

EXPERIMENTS WITH A SUPPOSED CASE OF
DISSOCIATION OR SECONDARY
PERSONALITY.

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INTRODUCTION.

I have already published four cases of the type represented in the title of this paper, which would have been diagnosed as indicated: namely, as cases of dissociation or secondary personality. One of them was actually diagnosed as worse than that; namely as prodromal paranoia by one physician and as hallucinosis by another. This was the case of Frederic L. Thompson, who proved to be under the influence of Mr. Gifford, the artist. Cf. Vol. III, *Proceedings Am. S. P. R.* The second case was that of Miss de Camp, who wrote fiction purporting to come from Mr. Frank R. Stockton. Cf. *Journal Am. S. P. R.*, Vol. VI, pp. 181-265. The third case was that of Miss Ritchie, who proved to be influenced by Emma Abbott, the singer, deceased. Cf. *Proceedings Am. S. P. R.*, Vol. VII, pp. 428-569. The fourth incident was unnamed, but was that of a gentleman who had a dream apparition and apparent communication with the person represented in it, a deceased friend of the dreamer. The experience would have been regarded by all psychologists and psychiatrists as one of hypnogogic illusions. But when he was taken to Mrs. Chenoweth for sittings the person represented in the dream communicated, proving his identity, and referring to the dream and its incidents, repeating the main features of it. Cf. *Journal Am. S. P. R.* Vol. VII, pp. 698-706. In each of these cases the phenomena reported as personal experiences had no external evidence of being supernormal, and at least superficially had no other claims to interest than as normal or abnormal events in ordinary life. All students of psychology, not familiar with psychic research, would have unhesitatingly explained them as cases of dis-

sociation or secondary personality, one of them as a hypnogogic illusion, and would have scorned to admit the influence of the discarnate upon the subjects. I did not suspect any such influence myself, until I had learned in one or two instances that the case could not be decided by superficial appearances. The only way to decide the matter was to take the subject to a psychic, which I did, and the result was distinct evidence of outside invasion causing the very phenomena which, on their own recognizance, would have to be treated as merely experiences of the subject classifiable with well known abnormal phenomena.

The present case, when it came to my attention, had all the characteristics of secondary personality, or even hysteria, as some would say, tho not any distinctive symptoms of that malady in its marked development. But remembering what had been proved in the other instances I resolved to try the same kind of experiment with it.

The lady had a taste for music and was trying to develop musical composition, piano and operatic, and also to train her voice for operatic singing. She had many of the experiences which psychics have in the form of impressions, inspirations, peculiar sensations, and automatic writing, the last being a later development, tho before I began my experiments. There was no evidence in her experiences of the influence of transcendental agencies, except what she got from a psychic whom she knew and through her she learned that her old music teacher, who had recently died, was trying to continue her teaching. With this personality several others appeared to be present and one of them was named Gerli, an old master in music teaching. But her own experiences gave no scientific evidence or proof of the influence of any of them. They were just such as any ordinary psychologist would refer to dissociation and secondary personality.

I took this lady under the usual conditions to Mrs. Chenoweth. She lived in Cambridge and her husband, a young man, was in the art department of Harvard University. Mrs. Chenoweth lived near Brookline and had no opportunity to know either of them, much less to know that I had become interested in the experiences of Mrs. M——, the subject of the experiences mentioned. Indeed Mrs. M—— had not made them a topic of public

knowledge. She kept them all to herself and a few very intimate friends, and they discouraged her interest in them. Her immediate family despised them. Besides, I admitted her to the house of Mrs. Chenoweth without any indication beforehand, as always, that I was bringing any one and Mrs. Chenoweth, in her normal state, never saw the lady, as she never sees sitters that I bring, unless it is my desire that she shall, and that is very rarely. Mrs. M—— was admitted to the séance room only after Mrs. Chenoweth had gone into the trance and left before she issued from it. She sat behind Mrs. Chenoweth where the latter could not have seen her, even if in her normal state. The record shows just what was said on the occasion by Mrs. M—— and myself, so that the influence of suggestion is reduced to a minimum.

