, spelling backwards, writing from right to left, and even beginning at the right-hand lower corner of the page and inscribing every word with its last letter first, etc., till the top is reached, are among the peculiarities of the automatic pencil. Mr. Myers has tried to assimilate some of these traits to what is observed in aphasia—with what success, later inquiry alone can show.

Another remarkable point is that two persons can often make a planchette or a bare pencil write automatically when neither can succeed alone. The explanation of this is hard to find. The individuals themselves will sometimes say, "One of us gives the force, the other the intelligence." Certain it is that perfectly determinate combinations of individuals are often required for success. The more physiological explanation is that the automatic freedom is interfered with by conscious attention to the performance, and that when two persons work together each thinks that the other is the source of movement, and lets his own hand freely go. We sadly need more discriminating observations on this as well as other points.

Of course, the great *theoretic* interest of these automatic performances, whether speech or writing, consists in the questions they awaken as to the boundaries of our individuality. One of their most constant peculiarities is that the writing and speech announce themselves as from a personality other than the natural one of the writer, and often convince *him*, at any rate, that his organs are played upon by some one not himself. This foreignness in the personality reaches its climax in the demoniacal possession which has played so great a part in history, and which, in our country, seems replaced by the humaner phenomenon of trance-mediumship, with its Indian or other outlandish 'control,' giving more or less optimistic messages from the 'summer-land.' So marked is it in all the extreme instances that we may say that the *natural and presumptive* explanation of the phenomenon is unquestionably the popular or 'spiritualistic' one, of 'control' by another intelligence. It is only when we put the cases into a series, and see how insensibly those at the upper extreme shade down at the lower extreme into what is unquestionably the

work of the individual's own mind in an abstracted state, that more complex and would-be 'scientific' ways of conceiving the matter force themselves upon us. The whole subject is at present a perfect puzzle on the theoretic side. And even on the phenomenal side we need more abundant proof than we have yet received that the content of the automatic communications may transcend the possible information of the individual through whose hand they come. To interest the reader in these more difficult phases of the subject I will append as illustrations some of the cases which we have received. The first is from Mr. Sidney Dean, of Warren, R.I., member of Congress from Connecticut from 1855 to 1859, who has been all his life a robust and active journalist, author, and man of affairs. He has for many years been a writing subject, and has a large collection of manuscript automatically produced.

"Some of it," he writes us, "is in hieroglyph, or strange compounded arbitrary characters, each series possessing a seeming unity in general design or character, followed by what purports to be a translation or rendering into mother English. I never attempted the seemingly impossible feat of copying the characters. They were cut with the precision of a graver's tool, and generally with a single rapid stroke of the pencil. Many languages, some obsolete and passed from history, are professedly given. To see them would satisfy you that no one could copy them except by tracing."

"These, however, are but a small part of the phenomena. The 'automatic' has given place to the *impressional*, and when the work is in progress I am in the normal condition, and seemingly two minds, intelligences, persons, are practically engaged. The writing is in my own hand, but the dictation not of my own mind and will, but that of another, upon subjects of which I can have no knowledge and hardly a theory; and I, myself, consciously criticise the thought, fact, mode of expressing it, etc., while the hand is recording the subject-matter and even the words impressed to be written. If I refuse to write the sentence, or even the word, the impression instantly ceases, and my willingness must be mentally expressed before the work is resumed, and it is resumed at the point of cessation, even if it should be in the middle of a sentence. Sentences are commenced without knowledge of mine as to their subject or ending. In fact, I have never known in advance the subject of disquisition.

"There is in progress now, at uncertain times, not subject to my will, a series of twenty-four chapters upon the scientific features of life, moral, spiritual, eternal. Seven have already been written in the manner indi-

¹ I should say that I have seen some of these curious hieroglyphs by Mr. D., which professed to be Chinese. They bore no outward resemblance to what I have learned to know as Chinese characters. I owe to the kindness of Colonel Bundy some four or five other sol-disant specimens of ancient languages, automatically written, which I have had examined by my colleagues conversant with Sanscrit, Hebrew, Assyrian, Arabic, and Persian, as well as by a Japanese student who knew Chinese. None of the characters were in any instance recognized. — W. J.

cated. These were preceded by twenty-four chapters relating generally to the life beyond material death, its characteristics, etc. Each chapter is signed by the name of some person who has lived on earth, — some with whom I have been personally acquainted, others known in history. . . . I know nothing of the alleged authorship of any chapter until it is completed and the name impressed and appended.¹ . . . I am interested not only in the reputed authorship, — of which I have nothing corroborative, — but in the philosophy taught, of which I was in ignorance until these chapters appeared. From my standpoint of life — which has been that of biblical orthodoxy — the philosophy is new, seems to be reasonable, and is logically put. I confess to an inability to successfully controvert it to my own satisfaction.

