THE HISTORY OF A STRANGE CASE.

A STUDY IN OCCULTISM.

BY DAVID P. ABBOTT.

[CONCLUDED.]

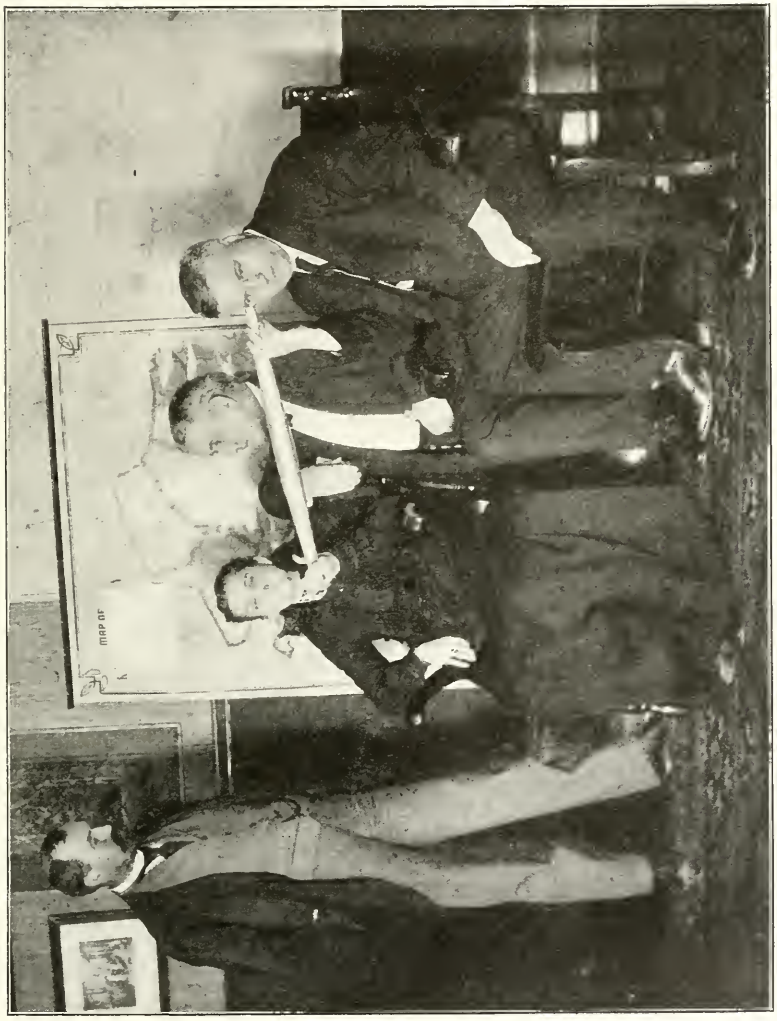
We now returned to the house of our friend. Immediately after noon he sent his driver after Mrs. Blake, while he went to the train to meet some guests for whom he had telephoned during the forenoon. Soon after this, Mrs. Blake arrived; and we took her arms and assisted her to the Doctor's parlors, while we carried her crutches in our hands. After she had rested for a while and as soon as a photographer arrived, to whom we had telephoned, the accompanying photograph was made. During the exposure, whispered voices were in the trumpet, but I could not understand the articulation. Professor Hyslop is standing, the writer holds one end of the trumpet to his ear, while between him and the medium Mr. Clawson appears on one knee.

I will mention that Mr. Clawson rode to the city with the driver when he went after Mrs. Blake; and upon the latter's coming, he rode from the city to the residence of our friend with her. I was not with him, but he assured me that he gave her no information during this fifteen minute drive.

Soon after the photograph was made in our friend's office, we retired to his parlors, where we seated Mrs. Blake by an open window in a large arm-chair. Here we conducted the most successful experiment of our entire visit. The voices were mostly vocal or nearly so, and the responses came instantly. To all appearances, the ride and the excitement of sitting for a photograph, seemed to have stimulated Mrs. Blake to a great extent. One of the supposed gentlemen's voices echoed so loudly, that it could have been heard one hundred feet out on the lawn. This voice was conversing with the governor of a state, who happened to be present. I am not

at liberty to give his name. As far as I could infer from the conversation, it seemed to satisfy the sitter.

Mr. Clawson first took the trumpet and addressed what he supposed to be the voice of his dead daughter. He said, "Georgia, give me your second name."



"Chastine," responded the voice.
"Repeat that again, please," asked Mr. Clawson.
"Georgia Chastine," responded the voice this time.
"Spell the name," Mr. Clawson now requested.

"C—h—a—s—t—i—n—e," spelled the voice.