SUMMARY OF THE FACTS.

The first sentence written was: "Morning and night bring us the privilege of association with the sensitive you have brought with you." This was true and I have never known Mrs. Chenoweth to speak this way of a sitter as a sensitive without being correct. She has uniformly recognized the psychic nature of sitters whom I knew to have this. I suggested the desire to have the identity of the communicator proved and this was recognized and the initial C came in a moment, but the sitter did not recognize its relevance and this effort closed with two more initials, E and J, which also were not recognized. There was then a change of control.

The new communicator claimed to be a woman and soon gave the initial A and the relationship of aunt to the sitter, alluding also to the sitter's psychic nature, and saying she had long been dead. The sitter had had an Aunt Anna who died before she, the sitter, was born. She claimed that she did not know "about these things before I came here", a fact that is probable, but not verifiable, and remarked the unsettled state of the sitter, which was a very evident fact from what I was told about her state of mind and plans. It was also remarked that she, the sitter, was "so often misunderstood in her ways" and this I found to be perfectly true on the part of her immediate family and relatives. As a distinct indication that her psychic nature was recognized I was told by the control to "put her further back in the room."

This meant that she was too near the medium and so I had her sit farther off. This same request had been made of Miss de Camp, who was as decidedly psychic and was the subject of the Stockton incidents. Reference was also made to the sitter's incipient clairvoyance, which I learned to be a fact, tho it had not yet gone far in its development, and also to her automatic writing, which had slightly developed, a fact which I did not know at the time. Then came the following passage which deserves quoting:

It makes me laugh to see her first know and then doubt and then know again. Poor child, it is all in the unfoldment coming as fast as it can be prompted by love and directed by the need which we see for her. It is all so light when we sit with her and we are as happy as she can be. I would write about mother, not here, but I wish to write about her, very strong in opinions. She knows what I mean.

This description of the sitter's state of mind about the matter is exactly correct. She could not herself have given a better account of it, tho she would probably have made it more detailed. She believed and doubted alternately about her psychic phenomena and also about the propriety of following or discouraging the impulse involved in them; namely, to pursue a musical career. The sitter's mother is living, as indicated in the message, and was a woman of strong convictions and the daughter inherited the same disposition.

Jennie P. came as the change of control and took up the subject at the point where the previous communicator broke down, tho first explaining the difficulty in communicating, and this is worth quoting for its relevance to the issue involved.

J. P. needs to take a hand here I think just for a minute. It is all right, but it took some little time for them to decide just which one they would write through. Funny is it not, but the difficulty which a group of communicators has when they have two lights to choose from is almost as disconcerting as when a little girl has to choose which kind of soda she will take.

The reader will understand now why the sitter had to be made to sit farther away from Mrs. Chenoweth. The process of communicating is not wholly under the control of communicators, but is like the mechanism of the telephone which cannot prevent

crossing of messages when the conditions favor it. Then Jennie P. proceeds with the case in hand.

I do wish to say a few words to the psychic friend you have brought. There is a group of people who do not belong to her as far as relatives go but who are infinitely nearer her soul and its desires than some of the closest relatives are. Yet there is a strong bond of love between the relatives gone and herself and between these two groups of people is no conflict but great effort to give her an adequate understanding of both the qualities which she possesses and which they make use of. Her fidelity to truth is the first and strongest factor in her makeup and loyalty to her friends the second factor.

I wish I could make her realize how great and good the gift is which is being unfolded in her and the writing will continue in connection with it.

(What gift is that?)

I would rather let the guides tell what they are doing, but this much I can say. I see her standing alone in a room humming away to herself, happiest when entirely alone; and yet in her mind showing off this expression which is the gift of the spirit.

[Change of Control.]

Do you know anything about art. I mean a special art with the hands. [Control was then lost.]

