

COMMENTS ON THE CASES RECORDED IN THE AP-
PENDIX TO THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON
PHANTASMS AND PRESENTIMENTS.

OPINIONS may vary, but records will remain; and it has seemed best to add to the more formal report of the committee a large number of the cases which have reached us, reprinting their chief documents, and so setting the results of no small labor on the part of our Society's Secretary in a place where all may read. As to what these documents prove, members will probably not agree. I frankly confess that to my mind most of them are serviceable as illustrating mental processes that do not lie within the range of telepathy nor yet of clairvoyance. But others may regard the cases, especially when thus united, as of much evidential value for the hypothesis of telepathy. At all events I feel sure that the list contains a number of beautiful instances of pseudo-presentiments, as well as a number of fine illustrations of the difficulties that still beset our way in all these researches. Many of the best coincidences are remote in time, the most valuable documents have sometimes been lost, the telepathic coincidences of very recent time often relate to minor matters, and the most thrilling dreams, the best developed spiritual apparitions, have often not surrounded themselves with clouds of witnesses. Nevertheless, so full is this whole correspondence of live human nature, so rich is our material in sincerely and earnestly reported experiences, in quaint reflections on the part of correspondents, in well-meant advice given us by people of a philosophic frame of mind, in cool self-criticism on the part of our best observers, and in warm-hearted credulity on the part of not a few less cautious people, that I heartily commend the whole material to anybody who loves psychological curiosities as much as I myself do.

For the rest, my comments here, as in my report, are made on my own responsibility. If any reader finds me sceptical or unsympathetic or ignorant or credulous, I hope that he will remember that it is I who own these faults, not the Society. Another in my place might easily do the work better, and would be sure not to make the same comments. Let these comments therefore be considered, especially in this Appendix, as committing nobody but myself.

Two things I want to add yet in general, and for the benefit of less active members of the Society: First, I hope that all careful people will be good enough to attribute to the responsible officers of this Society only such opinions on serious questions as the officers make

themselves properly responsible for. The newspaper press of the country which, at the cost of no small labor, has courteously helped us so much in our researches, has also in some few cases taken a certain doubtless good-humored revenge upon us by reporting from time to time all sorts of marvels as having been vouched for by this or that officer or committee of the Society. Mr. Hodgson, who is a favorite in these respects, is made from time to time to appear in some Western-newspaper article as a very magician, and he seems to be rapidly becoming, in certain outlying districts of the land, a legendary person, — a sort of Doctor Faustus. He transports an astral body to and fro, all but raises the dead, and daily confounds Madam Blavatsky, with almost equal facility. Others, to be sure, have no such legendary distinctions. For myself I have only one or two newspaper reports to complain of, and that very slightly, in so far as these reports have attributed to me certain opinions which I have never expressed, — opinions both about individual cases and about general topics. These are small matters; but my own correspondence has contained already some evidence that, small as they are, they have puzzled and misled several persons. Hence it may be worth while, both for my own sake and for that of some other officers of the Society, to remind readers that when newspapers mention our researches, they may do so without weighing well the scientific sense of their words, or the bearing of the matter on our concerns.

The second remark here is, that if our documents prove nothing else, they prove the need of having more means at the Society's disposal for official travelling and interviewing, in connection with the careful collection of good evidence. Some members of our body have intervals of comparative leisure at their disposal, which they could use for propagating our research by means of interviews with such persons as have reported valuable experiences, were it not for the expense of such journeys. How very different might not Case 34 appear, for example, in the eyes of a cautious and sceptical reader, who should be suspicious of some hidden source of error, in case a good judge had personally interviewed all concerned, and had reported his impression, not only of their sincerity (for that need not be called for a moment in question), but of their good judgment in the matter of a critical rendering of precise details? I hope that, if this research is to continue, the Society will provide ample means to make it effective. In commenting upon the cases I shall first speak of Cases 34-48, in order, and shall then attempt a more summary classification of the remaining cases according to the categories suggested in the body of my report, treating, however, one small set of cases separately.