His daughter had boarded with a lady whom she called "Aunt Burgess," while going to school in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts. Before this lady had married Mr. Burgess, Mr. Clawson had known her as "Aunt Tina." It was this last name that he had in mind, when that which follows took place. His daughter at this time had a favorite schoolmate by the name of "Nellie Biggs"; and also, when she went to school in Kansas City, she had another school-girl friend whose first name was "Mary." Of these facts I was in ignorance at the time; but I heard a good portion of the answers given in the following conversation, though at the time I did not know whether or not they were correct.

Mr. Clawson now asked, "Where did you board when you went to school in Wellesley Hills, Massachusetts?"

"With Aunt Burgess," responded the voice.

"Tell me the name of your schoolmate friend," Mr. Clawson asked.

"Nellie Biggs," instantly responded the voice.

"With what friend did you go to school in Kansas City?" asked Mr. Clawson.

"Mary," responded the voice. It then continued, "If you will wait a minute, I will give you my pet name for her." However, this the voice did not do, and in a moment Mr. Clawson asked, "Georgia, which grandmothers are with you?"

"Grandma Abbott and Grandma Daily," responded the voice.

"Is there not another one?" Mr. Clawson asked.

"Do you mean my mother's mother, my own grandma?"

"Yes."

"Yes. Grandma Marcus is here," responded the voice. I will say that Mrs. Marquis had died but recently, and that her grandchildren always pronounced her name as if spelled "Marcus."

"Daddie, I want you to tell Ark that I want to talk to him before he gets married. I am so anxious to talk to him and to tell him something," spoke the voice.

"Is there any medium in New York that he can go and see?"

"I do not know of any. Bring him here and have Mamma meet him here," requested the voice.

"Georgia, don't you want to talk to Cousin Dave a minute?" asked Mr. Clawson.

"Yes, Daddie," spoke the voice. I now took the trumpet.

It was here that the loudest voice of all spoke and desired to converse with the governor whom I mentioned before. The voice

first spoke apparently in Mrs. Blake's lap, just as I was placing the trumpet to my ear. The voice was very deep-toned, and reverberated over the large room so loudly that Professor Hyslop, who had stepped out, our friend's stenographer, and others entered and stood around the walls listening. When this conversation ceased I again took the trumpet.

A voice now addressed me, saying, "How do you do, David?'

"Who are you?" I asked.

"I am Grandma Abbott, and I always loved you, David, the best of all," responded the voice.

I will state for the information of the readers, that my father has always been quite skeptical as to the life after death, the inspiration of the Scriptures, etc.; and that in his younger days he used quite frequently to engage in arguments in support of his position. This seemed to grieve my grandmother greatly; and I have a remembrance of her frequently asking me, as a child, never to read the writings of Thomas Paine. I also now quite plainly remember (as does also my eldest sister) my grandmother saying to my father during the arguments referred to, these words, "Oh, George, don't be a 'doubting Thomas'!" According to our best remembrance we, as children, heard this expression many times. At the time of this sitting this had completely passed from my mind, and only after some months has it come into my memory clearly.

I now asked the voice, "Grandma, have you any message to send to my father?"

"Yes, tell him I am all right, and tell him not to be a 'doubting Thomas'."

"Grandma, that I may convince him that it was really you who talked to me, tell me his name."

"George Alexander Abbott," spoke the voice, instantly and distinctly, so that all could hear.

"Grandma, do you remember the summer that you spent at our home long ago?" I asked.

"Very well, David, and I always loved you," replied the voice.

"Grandma, can't you tell me something to tell my father, some little thing that will convince him that it was you who talked to me?" I asked.

"Yes, ask George if he remembers the last day I spent at his house — — — —." The word "house" was followed by a number of indistinct words, in which I thought I heard the words, "had for dinner." Mr. Clawson said that he understood that it spoke of something "making her sick," but I can not be sure of this. Then

the voice revived from its weakness and said, "Don't forget to tell George that I talked to you, and that I want him not to be a 'doubt ing Thomas' any longer and to pray." Our friend here spoke and said, "That is the first time I have ever heard that expression used at any of Mrs. Blake's sittings. Here a whispered voice spoke, asking to talk to its "papa." No one seemed to know for whom this was, and finally Mr. Clawson took the trumpet.

"I want to talk to you. You are my papa," said the voice.

"Where were you born," asked Mr. Clawson.

"I can't remember," replied the voice.

"What is your name?" asked Mr. Clawson.

"Papa, I never had any name. Tell mother I am here with sister and am getting along fine,"responded the voice.

I then took the trumpet and said, "I shall ask for a person who does not come without asking. I want to talk to my father-in-law, Mr. Miller." After this we sat with the trumpet in our laps, waiting, as Mrs. Blake had just encouraged me to ask for any one I might desire. Mr. Miller had resided in Beatrice, Nebraska. His wife is now living. Her first name is "Hannah." The first name of my wife is "Fannie," and one of his sons has a wife whose first name is "Lody."

Soon a gentleman's voice seemed to speak in Mrs. Blake's lap, and we placed the trumpet to our ears.

"Who are you," I asked.