It will be observed very clearly that the sitter is recognized as a psychic and the sequel showed that there was a group of persons wholly unrelated to her influencing the art which she had chosen to develop; namely, the art of musical composition for the piano and the opera, as well as the practice of operatic singing. This last is not hinted at yet, but the new communicator that came got so far as to mention "art" and an art requiring the use of the hands, which was correct. The automatic writing, too, is mentioned again. Her fidelity to truth and loyalty to her friends were noticeable traits in her character, and I learned from her that she is often in a room alone at her work and humming songs which she wants to put into form. The word "humming" suggests the art she is interested in, tho it does not name it, and her constant practice of singing shows how near the truth the word came.

The next sitting was occupied with the effort of a control who turned out to be an Italian music teacher, as the giving of his

name later indicated. He made an effort in the course of his long communication to give his name, and got a part of it, and along with it some indication of his profession, but it was not clear.

After I explained to the communicator that I wanted his identity proved I got the capital letter G, which had no meaning to me, but was recognized by the sitter, and he made the statement that he "had tried to do that through the other soul" who "is here with you." After giving the letter G he went on to say that he was trying to work with her in the way of inspiration and that at first it was somewhat without any plan, but that it was now expected and thought about, and he added that he was trying to give a larger expression to a power already there. After saying that he had not been able to finish his work in life and laboring to tell what it was he succeeded in getting the letters "Ge" and "M" through. The letters "Ge" were the first two of the four letters in his name, completed later, and "M" might possibly have been an attempt to write "Musician", but that is a conjecture, tho it is true that he was a musician. With further effort "Gr" and "M" came again. And in a few moments the planchette was referred to in that connection, and the sitter shrugged her shoulders and said she had not done anything with the planchette for a long time. But the communicator insisted on writing it.

Now "r" is the third letter in the communicator's name which the sitter had gotten through another psychic elsewhere—a name not generally known. At one time she had used the planchette and hence the effort here may have been to say that the communicator had tried to give his name through that means, and as she seems never to have gotten the name in that way the reference has no other value than its coincidence with a former experiment of the sitter. The sitting ended without getting any more evidence of the communicator's identity.

In the subliminal a good description of her grandfather, both physically and morally, was given and the relationship to the sitter stated, and then a brief account of the sitter's way of training herself which, tho it did not make clear what was intended, would be recognizable to one who knew. The statements referred to practices in her voice culture, long breathing and efforts to en-

large the lung capacity. Then came the following spontaneously:

I hear music.
(What kind?)

It is piano. I hear it you know, all playing, you know. Has music anything to do with her.

(You must find out.)

I think so. I see sheet music. I am doing something with it, taking it down and writing something. You don't know whether it has anything to do with her, do you?

(No.)

I gave this last answer because I did not know at the time that the sitter was trying musical composition for the piano, but later found she was. But the prompt reference to piano music was a hit and it was not in any way suggested by the reference to breathing exercises. Rather the contrary is the fact. The allusion to sheet music is possibly a part of the picture designed to indicate that musical composition was her task, and it was a part of it, both piano and operatic.

At the next sitting, Rector, one of the Piper controls, began the automatic writing with some general ideas, interesting and important, but not pertinent to our present problem, tho he explained correctly enough the allusion the previous day to the grandfather and how the reference to the planchette arose, and it seemed that the intention was to indicate that it was her grandfather that had tried the planchette rather than the guide indicated in the letters "Ger." Then he closed his effort with a trial at evidential incidents.

It is good to be at the specific work again, somewhat like the old days.

(Yes indeed.)

and yet so different. Does the friend know two children over here; a small very young child, girl, and a larger boy. They have been about her since she came into the room.

(Mrs. M.: No, I don't know.) [Whispered, and writing went on disregarding the statement.]

The boy has the name of Willie. I go but leave my cordial blessings on the effort here and promise help to her in her hour of need in the work which awaits her. I mean the writing. Other work will be cared for in other ways, but you will understand my interest in that.

In regard to this message the sitter states: "My mother had several brothers and sisters who died while still young children. I think one was named Willie and one Addie."