CASE 34.—Here is a narrative which the newspapers generally

have reported as being vouched for by us. For my own part, I have never had any decided opinion about the matter at all. The sources of possible error on Mr. Fry's part are considerable. The quasi-supernatural incident of the clock depends on his own memory. So far, the whole might be a vivid pseudo-presentiment, the experience having its origin *after* the news of death came. Against this stands Mrs. Fry's corroboration. Experience, however, shows that after a few months, so simple a corroboration as this one, "My husband told me, early Monday morning, of the voice in the clock," is rather easily obtainable from any moderately uncritical and friendly member of a family, who has again and again discussed the great marvel with its original hero. More important is the reported coincidence between the words of the clock-vision, "I'm gone, I'm gone!" and the reported dying words of Mr. Fry's brother. For Mr. Fry is said to have reported these words *before* he had received anything but the telegram announcing the death, and were the vision only a pseudo-presentiment, such a coincidence would seem unlikely. However, the evidence for *this* coincidence is apparently only Mr. Fry's already well-convinced memory, the uncritical testimony of a reporter who is probably no expert in evidence, and Mr. Criswell's personal opinion that the whole is as reported.

I do not wish to seem lacking in cordiality, nor unthankful for the trouble which Mr. Criswell has so kindly taken; but it is my duty to state difficulties, and, for the moment, without fuller corroborative evidence that Mr. Fry told his vision in the reported form *before* its verification, and that the dying words were repeated by him to the reporter *before* confirmation, I must think it very possible that the real experience was a vivid, sincere, and irresistible pseudo-presentiment of the sort described in my report. Further evidence may indeed entirely alter this view. So far as I know, no member of my committee has ever "vouched for" this case.

CASE 35. — The reported coincidence seems to me here somewhat unsatisfactory, owing to ordinary dangers of error which attend all reports from memory. The related experience of M. O. A., taken alone, might have been, notwithstanding the actual fall of the clock-weight, a partial pseudo-presentiment; *i.e.*, a false memory, which localized itself about a real event, namely, the fall of the weight. If the corroborative evidence, however, contains no other errors of memory, and is therefore accepted as establishing the coincidence, then the latter was doubtless caused by a more or less well-founded fear of the uncle's death. At all events, the case leaves me sceptical.

CASE 36. — I see no reason to doubt the reality of the coincidence, which is, however, probably to be explained by the fact that Mr. W.

S. H. knew, as he says in Document 4, that the person of whom he dreamed was ill.

The following additional statements concerning this case have only recently come to hand :—

9.

FLORIDA, Jan. 14, 1889.

MR. WM. NOYES, *New York* :—

DEAR COUSIN, — Yours of January 9 to hand this evening. Will say in reply the C.'s are now living a little over a mile away and in a direction that I seldom go except when I go to call upon them. I will try and get down their way at an early date and see how much they remember about my dream. I do not expect to get much from them, however, as they are remarkably forgetful, and as I take little interest in dreams, I little more than mentioned the fact to them the morning after, at breakfast, and again when I got the letter announcing her death. I know nothing of the detail of your mother's removal, and would be pleased to know if there was anything about the dream, as described in a former letter, that is anywhere near the truth, outside of the mere fact of her death occurring about that time.

One of the main reasons why C. was not of sufficient use to me to remain in my employ was because he was so forgetful ; but he is thoroughly honest, a Quaker in good standing, and whatever he does say can be relied upon. When I wrote you last about the matter I asked him and his wife if they remembered the circumstance and they said that they did. . . .

W. S. H.

Will go down to C.'s to-morrow night, if not too tired, and write you for next day's mail. Am glad to give you any help I can in the investigation, and regret that I haven't more facts to offer. What I have, however, are *absolute facts*, without any uncertainty about them.

WILL.

10.

FLORIDA, Jan. 25, 1889.

MR. WM. NOYES, *New York* :—

DEAR COUSIN, — I went down to C.'s the next evening after I wrote you, and he said he would make out a statement and send it to me the next morning. I waited two or three days, then sent for it, and he promised once more to send it to me. I ran across him here at the post-office to-day, and having my fountain-pen and some paper along, I got him at it, and I enclose the result. I let him make his statement without assistance on my part, and it can be relied upon. His delay was caused by the forgetfulness that I spoke of, but I hope this may come to hand in time to answer your purpose. I got quite a long letter from your father a few days ago.