"I am Mr. Miller," responded the voice. It continued, "I want to send a message to my daughter. Tell her I am all right."

"Mr. Miller, to prove to my wife that it was really you who talked to me, tell me, what is her first name?" I said. The voice then repeated a word that did not seem to bear any resemblance to my wife's name, and followed this by a number of inarticulate words; until finally, I heard a name repeated a number of times that sounded like "Fannie," and I was quite sure that it was, but it could have been "Annie." Mr. Clawson, who was listening at the outside of the trumpet, seemed to consider the answer correct beyond any dispute, and repeated the name "Fannie" with a rising inflection. After this the voice said, "I want to talk to Fannie." Mr. Clawson, who thought my wife's mother was dead, said, "Ask for her mother." I then said, "Is Fannie's mother with you?"

"No, Dave, you know she is living, and I would like to talk to her."

"Tell me her first name, Mr. Miller," I then said.

This was followed by some inarticulate sentences in which we

heard the word "Dody" repeated a number of times. I know of no one by that name, and Mr. Clawson did not know of my wife's sister-in-law whose first name is "Lody."

I started to straighten this matter out; but Mrs. Blake wearily threw down the trumpet and smilingly said, "You would talk to the spirits all night. I can go no further."

I conversed with her pleasantly for a little while after this. I said, "Mrs. Blake, there are those who would call this ventriloquism."

She replied, "I would not care if the greatest van-triloquist in the world were here right now," then lowering her voice with the intense earnestness of conscious power, she continued, "he could not tell you your dead mother's name."

I did not reply, but I was thinking. Certainly in all of my experience, I had never met ventriloquists with such powers; neither had I ever before heard such a wonderful exhibition of voices. I told Mrs. Blake that I desired to keep as a memento the trumpet we had used, and I still have it. I had a little visit with her at the end of this sitting, and found her very intelligent. However, her education has been neglected. Were a critical observer to inspect certain specimens of her chirography which I possess, he would conclude that were she able to correctly spell such names as "Archimedes" and "Chastine," this would be a phenomenon on a par with her other achievements.

I, however, found her quite intelligent, and I enjoyed listening to her spiritual philosophy. The intense earnestness with which she apparently portrayed an absolute knowledge of the "hereafter" was very refreshing.

We now assisted Mrs. Blake to the carriage; and placing her crutches by her side and thanking her, we bade her good-bye. Professor Hyslop expected to remain for some days and to conduct his investigations in private. That evening Mr. Clawson and myself returned to our homes.

I have been asked by many, what results Professor Hyslop obtained. This he must answer for himself. But I have reason to believe that his results were similar to ours. Any number of apparently marvelous incidents, illustrating Mrs. Blake's power, can be collected in the vicinity.

Prof. Hyslop took the written statement of Mr. Killgore, a business man residing in Kentucky, in regard to the following: Mr. Killgore deposited all checks in a bank. Mrs. Killgore kept all the currency in a safe, she alone having the combination to it.

When her husband desired cash she furnished it to him. At her death all knowledge of the combination of this safe was lost. He tried to open it for some hours but had to give it up. Two months after his wife's death, while visiting Mrs. Blake and conversing with his wife's supposed voice, the latter told him to take a pencil and paper, and it would give him the combination. This he did, and on arriving home unlocked the safe within one minute's trial, using this combination.

Shortly after our return Dr. X—, together with his wife, a Mr. L. S. English and a Mrs. Humphrey Devereaux, conducted an experiment and reported it to me, both Dr. X— and his wife attesting to its truth in writing. The Doctor took eight O. N. T. spool boxes, packing in each, wrapped in cotton, a different article which had belonged to his father. Rubber bands were now placed around each box, and the latter thoroughly mixed and stacked on the Doctor's desk. His bookkeeper was now brought into the room and requested to draw a box at random from the stack, while the Doctor turned his back. The object was to select a box the contents of which the doctor would not himself know. The selected box the Doctor placed in his coat pocket. He then placed in another pocket his father's pocket book, and the four started for the seance.

On the way the Doctor gave the pocket book to L. S. English. During the seance the supposed voice of the Doctor's father spoke. Dr. X— then said, "Father, can you tell if we have anything with us that formerly belonged to you?"

"Yes, you have," answered the voice.

"What is it?"

"My pocketbook."

"Who has your pocketbook?" the Doctor asked.

"L. S. English," replied the voice. The voice then resumed a previous conversation with Mrs. Devereaux. During this time the Doctor requested his wife to ask the voice what was in the former's pocket.

"Colonel, can you tell me the contents of the box James has in his pocket?" she asked. *

"Yes."

"I am very anxious to have you do this so that I can report it to Professor Hyslop, and if you say so I will take the lid off the box to enable you to see better," spoke the Doctor.

"That is not necessary. I can see the contents as well with the lid on as with it off," responded the voice.