The control then changed and the initial E was given at once which had no meaning at the time: a little later came the initial M and the statement that he had been gone a long time. Then came "E. A." and "Ed" and "Edward A," which was completed in the subliminal as McDowell. In close connection with the "Edward A." came "Gre" and "Gri" which were evidently attempts to give the name Gerli which had been attempted before and which succeeded later in getting through. When the word "Gross" came I suspected the presence of a German and spoke a German sentence which was followed by an attempt at German, only successful in a few words, and which Mrs. Chenoweth does not know. But he indicated rather clearly that he was endeavoring to influence her work, which was so much evidence of foreign inspiration of what the psychiatrist would call dissociation and hysteria. The subliminal was occupied mainly with the name McDowell and its importance lies in the fact that the sitter had been interested in him and his music some time before this. Some musical notes were written by the control that were evidently attempts to reveal identity in some way and they were pertinent for either Gerli or McDowell, more perhaps for the latter.

In the second series of sittings for the lady, the first communicator gave at the start the initial L, which was the initial of the surname of the sitter's music teacher who had recently died and who had purported to communicate with her through another psychic also. The communicator said in her message that she had "made an attempt to come to the friend who is here." But she got little that was evidential through. One statement is worth quoting for its admission of modifications of messages by the media through which they come. I had remonstrated against the advice to follow all the suggestions that came to the sitter, indicating that what came was colored in the transmission by the medium. The answer was:

We inevitably color all she does, and it is not so fragmentary as you imagine. Nothing is ever pure or unmixed with the influence

of our minds in your world or ours, and that is what makes us feel the injustice of making us have our individual solitariness of thought when we return. It is quite impossible to do that, but what I do mean is that, in a little time and with a little faith, on her part, that she is really used by unseen people and a little practice on our part will produce the evidence which she thinks she needs.

Further statements were made admitting that a spirit had first to prove its worthiness to have its advice accepted, but here we have the confession made that messages are bound to be colored in the transmission, and the admission is one of great importance both scientifically and ethically. It was, of course, apparent in the actual phenomena of the lady in her experiences, so evident to herself that she had her doubts about their source and integrity. Moreover, the communicator possibly has no assurance that the influence exercised upon the subconscious of the subject comes intact through to the normal consciousness. It might even be perfectly pure and unmixed in the transmission to the subconscious and yet not reach the normal consciousness in a pure state. There is also another possibility, and this is that even the communicator might receive from the subconsciousness of the living ideas whose source he does not recognize and so takes for his own and transmit them pure, tho they are in fact colored by the mind of the living before they are transmitted back to the living. Accepting any one of these possibilities we can quite understand why the communicators here have difficulty either in proving their identity or in influencing the living in the way they plan before undertaking it.

The long passage explaining the process and giving advice about the sitter's development is not evidential, save that it assumes the truth that she is psychic and implies that the phenomena which would be adjudged as secondary personality are foreign in their stimulus.

In the next sitting the first word written when the automatic writing began was the name of Gounod. This was pertinent on any theory, as it implied musical associations which fitted the situation well. But the sitter wrote of this appearance:—

“I have always had the greatest admiration of Gounod's music. ‘Faust’ was the first opera I learned and for a long time I have been anxious to sing ‘Juliet’”. On April 23rd, which

was six days before this sitting, the sitter got the name of Gounod in her own automatic writing. Hence it is a cross reference here, and it matters not for the main point of this paper whether we assume that Gounod is present or only that some one else is making a reference to him for his music.

After some general communications the attempt was made to give the name of Gerli and after some confusion it came correctly, but it was associated with some German, tho Gerli was Italian. But later communications explain the mixture of German here. A German musician appeared as one of the guides to the sitter. But the importance of the name of Gerli lies in the fact that the sitter had gotten his name as one of her guides through another psychic, so that it is a cross reference involving something supernatural.

Jennie P. came in and said that he, Gerli, had a life work to do with the lady, thus indicating the spiritistic nature of the sitter's phenomena which the actual amount of the supernatural in the case would confirm. Gerli was the master of the teacher who was educating the sitter's voice before her own death.