Yours hastily,

W. S. H.

11.

JAN. 25, 1889.

By request of Mr. W. S. H. I will state that I fully remember of his coming to the breakfast-table one morning and relating to myself and wife the particulars of a dream he had had the previous night, in which he said he had seen his aunt, Mrs. Noyes, laid out as if dead, in a room which he also described, also other particulars which I do not recall now, but some days after he received a letter giving an account of the death of Mrs. Noyes *at the time of his dream*. We talked about it considerable at the time, but since then most of the particulars have passed from my mind.

Respectfully,

E. S. C.

CASE 37. — This reported coincidence as to the “Cambria” would be of great value for the discussion of the telepathic hypothesis, were it not for the lapse of time since the occurrence, and the consequent meagreness of the evidence. What would we not give for a hundred such coincidences, recent in time, and verified by abundant evidence?

CASE 38. — The documents in this case are well worth reading, as illustrating more than one interesting feature of our investigation. One of the corroborating witnesses remembers that he heard the dream “four or five years” ago (see Document 2, last portion). The dream, whose coincidence with the event he was to corroborate, occurred, however, in 1873. Such is the human memory! The actual experience may once more be interpreted as possibly a pseudo-presentiment. “I then for the first time recognized the man in my dream,” says our correspondent, speaking of the moment when the dream was verified. The vision of Miss Florence Boram is an interesting subjective hallucination of a familiar type. Our correspondent’s relation of Mrs. Boram’s opinion of the work of our Society has its own charm, and should be remembered. We hope that Mr. Boram’s fears of a shortening of his days may prove unfounded, and that he may long remain within the jurisdiction of our Society.

The coincidences reported in CASES 39 and 40 call for no comment beyond what every reader may make for himself.

CASE 41. — The remembered experience is extremely vivid and elaborate, and accordingly has its strong psychological interest, although, in view of the loss of the confirmatory letters, I am now unable to find this interest elsewhere than in the illustration which the case seems to me to furnish of the dangerously plastic power of memory when sufficiently affected by strong sentiment. I need not add that it is of the greatest value to everybody to learn just how far this plastic power really extends, and that the whole subject is

still in its infancy, so that every new illustration is instructive. Others may find here, of course, something far more than I do.

CASE 42. — Here is a sporadic experience of a type worth recording, although it surely suggests no theoretic connections just now, and is interesting mainly because it *is* sporadic, and is apparently not associated with any superstitious beliefs of a general sort.

Of CASE 43, much the same might be said, with the special addition that the story has, of course, not precisely suffered during “the twelve years during which we have often told it in each other’s presence.” However, the diary extract of 1872 establishes the essential facts. What happened may of course have been simply the presence of some unexplained but fleshly man on the stairway at the time in question. He was mistaken for another man, himself not personally known to Mrs. G. The mistake once made, the rest soon follows, and it is greatly to the credit of the coolness and good judgment of our correspondent that during as much as twelve years her ghost has been kept so modest and unassuming a being as he here appears. Ghosts twelve years old are usually much livelier than this. We are much obliged to our correspondent for her contribution.

In the interesting CASE 44, the two informants differ as to the state of the dreamer’s health at the time. The dreamer regarded herself as perfectly healthy, while Miss W. thought her excited, and suffering from nervous prostration. The dreamer is sure that she herself laughed at the warning, and that Miss W. was made anxious on hearing of it. Miss W. is sure of the reverse of this relation. In view of these discrepancies there must be some doubt whether the dream was not a pseudo-presentiment, exaggerated by ordinary errors of memory into something more.

CASE 45 is almost unquestionably a pure instance of a vivid pseudo-presentiment.

CASE 46, which is printed *verb. et lit.* as we received it, contains in its first document a contribution to divine philosophy from a sincere friend, and we only hope that our readers may enjoy it as heartily as we do. The confirmation of a matter of fact in Document 2 is meanwhile of genuine and decided value. Enough more cases of this kind might truly help us far on the way towards the telepathic doctrine. Meanwhile, at all events, no one will see any room for my favorite pseudo-presentiments here. I must indeed admit an interesting coincidence as probably established.