* "Colonel" and "James" are substituted names.

"Well, what is in it?" asked the Doctor.

"My pass I used to travel with," replied the voice. The Doctor's father used to have several annual passes. Some of them he never used, but one he used almost exclusively. Upon examining the box it was found to contain this pass.

Shortly after our return, I received a letter from Mr. Clawson. He stated that he had just received a letter from the fiancé of his dead daughter, and that in it the writer stated that he was contemplating marriage with a certain lady. This letter bore date of some time previous; and with it was an additional note of a later date, stating that the writer had supposed the letter mailed, but that he had just found it in his pocket and that he now hastened to mail it. This letter was therefore already written at the time of our sittings.

After this, at Mr. Clawson's request, this young gentleman journeyed to Huntington, where he met the wife of Mr. Clawson, and the two carried on an investigation. They expected much from the supposed voice of Mr. Clawson's daughter, but received very little. In fact, they received so little that they considered the journey a failure.

However, in looking over their reports (which I have), I find that they each received from other voices information partly on a par with what we received. A number of correct names were given, including such as "Arista," and also the name "Hyer." The latter is that of an acquaintance who, it was thought, had committed suicide a couple of weeks previously. To repeat these is but to multiply instances. It is, however, remarkable that, from the supposed voice of Mr. Clawson's daughter, they did not even receive the information which previously had been given us.

IV.

In an attempt to solve in a manner satisfactory to myself the problem presented to me by this marvelous exhibition, I have divided the phenomena into two parts,—the physical, and the psychical or mental. The former includes the phenomena of the voices, light and heavy trumpet, floating trumpet, and lights. The latter includes merely the correct names and information furnished by the voices.

In regard to the floating trumpet at the dark seance, I will say that I attach no importance to this whatever. The trumpet lay upon the table in front of Mrs. Blake, and *there was nothing whatever to prevent her lifting it and dropping it,* as is done by the many mediums of the land. As to the lights, they were in appearance

exactly similar to those produced by dampening the finger and then touching the dampened portion with the head of a sulphur match. The light that floated over the table was at no time further from Mrs. Blake than she could reach. The light on the floor near Mr. Blake appeared to be about where the toe of his shoe was situated. This phenomenon did not in any way differ from that of the many other mediums producing it. As to the light and heavy trumpet, I noticed the position of the fingers of Mrs. Blake with reference to the flange or ear-piece in her hands. When the end of the trumpet which the sitter held showed a tendency to move upwards, these fingers were so placed, that in case a slight pressure of some of the fingers were applied on the flange, it would give the trumpet this tendency. Such pressure could not have been detected by the eye. I noticed that when the tendency of the trumpet was downward, the position of the fingers was reversed. I find it quite easy to reproduce this phenomenon by this simple means. The trumpet can be caused to roll or turn on the hand by slightly tilting the latter. I also find that the merest slipping of the finger on the trumpet while under slight pressure makes very good raps upon it, but we heard no raps at *our* investigation.

This leaves in the first division the one important thing, the phenomenon of the voices, to be considered. Strange as it may seem to many, I will lay it down as a fact beyond any dispute that all of the articulated words, whether vocal or mere whispers, *came out of the ears of Mrs. Blake.* Before my journey I was confident that sound waves could not exist unless they were first produced by the vibration of some material thing. I was also satisfied that intelligent language if not produced by a phonograph, could only originate in the vocal organs of some living human being. The question with me was, where was this person located and by what means were the waves conducted to the trumpet?

As soon as I saw plainly that there was no assistant and no mechanism in the building, I was confident that the words originated with Mrs. Blake herself. In fact, this was the simplest way out of the difficulty. I next noticed that, although voices were in the trumpet when it was removed from her ear for a moment, at such times they were not so loud; *and that in no such case could the articulation be understood.* If one desired to understand whispered words, it was absolutely necessary to place the trumpet to the ear of Mrs. Blake. They then came out plainly. When the trumpet was in the hand, I noted that the ear was slightly turned towards the opening in the trumpet, and at such times a listener at the other end

of it would hear sounds in the trumpet instead of out of it. I have since verified this by experiment. The trumpet gathers and concentrates the sounds. One, on listening to this, would afterwards remember the sounds while the trumpet had been in the hand, and would forget the fact that this was but for a mere instant, and that he could not at that time understand the words. The illusion would thus be produced in the sitter's mind that the voices were able to speak in the trumpet, whatever its position.