In the subliminal the following came with reference to the sitter and her hard work:

What did you let her work so hard for?

(Who?)

The girl. She is like a race horse. She will kill herself trying to win.

(What about her diet?) [Sitter had been fasting.]

What has that got to do with her work? It is the work that makes it so bad. Do you know it?

(No.)

She will be better after awhile. She has been under an awful strain. She is not always conscious of it. Does she eat much bread?

(Mrs. M.: No.)

I wouldn't put a bit in the stomach, anything floury or pasty. Do you know that?

(Yes.)

I would live on vegetables and fruits and not much trashy stuff, but some meat. She needs it, not too much at a time.

The sitter had been fasting as a help in the training of her system for her work, and had been working far beyond her

powers or what was well for her, a fact which I learned after the sitting. All that was said about her condition, the strain on her and the hard work was perfectly correct and it was not possible for the psychic to know anything about it.

The next sitting produced little evidence of the personalities claiming to influence the sitter. The communications came mostly from relatives. An allusion to Elsa and Lohengrin was pertinent, tho it was not self-explaining in its character. The lady had lost her voice ten years ago, singing Wagner's operas.

CONCLUSION.

The importance of this case lies only in the repetition of the phenomena which pointed the way to foreign and spirit influences in the other instances mentioned at the beginning of this article. The evidence of identity in this instance is not what one might wish, but I was less concerned with the identity of the invading influences than I was with the evidence of their presence. An observer of Mrs. M—— would not suppose that she was in any respect psychic. She led a normal life in so far as her friends could observe. There were no manifestations of hysteria or ill health. Even her friends would not have observed anything out of the way and it was only the frank admission to them of her psychic experiences that enabled them to know anything about it. A physician would have observed nothing, unless he had been told of the automatic writing and the psychic impressions, and then he would have diagnosed them as hysteria or paranoia or other mental disturbance. But he would have had no right to treat the case in this manner except as suspected incipient abnormality. It would have been quite natural for him to suspect this, tho he would not have discovered symptoms of even this in any observations of Mrs. M——, without her confession. She had all the ordinary marks of a normal person and had control of these experiences, admitting them when she wanted the desired help in her work. But the moment that any psychiatrist learned the facts he would have been quick to diagnose it as some form of abnormal mental disturbance. He would have treated it accordingly. I should have done the same a few years ago. I should not have suspected the invasion of spirits in the case. It was the Thompson-Gifford case that opened my eyes to the possibilities,

and the repetition of the experiments with that case only confirmed my conjecture. In fact it was this that prompted me to try the experiments with Mrs. M——. The result any reader can determine.

The controls at once diagnosed the case as one of psychic tendencies and they did this without in any respect confusing it with ordinary sitters. I have never had ordinary sitters impeached for psychic abilities. The controls always recognized them as seeking communication with their deceased friends. But in each case that had manifested psychic phenomena the diagnosis was correct without any hint even from normal knowledge on the part of Mrs. Chenoweth. But they did not stop with that general characteristic. They proceeded to recognize a number of specific facts which confirmed this view.

I may enumerate these. (1) There was the reference to music as the subject of the inspiration. (2) There was the recognition of the two types of it, piano and operatic music, both correct. (3) There was the definite mention of Gerli, a music master whose name had been given through another psychic, saying that he was with the sitter and influencing her work. (4) There was the initial of her own music teacher, recently dead, with certain marks of her identity, and the claim that she was helping the sitter. This teacher had also been a pupil of Gerli. (5) There was the mention of McDowell, in whose music she had been particularly interested. (6) There were incidents in the identity of relatives and the distinction drawn between them and her "guides". (7) There was apt diagnosis of her condition and advice as to the process of development. (8) There was the correct statement about her mental attitude toward the interpretation of her phenomena.