CASES 47 and 48 are also important and probably established coincidences. In both cases the general character of our informants

gives added weight to their judgment, and plausibility to their memories.

The remaining cases will be dealt with in three groups. I follow the classification of the report, but shall make an exception as to the narratives furnished us by our correspondent Prof. E. W. C.

PROF. E. W. C.'S CASES.

The cases referred to are Nos. 49, 50, 58, 59, and 60.

The special interest of the group arises from the fact that one of the coincidences for which the evidence is documentary, namely, CASE 22 in the foregoing report, comes to us from the same source, and also because all these cases, including the documentary one, represent experiences occurring in one family, — that of the wife of our correspondent. As I have remarked in the report, experiences of an apparently telepathic sort, as well as supposed forewarnings, seem characteristic of the family in question; and at the same time these experiences suggest to me, for the most part, the hypothesis of chance coincidence, or of pseudo-presentiment, or of a combination of the two. Considerable value will be given to these instances, however, in the eyes of many, by the very fact that one of the coincidences is so well established. Others, like myself, may feel, on the contrary, that the fact of such repeated dreams and presentiments relating to persons of the same family indicates a predisposition to expect remarkable events, which renders occasional coincidences less surprising. I begin the comments on these narratives by calling attention to CASE 50.

Here, in the first place, a dream about an expected baby, even a month in advance, is not remarkable; and, as to the further coincidence, the possibilities were but two. Against the hypothesis of pseudo-presentiment is the corroboration of Mrs. C., to whom her own mother shall have related the experience. Opinions must differ as to the evidential value of this corroboration. Of its sincerity there is indeed not the least doubt. But the family are once for all sure that they frequently have such experiences. I think it very possible that this assurance may have had its origin in frequent pseudo-presentiments, so that I do indeed regard it as founded upon something much deeper than any ordinary “fancifulness,” or “imaginative tendencies.” Still, the assurance once established, there can be no question but that it would greatly influence the interpretation and memory of individual incidents.

Another effect of the same *à priori* assurance seems to me probably illustrated in CASE 49. Mr. J. T. leaves home after a period during which he had been frequently awakened at night by the call of his sister to aid in the care of a patient, also his sister. During his absence the customary call at night haunts him, apparently in his dreams; and his general belief that such feelings are indicative of trouble at home makes him return just in time to find his mother ill. To my mind the indications are that he would have returned in any case, his anxiety being due to the previous illness in the family, and not to anything telepathic.

CASE 58 I regard as a pseudo-presentiment. The corroboration by Miss T. comes thirteen years after the event, and is insufficient to characterize the case. The letter of Mrs. C., dated Sept. 25, 1874, is most excellent evidence of the reality and vividness of the experience. But observe the order in which she relates the facts in this letter. The letter had been interrupted, and is continued immediately after dinner. "Now," says Mrs. C., "now my thoughts are scattered." The cause of this scattering is the brother's story, to which Mrs. C. at once *adds* the memory of her dream and of the scene at the breakfast-table in the morning. So rapid and definite a hallucination of memory as this would indeed seem antecedently improbable were it not for the numerous other cases of a similar type which we have now collected, and especially for the other instances of a closely analogous sort which are given us by CASES 59 and 60.

CASE 59 is very clearly a pseudo-presentiment. That the dream of the railway accident was related to Mrs. C.'s sister at once is an incident dependent for its accuracy only upon a long-established belief of memory. The corroboration of Miss T. may be perfectly accurate as regards the fact of Mrs. C.'s "circumstantial account," but, as Miss T. says, the whole affair is too remote in time to give the evidence as to the time when the dream was narrated any great weight. CASE 60 brings better corroboration for the coincidence; yet here, too, I fully believe that we have only a pseudo-presentiment. Here once more Mrs. C. dreamed of an accident at a distance, and is said to have narrated the dream, in advance of news, to two persons. Of these, one (again Miss T.) gives a rather imperfect corroboration, eleven years after the event. In Miss T.'s words, Mrs. C. "had been to the camp in her dream, and gave a circumstantial account of the boys, as they were at the moment of her dream, which, I am sorry to say, I forget. But the truth of it all was quickly verified." Prof. E. W. C. himself did not know of the "dream" until its "fulfilment" was known to Mrs. C. But his corroboration as given in his words, "On our return we were surprised by the absence of all appearance of astonishment at our premature return, until we learned of the dream," has, of course, a decided value; but still I think that the presumption is in favor of my own explanation.