Mrs. Blake practically acknowledged that the sounds came out of her ears, when she stated that as a little girl she heard them in her ears, and that she discovered that the use of a closed receptacle confined the sounds, making them plainer and enabling others to hear them better. When whispered words were spoken, it was far more difficult to locate their origin than when the loud and deep vocal tones of gentlemen's voices were speaking. During the latter, I frequently stood very near Mrs. Blake's head. I could plainly hear the voice emerging from her ear; that is, from the outside I could note the mellow effect of the tone in the trumpet, while I could at the same time detect what I call a "buzzing" of the tone near the ear, as a part of the vibrations escaped outward. I had done much experimenting for many years with phonograph horns, and various reproducers, and this training enabled me to detect these things very quickly. I could also at such times hear a third sound that was not nearly so loud as the voices. This was a species of "clucking"—at least, so I call it for want of a proper word to describe it. This seemed to be within her head, and I think came out of the nostrils. This was particularly noticeable when the voices were very loud. It seemed that the production of loud, vocal words, without the use of the mouth or lips, resulted in this secondary effect. This sound was independent of the words, and did not belong to them except that it accompanied their production.

For a long time I marveled that Mr. Parsons could not have readily discovered the origin of these voices; and that he should not have done so seemed a great mystery to me, until I remembered that he heard only whispered voices, and also that he was at such times generally using one ear at the trumpet. This effectually prevented his making this discovery.

Now if these voices come out of the lady's ears, the question arises, "Where do they originate?" I am satisfied that the whispered words originate in her throat, and that the vocal voices are produced lower down in the chest. These sounds I believe are conducted from the throat through an *abnormal* Eustachian canal, to

a point close to the tympanic membrane. The office of this membrane is to transmit sound waves; so that once they are there, the sound waves are easily transferred into the outer or auditory canal. How these sounds can be guided into either ear at will, and how the nostrils can prevent their exit, I can only surmise. The low, guttural, single syllables that were apparently in the lap, I believe were merely heard inside the chest or abdomen. As to the sounds Mr. Parsons heard when the trumpet was to the back, I can not say, unless they were heard somewhat like the pulsations of the heart are heard in a physician's stethoscope when it is placed against the chest.

When the little grandchild used the trumpet, we could plainly see the workings of its throat, although the most innocent look was in its pretty eyes. Mrs. Blake noticed our close scrutiny and remarked, "I do not know but that they may use her vocal organs." This remark was intended to explain to us that the use of the child's vocal organs was automatic, or rather directed by spirits of the dead, and not by the will-power of the child. It is natural to suppose that both she and the child use the same methods. Any one observing the junction of Mrs. Blake's throat and chest closely, will notice an extraordinary fullness indicating an abnormal development within it.

Since my journey, I myself, have done considerable experimenting in this line. I can now produce whispered words in the trumpet so that they may be understood as well as this child did, but of course I have not the natural gift possessed by Mrs. Blake. While upon the subject, it is well to remark that I have learned that a few miles out in the country Mrs. Blake has a friend whom she visits very often; that this friend gives demonstrations the same as does she; but I am informed that the words are not nearly so plain. My informant states that it is very patent to an observer that the sounds are produced in her vocal organs. Now it is but a reasonable conclusion that if these ladies are quite friendly, both use the same means in producing these voices.

Readers of my book, *Behind the Scenes With the Mediums* will remember an account of a seance described in the Appendix, which was furnished me by a gentleman in Oldtown, Kentucky. This was where in the twilight a trumpet floated out of the door and up into the branches of the trees. This gentleman also wrote me in reference to Mrs. Blake, stating that he had known her all of his life, and that he "fought through the War of the Rebellion with Mr. Blake." He also informed me of this same medium friend of

Mrs. Blake (of whom I had previously been informed), and he seemed to attribute equal and genuine powers to both. He described a dark seance which he attended, where, in his own language, "Both of these old ladies were present, and the seance was one grand hurrah of voices from start to finish."

I may state that I noticed the workings of Mrs. Blake's throat on some occasions, but that her lips were always tightly closed. That any one could reach such marvelous perfection in producing voices in this abnormal manner seems incredible, but it is certainly a fact. How Mr. Parsons heard the sounds of piano-playing I can not imagine, unless the lady possess a very perfect power of mimicry such as I have heard at times. He described the sounds to be as if one were simply running arpeggios. This would indicate that he heard but one tone at a time.

I should also mention that there are two ladies in Omaha, who produce the phenomenon of "Independent Voices." One of them gave sittings professionally for some years; but having more recently married a Catholic gentleman who disapproves of such things, she has discontinued such exhibitions excepting in private before a few intimate friends. I am informed that these voices speak up suddenly when unlooked for, while the lady is conversing. They appear to come out of her chest. One lady informs me that there is no doubt upon this point, as she was permitted to lay her ear against the lady's chest and listen. This former medium now claims that she, herself, does not understand this phenomenon, or what causes it. Being now so closely connected with the Roman Catholic Church she can not well claim that it is done by spirit agency.

The other lady's voices seem to come in the form of a kind of "whistle," and seem to come out of the nostrils. I am told that in neither case do these voices give correct information.

This now brings us to the consideration of the problem presented by the mental or psychical part of what we witnessed. I frankly say that I have not yet found a solution of this problem to my own satisfaction.