All these circumstances collectively point strongly to the interpretation of the case as one of spirit influence rather than of ordinary mental disturbance. In fact, the case confirms all that was suggested or proved by those instances enumerated at the beginning of the article, and whether the claim be proved in this instance or not, it certainly proves the necessity of investigating all such cases for similar results. The diagnosis of insanity and psychoses generally, when they are likely to be of the functional type, should never omit this kind of experiment. I do not mean

to imply that insanity may be caused by such influences, for we have not gone far enough in the investigation to suggest any such conclusion. Moreover we have two things to distinguish from this type before generalizing at all. They are (1) the fact that much insanity is caused by physical lesions in the brain, and (2) that many cases of insanity may be caused by physical lesions, even tho we found spirit presences there for either help or other influence. The fact that we find evidence of spirit invasions does not entitle us hastily to conclude that they are the cause and that we have to substitute this explanation for the ordinary physiological one. All that we show is that certain types of cases usually diagnosed as hysteria or some form of paranoia, dementia precox, or other mental malady, may yield to the idea of obsession, whether good or bad. Whether it shall be good or bad will be determined by the character of the phenomena displayed.

In some other cases which we have investigated we have found that the cure, where the manifestations are immoral or deleterious, is not in wholly stopping psychic development, but in substituting the better type of it, for the worse. Hence it is not invasion in general that is to be deprecated, but the bad form of it. Where its occurrence is compatible with the normal habits and ethical ideals of the subject, the influence may be safely allowed to have its course, tho it should be wisely directed. Of that aspect we cannot speak at length here. In this paper, we are interested in adding to the evidence that the influence exists where we should not suspect it from the superficial phenomena. The standard of evidence for the intrusion of spirits has, in the first stages of our work, to be phenomena that are rigidly and provably supernormal, until we discover that many non-evidential phenomena fall under the same explanation by virtue of being associated with the evidential. We may then extend our explanations to these non-evidential facts. But there is one way of converting the phenomena which appear non-evidential in the subject into evidential phenomena, and that is to get reference to them through a psychic who knows nothing about the subject of them. This is what we have done in the several cases named, and the present one only adds to the list. What betrayed no superficial evidence of invasion becomes supernormal evidence of that invasion when confirmed by another psychic who does not

know the facts. This criterion has been satisfied in this instance by the sittings. Cross reference has indicated what the subjective phenomena did not indicate so clearly.

All that need be said, then, is that we shall probably have to concede that spirit influence is more extensive than the ordinary test of the supernormal would suppose. The revolutionary effect of this view on psychology and physiology, as well as psychiatry, can be seen at once, and the only hesitation about admitting it as a fact would come from the strength of the materialistic interpretation of the phenomena. But no materialistic theory can stand up against the cross references of the type in the cases enumerated, if those cross references become numerous enough to silence opposition. There is nothing to hinder wholesale experimentation in that direction, except the financial means to conduct it rightly. Every single case in which I suspected, not the fact, but the possibility of spirit invasion, has turned out to offer good evidence of it, and there is no further excuse for neglecting the systematic inquiry for its larger evidence. The conclusion carries with it the assumption of a very wide influence of spirits upon the living, tho that assumption will have to be qualified by the evidence and more especially by the probability that it is more or less limited to those who have psychic powers, whatever these may be. Of course, we may not know the limits of psychic capacities in all of us, but in what we call the normal person, there is little or no evidence of this invasion and it is conceivable that the invasion is limited to the abnormal type, a type that is not easily distinguishable from the normal in the borderland region. However, we are not in a position to classify and to draw lines of demarcation in the subject. We can only call attention to the fact that spirit invasion extends beyond those types which, like Mrs. Piper, Mrs. Verrall, Miss Verrall, Mrs. Holland, Mrs. Smead, Mrs. Chenoweth and others, so quickly manifest evidence of the supernormal. Then we have to raise the question how far such influences might fuse with normal minds and give no evidence of their presence and influence. That is a later and more difficult problem. But in the several cases enumerated we have given distinct evidence of this invasion and it affects the domain of psychology and physiology so extensively that it is high time for their devotees to give attention to the subject.