In view of the facts brought out in this analysis, I conceive that all these family experiences, while psychologically very interesting, have a comparatively simple origin. Mrs. C.'s family contains several impressionable persons. They are apparently not at all superstitious; they are not "fantastic" people, in the common sense; they make no system out of these singular occurrences. But, in fact, after noteworthy events they occasionally experience vivid and typical pseudo-presentiments. Failing — as, of course, under ordinary circumstances, they must fail — to understand this phenomenon, they become somewhat disposed to expect similar warnings in future. Hence they are apt to lay undue stress on the anxieties which separated members of the same family so frequently experience. The same tendency may affect their dreams. Hence, finally, occasional coincidences of an undoubted sort may result. In short, one's dreams cry "wolf" till the wolf comes. In my report I have laid considerable stress upon the

documentary coincidence of Mr. J. T., but our documentary cases are so rare as to render a little rejoicing over one recovered sheep very natural.

Of the remaining cases on my list, I shall treat, first, the probable pseudo-presentiments; secondly, the apparent coincidences.

SUPPLEMENTARY PSEUDO-PRESENTIMENTS.

As before indicated, the mere presence of a general corroboration from some sincere witness, who says, some time after the event, "I feel sure that I heard M. W. narrate the dream just as he now says he did," is not sufficient to render the hypothesis of a pseudo-presentiment as improbable as telepathy, or as true forewarning would be, especially if other circumstances of the case, such as the momentary nervous excitability of the subject, suggest strongly the possibility of an abnormal experience. Such indications, of course, exist in any case occurring on the border-land of sleep. CASE 51 (*c*) seems to me an instance that would excellently illustrate our hypothesis, if, after this lapse of time, it could be well reported. As it comes to me, I very much doubt whether the mother or the daughter was the true dreamer. One wakes and says to the other, "I dreamed so and so;" and the other says, "Why, I just dreamed that, too!" Which was first on the ground I do not know.

I regard CASES 52 and 53, notwithstanding the corroboration, as probably falling in the same class. In CASE 54, the corroboration of the coincidence would make our hypothesis inapplicable if the letter mentioned could be recovered. As it is not forthcoming, I have no decided opinion of the case. CASE 57 is well reported, and is probably a combination of a slight coincidence with a strong after-feeling that the coincidence must have been important. Mr. Krebs feels that his friend's forgetfulness about the degree of the coincidence is "astonishing." The experience is not a typical pseudo-presentiment, but rather an instance of a more familiar phenomenon; viz., the almost irresistible exaggeration of the importance of a remembered emotion, when subsequent events give that emotion significance.

The experience reported in CASE 61 seems to have belonged to our class, but I give it a place in the supplement, not so much on this account as because of the charming *naïveté* of the account. In CASE 62 it is impossible to tell how far ordinary errors of memory have affected the narrative; *e.g.*, how far our correspondent's judgment of the character of her fellow-passengers on the steamer may have been responsible for the so-called warning. Still, the case may fall within our present class. In CASE 63 we have four dreams reported. The first is too remote in time to have any present significance under the circumstances. The second and third are almost obviously pseudo-presentiments, and in the fourth case, notwithstanding that the corroboration rests upon a comparatively recent memory, I am disposed to accept the same explanation.