That spirits of the dead, if such exist, should be a party to deception of any kind, I positively can not believe. Knowing the origin of the voices beyond any question, I never can believe that I communicated with the dead. And yet, if Mrs. Blake's intelligence directed this conversation, from what source did she secure her accurate information?

It was suggested to me that possibly the dead caused these voices to sound in the seat of Mrs. Blake's hearing as a mere sub-

jective phenomenon, and that she but repeated what she heard subjectively. That is, it was supposed that she did not perceive actual sound waves, but that she was caused to experience the same subjective sensations, that such sound waves would have produced. This is ingenious, but one with my natural skepticism could not accept it.

It was also suggested to me that possibly Mrs. Blake did not control her own vocal organs at the times when voices were speaking, but that spirits of the dead controlled them; or that they acted automatically, as it is claimed is the case with the hand of Mrs. Piper when executing her famous writings. Had Mrs. Blake made such claims as this openly, it would certainly have strengthened her case, but would have lessened the dramatic effect. I, however, could have no faith in this solution. For many reasons which I shall not take space to recount, I am quite sure that the will power of Mrs. Blake controlled her own vocal organs.

At the time, it seemed irresistibly borne in upon me that Mrs. Blake did receive subjective mental impressions from some source. I am by nature as skeptical about anything of the nature of so-called telepathy or mind-reading, as I am about spirit communion. And yet, *at the time,* I could not avoid the inner feeling that she possessed some kind of a "freak power"; that something in the nature of mental flashes would at times come to her, and that certain names or facts would be impressed upon her mind, or rather make their appearance there; that she, herself, possibly did not know the cause of this, but by uttering what then came into her consciousness, she had found that it agreed with facts; that she was thus possessed of some freak mental gift, and that possibly she, herself, did not understand it.

Whether this was in any way connected with those around her I did not decide; but it seemed that it was, for otherwise tests could be given to those at a distance. As I could not believe that her information emanated from spirits of the dead, it seemed that she must draw her inspiration from those around her. And yet there was some evidence of knowledge being imparted, which was not in the minds of those about her. Could she have discovered this freak power, and as a child have come by degrees to claim that such information came to her from the dead? Could she, for instance, when with playmates, have said to one, "Your grandmother says so and so," naming the latter, and to another have made similar statements? She would then have noted the startling effects of such

things as this, and this might have induced her to continue such experiments.

She then might have adopted gradually a means of using her own voice as if it were the voice of the dead, and have had this voice give directly the information she received in these flashes. She would have been liable to have tried this on account of the more startling effect of such a thing; and she might thus have learned to speak with her lips closed. The conversations that such experiments would induce, would naturally reveal to her many secrets, of which use could then be made. The great interest such things would excite in average persons, would be a sufficient inducement to cause a person to continue such experiments, thereby becoming very expert.

These things I considered, and this seemed a natural mode of evolution for the development of such peculiar gifts. In fact, it seemed that some cause for a slow development of such a gift must be predicated. To assume that any person would suddenly begin the development of such an un-heard-of gift as the ability to speak through the ear, with no reason to believe that success could ever be achieved, seems very improbable. It certainly seems more plausible that such development was gradually reached by previous experiments conducted under other stimuli. I asked myself again and again, Could any person be gifted with two such abnormal gifts as these, one physical and the other psychical?

It certainly seemed to me that it was the decline of the psychic power that now caused her to refuse sittings, or when giving one to suddenly terminate it. In the matter of the voices there was certainly no decline of power, and I could only ascribe what she called weakness to the loss of this supposed psychic gift. According to Mr. Parsons, there was no hesitancy on her part in former times, and all were then afforded every opportunity for investigation. *At the time,* all of this seemed to me to be the most reasonable conclusion.*

* I had promised a daily paper a brief account of this investigation at the time it was made. This I furnished with such limited explanations as I was then permitted by my contract to publish. The paper published the article, omitting without my knowledge some pages containing explanatory matter. This cast somewhat different an aspect on the case than I had intended. This account reached Dr. Isaac K. Funk. He wrote me, stating that he desired to include this account in his book, *The Psychic Riddle.* I wrote, requesting him not to do so, as I did not wish this case to be given to the public in exactly that form. I supposed that this ended the matter; but upon the appearance of his book, I found a partial account that varied somewhat from the original newspaper article. This explanation is offered to those who may have read the Doctor's book.

After the lapse of time and much consideration of the mystery, I find that I should much prefer what I would call " a rational explanation." I feel that *I* should remember the lesson that my own previous investigations have taught me. As Dr. Carus has said, "When one stands before something which he can not explain, he should not conclude that it is inexplicable and attribute it to supernatural causes." I fully agree with the Doctor in this. The problem presented by the psychic part of this investigation, is by its nature very difficult of solution. But it surely does seem that if a rational explanation were possible one could find some evidences of it.