"It is an intelligent *ego* who writes, or else the influence assumes individuality, which practically makes of the influence a personality. It is *not* myself; of that I am conscious at every step of the process. I have also traversed the whole field of the claims of 'unconscious cerebration,' so called, so far as I am competent to critically examine it, and it fails, as a theory, in numberless points, when applied to this strange work through me. It would be far more reasonable and satisfactory for me to accept the silly hypothesis of re-incarnation, — the old doctrine of metempsychosis, — as taught by some spiritualists to-day, and to believe that I lived a former life here, and that once in a while it dominates my intellectual powers, and writes chapters upon the philosophy of life, or opens a post-office for spirits to drop their effusions, and have them put into English script. No; the easiest and most natural solution to me is to admit the claim made, *i.e.*, that it is a decarnated intelligence who writes. But *who?* that is the question. The names of scholars and thinkers who once lived are affixed to the most ungrammatical and weakest of *bosh*. . . .

"It seems reasonable to me, — upon the hypothesis that it is a person using another's mind or brain — that there must be more or less of that other's style or tone incorporated in the message, and that to the unseen personality, *i.e.*, the power which impresses, the thought, the fact, or the philosophy, and not the style or tone, belongs. For instance, while the influence is impressing my brain with the greatest force and rapidity, so that my pencil fairly flies over the paper to record the thoughts, I am conscious that, in many cases, the vehicle of the thought, *i.e.*, the language, is very natural and familiar to me, as if, somehow, my personality as a writer was getting mixed up with the message. And, again, the style, language, everything, is entirely foreign to my own style."

Another gentleman, Mr. John N. Arnold, of 19 College street, Providence, R. L., describes his experience as follows: —

I make my mind as negative as possible, place myself in the attitude of

¹ I have seen and read three of these chapters. They are fluent, scholarly, and philosophical enough, but to my mind have a curious resemblance in style to other inspirational productions which I have read, and doubtfully attain to real originality. One of them, signed Louis Agassiz, was, both in thought and diction, wholly unlike the utterances during life of my lamented teacher. — W. J.

writing, with pencil and paper, and in about two or three minutes I feel a sensation at the elbow as if a galvanic battery had touched it. The thrill continues down the forearm till it reaches the hand, which quickly doubles over towards the thumb, and then back, with a strong tension, several times. When quiet, it begins to write. The power that writes sometimes tells the truth, but oftener lies. For instance, an influence which called itself Lydia, my wife's sister, wrote that Rose (my wife) had been raising blood. I replied I thought not. Lydia insisted, and, upon reaching home, I found she was correct. Again, she wrote that a lady friend was dead. I contradicted the Automat, as I had seen the lady but a few hours before. Lydia seemed hurt to think I doubted her, and strongly asserted that the lady was dead. In a few hours I ascertained the falsity of Lydia's vehement assertion by meeting the lady in question. I got so little satisfaction from the power that I gave it up, and of late can only get names, but no communications, except yes or no, in answer to my questions.

In a second communication Mr. Arnold adds:—

The pencil was always held in my right hand. I never had any mirror-writing. I sometimes guessed what was coming, but never knew. For instance, many words begin with the first two or three letters the same, as "presuming," "prefix." I would sometimes guess, after the Automat finished them in such a word; but generally was mistaken, even when the context would indicate my word to be the proper one.

It is at least ten years (and it may be more) since the writing about my wife. I had no reason to think my wife had had hæmoptysis. She had had an attack in 1860, when we went to Macon, Ga., but not since; so that I was surprised when the Automat wrote with such confidence and persistency, and said that when I got home I should see that it was telling the truth. When I reached home I questioned my wife about it. She seemed very much astonished, and wanted to know how I got my information, as she had taken pains to conceal it from me, fearing it would cause me alarm. I have just asked my wife about this affair, and she seems to remember it substantially as I do. I have never tried answering mental questions put by another; in fact, the Automat and I got disgusted with one another years ago. We had a falling out, and haven't been on good terms since. The Auto got tired with my lack of patience, and I got tired with the Auto's lack of truthfulness.