Further cases that are almost certainly of the present type I find in 64, 66, and 68 (a most typical and excellent instance, notwithstanding the lapse

of time). With CASE 69, however, we reach what not only illustrates our hypothesis, but constitutes also a very important piece of autobiographical psychology from a professional man of distinction in the Provinces. Judge Travis is an author known both in his own profession and beyond it. His account has to do mainly with experiences of a rather long-past date, but that fact itself is important, as it indicates that his typical pseudo-presentiments were confined to a period which he himself is able to limit to his youth and early manhood. The fever-delirium of childhood, which he last mentions, is of a type well known. Cases of the sort are described occasionally in the text-books.¹ Ever since that experience, our correspondent has had an unsystematized but decided tendency to regard his life as the realization of a sort of fate of which he had been warned. From the age of sixteen until the period of the experience of 1856, typical pseudo-presentiments were frequent with him, and were often very precise, clear, and irresistible. I attribute them to no ordinary form of "imagination." They were simply irresistible and instantaneous hallucinations, occurring in a state of general good health, but to a man who worked much with his brain, who was a frequent dreamer at night, and who met at every stage of his life with "violent opposition," and had to make "almost superhuman exertions." Since he reached a more settled period of life, our correspondent seems to have been fairly free from these lightly pathological phenomena. In character, while they lasted, they sometimes very strongly differed from the ordinary experiences of "double memory," in that the "previous occurrence" whereby our correspondent had been warned was localized — as in case of the events of 1856 — at some particular point in the recent past. In other cases, the pseudo-presentiments seem to have resembled more fully the ordinary "double memory" itself. They were accompanied by a feeling of "shock." They were induced, in the special case of 1856, by a painful piece of news. In other cases, the superinducing cause was slight, and the sensitive nervous state of an overworked young man of literary habits seems to have been their main condition. In short, if I had no other facts to illustrate my hypothesis than those which Judge Travis furnishes, I should be fairly sure that pseudo-presentiments are real occurrences, just as, if we had no evidence of the psychological importance of "insistent ideas" than John Bunyan's *Autobiography*, "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners," we should be certain of their great significance.

CASE 70 contains a most charming pseudo-presentiment, which needs no further comment. I place the experiences of CASE 71 also in the present category, but with some decided doubts, owing to the comparative fulness of the corroborating memories. In CASE 76, a correspondent whose experiences, as detailed in CASES 74 and 75, have usually had much more elaboration, relates two instances of what I take to be very simple forms of typical pseudo-presentiment.

¹ "Warfare of the good and evil principles in hallucinations," Schüle: *Klinische Psychiatrie*, p. 184. Visions of contending good and evil spirits, *ibid.*, p. 186 and elsewhere.

REMAINING CASES.

My method of dealing with cases has now been so fully illustrated that I should prefer to leave the reader to judge for himself, the most part, both why the remaining cases have a genuine psychological value, and why they do not seem to me sufficient to convince any very critical observer of the reality either of telepathy or of more obscure matters. If by "emulating the Seybert Commission" the writer of the letter given in CASE 56 means ridiculing anybody's faith, or suppressing evidence, as I suppose he does mean, then, while I have here no opinion to pass on the Seybert Commission, I must certainly assure our correspondent, and all other persons, that I have no such intention. I am not convinced, to be sure, of his interpretation of his own experience; but I am glad to publish his letter, and to commend it to the attention of all students of psychology. CASES 51 (*a*) and 51 (*b*) illustrate the very baffling character of some of our narratives. The corroboration is considerable; but without more time than we have yet had to give to the work of interviewing our correspondents, it is very hard to judge of the degree of erroneous memory that may have affected the accuracy of the narratives. In CASE 65, one finds how easy it is to feel as if the most ordinary dream-coincidence possible were of some deeper significance. August 17, one dreams of a birth expected at any time after August 20, and dreams that the baby weighs nine pounds and is a girl. The dream is verified. I make here no supposition of pseudo-presentiment. It should be added that our correspondent herself has serious doubts whether the coincidence is of any value. But I print the case mainly because there are people who are apt to have no doubts, and to regard such cases with great wonder.

CASES 74 and 75 are from a very well known correspondent and a friend of our work, a lady of the highest character, and of the ability, which her writing clearly indicates. I regard her communications with no small interest. In CASE 76, as I have already said, I see pseudo-presentiments. Of the decidedly complex phenomena of the other cases, I can offer no present explanation.

I close a long task of analysis and comparison with a strong feeling that without the constant aid of Mr. Hodgson, my work would have proved far too much for my leisure and strength. I offer him my hearty thanks.

JOSIAH ROYCE.