I have gone over my record, test by test, to see if I could find plausible possibilities of trickery connected with them. The following suggestions I do not in any way assert to be facts. I merely suggest them as possibilities to be considered in a search for a rational explanation.

First, it is well to state that I am positive that no information about myself was catalogued in any "Blue Book"† prior to the time of this investigation. I had at that time attended but one public meeting of spiritualists, and two public seances. I was afterwards on very friendly terms with the mediums conducting these and was well informed as to what secrets they possessed and used. I need not go into other details explaining why I am sure of this, as I believe readers of my articles will be satisfied that I am critical enough to be certain on this point. It would be easy to attribute these things to something of the kind, and thus appear to have disposed of the problem. But truth and facts are what we wish to arrive at. No one knows better than a performer who has looked on from behind the scenes, the possibilities of "Blue Book" information. Also, no one knows better than he the actual limits of it in practical use, and the extent to which it is used at the present day.

Such being the case, the only other means of which I can conceive is either that information was secured in advance by some one employed for that purpose, or that it was extracted from us at the time by some cunningly contrived means. As to the first, I found very much difficulty in my endeavors to secure information relative to Mrs. Blake in advance. I must expect any effort on her part to secure information about myself, equally difficult at such a

† Here I must own that the Editor of *The Open Court* does not agree with me and thinks that I am as likely to be found in the Blue Book as Mr. Clawson who has frequently attended seances. At any rate he is convinced that after having started the investigation under my own name, Mrs. Blake had had opportunity to obtain information, which she did not utilize until after she was able to identify us.

distance. I would consider such as utterly beyond Mrs. Blake's powers of correspondence, as would others, could they see the chirography before mentioned.

I am aware that strangers reading this article, and not being personally acquainted with my friend, Dr. X—, will naturally think of him in this connection. I emphatically state that he is of the very highest standing and possessed of the highest personal honor. Knowing him, I could not believe it possible for him to contemplate such a thing. Then again, the only motive that he could have for such action would be to prove to me that the lady's powers were as he had represented. On the other hand, his motive for fairness would be that he was deeply puzzled himself, and that he greatly desired a solution of the case. *For myself, I can not consider such a possibility*; but by a generous use of money, information could have been obtained about my family in Falls City, Nebraska, my childhood's home. In a small place like this, however, had any one furnished such information, it would be truly a miracle if such a fact had not reached my ears ere this. But it being a possibility, we must grant for the sake of fairness, that, by some means Mrs. Blake had secured information in advance in regard to myself; but we are still forced to admit that such a thing was utterly impossible with reference to Mr. Clawson, when no living person knew I would take him. Even he did not know until the last moment.

This brings us to the consideration of some means of securing information from us at the time. Now *at our first sitting* when the voice attempted to pronounce the name which sounded like "Artie" or "Arthur," I made the discovery that these voices would sometimes pronounce a variety of names in an inarticulate manner. The sounds would first resemble one name, and then another. Nevertheless, the sitter could not conclude a wrong name had been pronounced, as he could not be certain of the name. If, on the other hand, the name sounded like the correct one, he would naturally in attempting to get it correctly, repeat it with a rising inflection.

That this system of "fishing" is quite frequently successful, I must conclude; but my quick discovery of it absolutely prevented its being so in my case. As evidence of this, I remind the reader of my refusal to repeat the names "Artie" and "Arthur"; and also the name "Grandma Daily" when I first heard it, lest the latter should have been "Grandma, Davie," instead. That misinterpretation of the sounds was a possibility with Mr. Clawson at the first sitting, must be considered. Otherwise we must conclude that here was some very extraordinary guessing. That the name "Brother Eddy"

was a guess is quite improbable, but of course could be possible; while it would have been a possibility for the name "Grandma Daily" to have been secured in advance. If we do not accept some of these possibilities, then we are unable to advance any rational explanation. After this sitting, I cautioned Mr. Clawson on the above point; and as I could understand probably one-half of his tests thereafter, the possibility of this system being used in *these* cases, and in my own tests, can not be considered.

In regard to the pet names, "Muz," "Muzzie" and "Daddie," given Mr. Clawson at the first sitting, only the possibility of a misinterpretation of sounds can be suggested. The names given me, "Dave Harvey," "Asa," and my own name, belong to those that could have been secured in advance. This may also be said to be the case with this statement of my supposed brother, "I want to talk to mother." Had the lady, in sending this message, merely guessed that my mother was alive, there was one chance in two of failure. In the two statements to Mr. Clawson, "Your mother is here," and also "Your baby," there certainly seems a good chance of error, if this were mere guessing. Out of fairness I must call attention to these points. I also do so to illustrate how carefully I have analyzed every little occurrence. I must reiterate that Mr. Clawson was absolutely unknown at this first sitting.

