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EXPERIMENTS.

By PROFESSOR OLIVER J. LODGE, F.R.S.



IV.

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While staying for a fortnight this autumn in the house of Herr von Lyro, at Pörschach am See, Carinthia, I found that his two adult daughters were adepts in the so-called "willing-game," and were accustomed to entertain their friends by the speed and certainty with which they could perform actions decided on by the company; the operator being led either by one or by two others, and preferring to be led by someone to whom she was accustomed. Another lady staying in the house was said to be able to do things equally well, but not without nervous prostration.

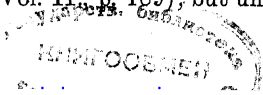
On the evening when I witnessed the occurrences nothing done could be regarded as conclusive against muscle-reading, though the speed and accuracy with which the willed action was performed exceeded any muscle-reading that I had previously seen, and left me little doubt but that there was some genuine thought-transference power.

Accordingly I obtained permission to experiment in a more satisfactory manner, and on several occasions tested the power of the two sisters, using one as agent and the other as percipient alternately. Once or twice a stranger was asked to act as agent, but without success.

The operations were conducted in an ordinary simple manner. One of the sisters was placed behind a drawing board, erected by me on a temporary sort of easel, while the other sat in front of the same board; and the objects or drawings to be guessed were placed on a ledge in front of it, in full view of the one and completely hidden from the other.

Naturally I attended to the absence of mirrors and all such obvious physical complications. The percipient preferred to be blindfolded, but no precaution was taken with reference to this blindfolding. Agent and percipient were within reach of one another, and usually held each other's hands across a small table. The kind and amount of contact was under control, and was sometimes broken altogether, as is subsequently related.

The ladies were interested in the subject, and were perfectly willing to try any change of conditions that I suggested, and my hope was gradually to secure the phenomenon without contact of any kind, as I had done in a previous case (Vol. II, p. 189); but unfortunately in the



present instance contact seemed essential to the transfer. Very slight contact was sufficient, for instance through the backs of the knuckles; but directly the hands were separated, even though but a quarter of an inch, the phenomena ceased, to reappear again directly contact was established. I tried whether I could bridge over the gap effectively with my own, or another lady's, hand; but that did not do. I also once tried both sisters blindfolded, and holding each other by one hand, while two other persons completed the chain and tried to act as agents. After a time the sisters were asked to draw, simultaneously and independently, what they had "seen"; but though the two drawings were close imitations of each other, they bore no likeness to the object on which the agents had been gazing. (See Plates at the end of this paper, Plate I., R. 1 (a) and R. 1 (b).) My impression, therefore, is that there is some kind of close sympathetic connexion between the sisters, so that an idea may, as it were, reverberate between their minds when their hands touch, but that they are only faintly, if at all, susceptible to the influence of outside persons.

Whether the importance of contact in this case depends upon the fact that it is the condition to which they have always been accustomed, or whether it is a really effective aid, I am not sure. I have explained to them the desirability of securing the results without contact, if possible, and it may happen that with some practice they will find themselves able to dispense with it. The time at our joint disposal was limited, and I was not able to do more than set things in train for more striking success later, provided they try experiments occasionally and do not get tired of them.

So far as my own observation went, it was interesting and new to me to see how clearly the effect seemed to depend on contact, and how abruptly it ceased when contact was broken. While guessing through a pack of cards, for instance, rapidly and continuously, I sometimes allowed contact and sometimes stopped it; and the guesses changed, from frequently correct to quite wild, directly the knuckles or finger tips, or any part of the skin of the two hands, ceased to touch. It was almost like breaking an electric circuit. At the same time, partial contact seemed less effective than a thorough hand grasp.

It is perfectly obvious how strongly this dependence on contact suggests the idea of a code; and I have to admit at once that this flaw prevents this series of observations from having any value as a test case, or as establishing *de novo* the existence of the genuine power. My paper only appeals to those who, on other grounds, have accepted the general possibility of thought-transference, and who, therefore, need not feel unduly strained when asked to credit my assertion that unfair practices were extremely unlikely; and that, apart from this moral conviction, there was a sufficient amount of internal evidence derived from