I am glad to answer any questions about this matter, and when you get a theory that will fit this problem, please write me. I don't mean unconscious cerebration, astral light, or spirit friends; but something new, something that will fit tight and snug all around and won't have to be taken in at the back or let out in the arm-size, and won't go all to pieces like Don Quixote's pasteboard helmet when the Damascus blade of logic, reason, and common-sense descends upon it.

An isolated case of apparent clairvoyance, like that which this gentleman reports, had of course better be treated as an accidental

coincidence. But there are other cases harder so to treat, — cases where some sort of telepathy appears to be involved. But telepathy seems always doomed to be baffling. The telepathic explanation of the cases I have in mind is neither disproved nor established with the fulness that is desirable. As an illustration of what I mean, take Mr. W. L. Smith's case again. It was first made known to us in November, 1887, by a letter from one of his neighbors, Miss —, who wrote as follows:—

After reading the reports on Automatic Writing published by the English S. P. R. . . . I determined to try my own power and those of my friends. Accordingly my friend W. L. S. and I each made a planchette. . . . The successful writer was S. himself, and with him we have obtained more remarkable results than I have ever seen reported. It is worth while to notice that he had never seen a planchette before he made his according to my direction, and had never seen writing done with one until he made his first attempt in my presence, so that the possibility of unconscious deception, which might have existed in the case of a person who had already amused himself with a planchette, was out of the question with him. The question of conscious deception may be set aside at once; yet, appreciating that experiments whose fairness depends on the honesty of any person lose their scientific value, we took pains so far as possible to avoid everything which might have been suspicious with unknown writers.

Our first attempt, though only partially successful, so far exceeded our expectations, that we were much encouraged.

After relating three attempts at answering mental questions which seem to have been failures the account goes on:—

At the fourth experiment, a repetition of the third, with a different card, the suit and number were immediately and correctly written. As in these cases there had been a possibility of thought-transfer, the next experiment was differently arranged.

The pack was carefully shuffled by me, and held under a table, both my hand and W.'s being in contact with it; neither of us could see the pack. I then faced the top card, again asking mentally for the suit and number of the card faced. The planchette immediately wrote the word which. We were about to consider the trial a failure when it occurred to me that I might have faced two cards. I found, on examining the pack, that this was not so; but, still without suggestion from W., I looked further, and found a second card in the middle of the pack, which I had unconsciously faced in shuffling.

I mention this in detail because it was the first instance of a writing unexpected by either W. or myself. At several succeeding experiments the planchette correctly wrote suit and number of cards turned up out of sight of every one, until we became tired of that test and gave it up.

A series of questions, the answers to which were unknown to any one

present, seemed to furnish a fair test for the powers of the planchette. At first the questions were asked aloud; in all cases they were put without suggestion by W.

I will describe two experiments as instances of trials of this kind. During these two experiments we sat in the dark, and yet the answers were legibly written.

My first question was, "What is the name on the visiting card which lies at the top of the cards in the hall?"

The planchette did not write immediately; during the time while we waited for an answer I involuntarily formed an idea of the name which I expected, and feared that thought-transfer would come in for a share of consideration if the answer should be correctly written. At last I heard the motion of the pencil; when it ceased we took the paper to the light and found the words *Upside down*. After reading this, we examined the card-plate, and found as an explanation of planchette's answer, the top card turned *upside down* on the pile.

Now, not only had S. no means of knowing that the top card was upside down, but no one else in the house knew it until after the writing by planchette; I had even a distinct idea of a certain name in my mind during the whole of the experiment. Furthermore, and most remarkable of all, the hall where the card-plate stood was unlighted, so that when we went to examine the card we were quite unable to say whether or not there was a name upon the card until we had carried the plate into the next room.

This fact reminded us of the power we had already seen in planchette to read the suit and number of playing-cards, held under the table so as to be out of the range of possible, as well as actual, vision.

We put the same question, "What is the name on the card which lies at the top on the card-plate?" a second time, the cards having been rearranged by a third person, who himself did not know what card he had placed at the top. The planchette wrote, "*Miss L. P. H.*"; the name on the card proved to be Miss Lillian C. H—. This partial mistake struck us as interesting, but we could find no explanation for it, as the card-plate stood in a lighted room during this experiment, where it would have seemed much easier for planchette to see it than in the first trial.