We pass now to the tests given at the second sitting. It was here that I secured the names "Sarah" and "Ada," together with the correct relationship of the latter. There was no misinterpretation of sounds. These names belong to those that it would have been possible to have secured in advance, but at the time I was so thoroughly convinced that such was not the case, that I was greatly startled.

The tests given Mr. Clawson at this sitting may be neglected, as they were somewhat indefinite; and the use of the false name, "Edna," just about offset anything that he received. That a mutual uncle's name should be given when asked for, instead of the name of some of my other uncles, must be attributed to lucky guess work, if we assume that the name was secured in advance; for although Mr. Clawson's question revealed our relationship, there was nothing to indicate that he was my cousin through my father's family. There was one chance in two, that a name from my mother's family would have been given instead. As to the resemblance to my uncle's voice, I think that as we both noticed it separately, it was a genuine resemblance; but I can only attribute this to accident, for I am positive of the origin of the voice.

We pass now to the more remarkable tests given at the morning sitting of the second day. That Mr. Clawson's name and residence were given at this sitting, loses value as evidence, when we remember his statement in the boat the evening before. The boatman seemed too stupid to remember anything, especially when conversation in his presence was continuous; yet we must remember that his assistance was one possibility to be considered.

The names "Lizzie" or "Lissie," and "Aunt Fannie," given Mr. Clawson at this sitting, are among those that could have been secured in advance. As to the names "Georgia" and "Archimedes," with the latter's correct location at the time, together with the correct spelling of his name, I can offer nothing satisfactory; for I do not think there was any misinterpretation of sounds. The tests given me at this sitting need hardly be considered, for my grandmother's parting request may be a phrase generally used by the voices. It will be noticed that the supposed voice of Mr. Daily used one of the same expressions that the supposed voice of Mrs. Daily used. Therefore, some of these expressions are doubtless "stock phrases" of the lady's. The imperfect manner in which the voice attempted to give my father's correct name was very unsatisfactory. I may state that this was supposed at the time to be our last sitting, and that had the lady secured information relating to my relatives in advance, it is strange that my father's name was not given then.

We now pass to the still more remarkable sitting given in the afternoon of the second day. Here, the names "Chastine," "Aunt Burgess," "Nellie Biggs," "Mary," "Grandma Marcus," my father's correct name, and also my wife's first name, were given. In addition to this was the name "Dody," the request for my father "Not to be a 'doubting Thomas,'" and the statement that my wife's mother is alive. Some of these things Mr. Clawson did not know, and a number of them I did not know. We must, however, consider as a possibility that he might have imparted certain information to Mrs. Blake during his fifteen-minute ride. He assured me that he did not, and he is certainly sincere in his statement. Yet he at that time considered all of our sittings as finished, and might have forgotten his discretion. I know that he had visited a medium recently, securing certain tests from her. This he enjoyed relating, and he might have related some of these things to Mrs. Blake. In case he did so, the matter evidently passed from his memory very quickly, for he was positive that such was not the case. As to the peculiar request sent my father I can only suggest accident.

One point should be noted. While the voices could generally

talk very plainly on non-evidential matter, as soon as a test name was asked for, in a number of instances, the voice immediately became weak, or another voice would "break in" to the conversation. However, this can not be said of all of the tests, for in many instances the names came rapidly and accurately.

However, the fact remains that we arrived in that community unknown, or at least Mr. Clawson was; and I had good reason to suppose that I was. Nevertheless, when we returned, Mrs. Blake had in some manner secured quite a minute history of our relatives regardless of all our precautions.

Some have asked me why I did not make this journey alone and entirely unknown. I answer that had I done so, I should have risked making my journey for nothing, as the lady might have been away or ill. Also there would have been no testimony but my own as to what occurred. I thought the other plan best.

I may mention that I have recently sent a gentleman, a partial believer in spiritualism, to visit Mrs. Blake, under the assumed name of "Douglass." She tried to avoid a sitting, claiming weakness. He, however, obtained one, but received no results, other than that a fictitious "Grandma Douglass" conversed with him. There had never been such a person. I have recently received word that Mrs. Blake has about lost her psychic power, and that it is now seldom that a sitting is given that I would regard as evidential.

While I am by nature very skeptical, I have tried to treat this case with perfect fairness from all sides, and to avoid taking sides myself. I have given all incidents with great care, no matter where they tended to lead. In doing this I have not considered my friendly feelings for the lady who was certainly very kind to us, and who was wholly unlike the professional "grafters" known as mediums whom I have heretofore met.

That I have not fully solved the problem does not prove that I could not have done so, had my opportunities been greater; or that others could not have done so.

I will not assert that any fraud was used in giving the correct information; for unless I could substantiate such a statement and defend my position, it would be an error to do so. I can only suggest possibilities as I have done, and I must still leave the case to a certain extent shrouded in mystery. Anyway, I have faithfully reported to the reader all of the important details of what to me seemed, on the surface at least, to be one of the most marvelous-appearing performances ever given on earth.