Although these questions were put without the slightest suggestion from W., he had been told before each experiment what inquiry had been made. From this time on we took pains to keep from him all knowledge, not only of the answer, but of the question asked. The question was either asked mentally or written on paper, and kept, with great care, out of his sight, except in a few instances, which I will mark with an asterisk in the following descriptions. Although deception was out of the question, we tried to perform all experiments with as great strictness as if the writer had been unknown to us, and it is only in the starred cases that there existed the possibility of W.'s seeing the question.

In the following four experiments the answers to the questions asked were known to one or more persons in the room, but not to S.:—

1. Q. Is Miss H. going away Tuesday?

A. Miss H. is no consequence to me. I don't know.

2. Q. What did her uncle do in Paris?

A. How should I know you or he did in Paris, or all France (sic), I wasn't there.

(Mr. F. said he had been thinking, when the question was asked, of a friend who had been with him in Paris.)

3. Q. What sort of a voyage home did he have?

A. Fair. If you keep that question to yourself there is no chance for thought transfer.

(This was not written at once, which was explained by the planchette as due to the fact that the question had been asked mentally, and by only one person. It was one of a few cases of mirror-writing.)

4. Q. On what steamer did J. A. come home?

A. J. A. has been way off like Mr. F. I am not everywhere.

(This was interesting, as W.'s acquaintance with Mr. F. was limited to the evening in which the latter had been present at a planchette writing, and during which, as may be seen from the second and third questions above, Mr. F.'s visit to Paris was mentioned.)

In the following six experiments the answers to the questions asked were known to persons present at the writing, and would have been known to W. if he had known what question was proposed. Accordingly, our care was exceedingly great in all these cases to keep the question out of sight. It is worth notice that in no case was the answer exactly what was expected by those who knew what inquiry had been made.

1. Q. Who wrote the play of 'Hamlet'?

A. I'd give a good deal to know that myself.

2. Q. Can Mr. F. make planchette write?

A. He can if he tries hard enough old man Bacon and gets some one to help at first.

(Before and after the words 'old man Bacon' were what might have been meant for parentheses. As the words had no meaning where they were written, we naturally referred them to the question immediately preceding, "Who wrote the play of 'Hamlet'?" where they certainly seemed appropriate.)

*3. Q. What letters correspond to the notes

A. Gace.

*4. Q. Add 4905, 8641 and 9831.

A. 17377.

(Planchette first copied the quantities to be added, making, by the way, a mistake in copying; this mistake, however, did not appear in the addition, though a mistake does appear in a column where the copy was correct.)

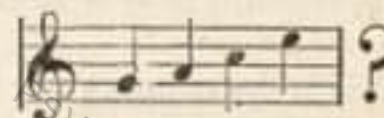
5. Q. How far is the earth from the sun?

A. 192,310,009 kill.

(This is curious, as every one who had known what question had been asked was expecting the answer in miles. W., however, always uses the metric system.)

6. Q. Who wrote 'Childe Harold'?

A. Byron, not drunk when he did it.



Here would seem to be excellent evidence of mental questions answered and of telepathic or clairvoyant replies given. Sometime after this account was received I had the opportunity to sit with Mr. S. and the friends with whom the former successes had occurred. There were several other persons present as well. Writing came in profusion, bold and legible, but nothing that could be construed as telepathic. Many questions were written by the ladies with whom the former successes had occurred, out of S.'s sight, but were either not answered, or answered so vaguely that it was not certain that the particular question had been grasped. The questions were written across the table from Mr. S. Considering various hyperæsthetic possibilities, such questions should always be prepared outside of the room. Twice, early in 1888, Mr. S. sat for the Secretary and myself, when questions were secretly written, but in no instance pertinently answered. These negative results are, of course, not incompatible with the positive ones previously obtained, for if telepathy exist, it is certainly of fitful occurrence, even in a given individual. But they lend, at least, no strength to the first report; and, as luck will always have it, farther sittings with us (except the two recorded at the outset of this paper) have been made impossible to the subject by family wishes and his busy life.

Another similarly baffling case is given me by Mr. C., who graduated in 1888 at Harvard College, whom I know intimately, and whose sincerity I cannot doubt. Mr. C., it should be said, is himself the subject of certain automatic phenomena, with which, however, this narrative has naught to do. He told me of the following experience, either one or two days after it happened, and then wrote out the account which follows:—

It was on the evening of November 2: The company consisted of four ladies and two gentlemen. In the course of conversation a chance remark turned our thoughts upon psychological matters. Almost every one had some strange thing to relate, but no one would acknowledge belief in any supernatural power.

After speaking of various reports of mind-reading and hypnotic experiments I said, in a half-serious, half-joking way, "Suppose we try something of the sort."

The suggestion being favored, the daughter of the house, a girl of nineteen or twenty years of age, seated herself by a table, with pencil and paper. She seemed to think it was all foolery, but was amiable enough to contribute all she could to possible success, and, shading her eyes with her hand, she made herself as passive as possible.

On my part, I stood up at the opposite side of the table, about three feet removed, and fixed my mind upon a certain word, and (wishing to select

one that would be most remote from her mind) I took 'hell.' With almost no hesitation in beginning, the girl made the letters, one after another, with easy legibility (though the handwriting was neither hers nor mine).

Surprised at the success of the experiment, I felt interested to continue, and now determined to test it to the satisfaction of others. Accordingly, I went for a moment into the hall with one of the company, and there said to her that my next word should be 'omen.' Returning to the room, the same success attended as before, except that the 'e' was, in its smallness, out of proportion to the other letters, and the line between 'o' and 'm' was too long, because of a slip of the hand.

The experiment continued in like manner till some ten or a dozen words were written, of which I now remember (besides the above two, 'hell' and 'omen') 'word,' 'four,' 'moon.'

The person to whom each time I announced my intended word was of a disposition entirely to be relied on as free from either serious or facetious tricks, though, for that matter, I do not see how collusion with the 'Subject' was possible without being noticed.

The paper on which the words were written I wanted to take, but as the young lady wished to keep it I said nothing. On inquiring for it a few days later, it could not be found.

On the third day after (November 5), I again went to the house to see if more might not be done. Certain other interests, however, being emphasized in my mind, I did not find myself able to exert so strong a will as on the previous occasion. Whether because of this or not, I cannot judge; but the results were more meagre, but two words being successfully written, 'music' and 'girl.' Upon my thinking of one word, 'orange,' my 'subject' wrote all the letters, but in wrong order, thus: 'georan.'

An additional fact that I noticed this time (and I think it was true of the first evening's experiments) was, that when I stood at the right side of the girl she wrote downwards, and when I stood opposite her she wrote upwards.

The rest of the trials, which were of lines and diagrams imagined by me, resulted in nothing but undecipherable scrawls.

Concerning the feelings of myself and of the 'Subject' there is but this to say: that the girl had a headache the next day after the experiment (to which, being unaccustomed to headaches, she ascribed it), and no effect after the second. Upon me there was no after effect either time, except that after the first experiment, and on the same night, I felt as one does after giving strained attention to one thing.

The lady who did the writing, three other ladies, and a gentleman who witnessed the first evening's performance, endorsed, on Nov. 16, Mr. C.'s statement as a 'true report'; but I am not at liberty in this case to publish any names. On Dec. 2, Mr. C. added this postscript:—

I omitted to say with regard to the second series of trials, that 'music,'

'girl,' and 'orange' (the three words which the girl wrote) were the only words that I tried.

Concerning the first evening's experiments, my memory enables me to add, that besides the words already mentioned as being successfully written, my subject wrote with remarkable plainness this figure [a spiral], and also its reverse (though not so promptly).

Yet one further fact, perhaps worth noting: On this first evening I twice (possibly three times) let my thoughts stray whithersoever they would, while my subject and the onlookers supposed that I was exercising my intent upon some particular word. The results in these instances were nothing; unrelated pencil-marks as rambling as my thoughts, though, of course, in no way resembling them.

A few days after this I spent an evening at the subject's house with C. Nothing of interest occurred, though we tried to get results similar to those of the first occasion. The subject wrote a very little, automatically; but no sign whatever of telepathy appeared. C., I found, had stood (on the successful occasion) where he could see the movement of the young lady's hand as it wrote. The hypothesis must of course be considered, that he may have guided it by unconscious indications, like those given in the 'willing game' to the blindfold subject. The indications must in this instance have been reduced to changes in his respiration. If such indications were given, they were at any rate ineffectual when I was there, and also on three later occasions, on which, with the same *modus operandi*, Mr. C. reports that he only got total or partial failure. The sitting first reported remains thus a unique occurrence, not to be distinctly classified as yet.

The great desideratum is to get cases which can be examined continuously. Little can be done without the help of associates of the Society. I publish these incomplete notes, making no mention of much of our collected material, in order to show how important is the field, and how great the need of its assiduous cultivation.

WILLIAM JAMES.