



**MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME**  
**By W. Wilkie Collins**

from

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## INTRODUCTION

‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’ is Wilkie Collins’s longest non-fiction work in a periodical. He wrote it for *The Leader*, a radical, left-wing, weekly newspaper founded in 1850 by George Henry Lewes and Thornton Leigh Hunt. Within a year the paper needed financial help and Collins’s friend Edward Pigott bought a controlling share. They had known each other since boyhood, studied for the bar together, and shared sailing trips throughout their lives. Collins’s first piece for *The Leader*—‘A Plea for Sunday Reform’—appeared in September 1851.<sup>1</sup> It was a polemical work calling for art galleries and museums to open on Sundays. ‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’ followed as a series of letters addressed to G.H.Lewes. All six, and a letter responding to a sceptical critique of them by Lewes, are signed W.W.C. During their publication Collins quarrelled with Pigott over the editorial attitude to religion in *The Leader* and would not allow his name to be used on pieces he wrote after ‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’.

On 16 February 1852 he wrote to Pigott

“I don’t see the distinction you mention, between the Portfolio part of the Leader and the other parts, and, if I did, I would not take advantage of it. I refuse my name in principle; and am by no means desirous of seeing it appear under protest, in a part of the newspaper specially set apart for protesting contributors! I always give it unreservedly—or I don’t give it all.”<sup>2</sup>

Despite this lack of a by-line, Kirk Beetz, the Wilkie Collins bibliographer, has identified 29 pieces in *The Leader* written by Collins, and he tentatively identifies a further 50<sup>3</sup>.

‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’ is a series of six accounts of mesmerism and clairvoyance witnessed by Collins in early January 1852 when he visited friends in Weston-super-Mare, a seaside town on the west coast of Somerset. He may indeed have been visiting Pigott himself, who could be the friend and barrister referred to in Letter V as ‘Mr. S’. He was a barrister – called to the bar with Wilkie on 20 November 1851; he had returned from Paris in December; and the ‘S’ could refer to Smyth – his full name was Edward Francis Smyth Pigott. The demonstrations of these manifestations were all by a man called simply ‘Count P—’.

The final essay was followed two weeks later by a sceptical rebuttal by Lewes both of clairvoyance and Collins’s evidence for it. Wilkie wrote a seventh piece arguing for the accuracy of his accounts.

Such exhibitions of what we would now call hypnotism and stage magic were popular at the time and it seems that Wilkie was the unwitting dupe of a clever act staged between the Count and his young assistant Mademoiselle V—. Let us hope so. Otherwise some of the events in the letters, particularly those in Letters II and VI, are little short of assaults and those witnessing them accessories to crimes. The careless way in which V— is treated and put in danger is more reminiscent of the sadomasochistic tales by the Marquis de Sade or Pauline Reage’s later *The Story of O* than it is of the sensitive treatment of women for which Wilkie Collins is known in his fiction.

In 1857 Collins and Dickens performed in a play called *Animal Magnetism* by Elizabeth Inchbald (1753-1821). Dickens played Doctor Mesmer. And at least a dozen of Collins’s books contain references to mesmerism, clairvoyance, or magnetic attraction. The best known is probably the clairvoyant boy in *The Moonstone*. But the earliest identified reference is in *The*

*Woman in White*. The doctor, Mr Dawson, called to treat Marian Halcombe, says to the housekeeper, Eliza Michelson, about Count Fosco

“Mrs Michelson, the fat old foreigner is a quack.”

This was very rude. I was naturally shocked at it.

“Are you aware, sir,” I said, “that you are talking of a nobleman?”

“Pooh! He isn’t the first Quack with a handle to his name. They’re all Counts—hang ’em!

...This foreign nobleman of yours is dying to try his quack remedies (mesmerism included) on my patient; and a nurse who is brought here by his wife may be a little too willing to help him.”

Perhaps by 1860 Collins had understood what had happened eight years earlier. When these essays were published early in 1852 Collins had already published four books, was writing regularly for *Bentley’s Miscellany*, and had met Dickens. Shortly after his final rejoinder was published in *The Leader*, his first story appeared in *Household Words*<sup>4</sup>. Four years later, after he had left *The Leader* and was about to join the staff at *Household Words*, he took the mirror made of coal from Letter IV and used it in an amusing piece on the pleasures of sailing compared with the perils of travelling abroad ‘My Black Mirror’<sup>5</sup>.

## Lewes

George Henry Lewes (1807-1878) wrote books and plays and contributed to periodicals. He met Marian Evans (George Eliot) in 1851 and from 1854 they lived together in London, without marrying, until Lewes’s death. In the early 1860s Collins used to join Saturday dinner parties at their home in Blandford Square – the same Square he and his mother moved to after his father’s death in 1847. On 30 November 1861 George Eliot records in a letter and in her diary that Pigott and Collins were there and Collins told an amusing story about Bulwer Lytton. Marian Evans is thought to be a model for Marian Halcombe in *The Woman in White*. Wilkie named his first daughter Marian.

## Source

This text is taken directly from copies of *The Leader* and retains all the original spelling, typographical errors, punctuation and paragraphing. Note Wilkie’s eccentric spelling ‘Shakspeare’ and that he punctiliously italicises the French words *clairvoyance* and its derivatives, whereas Lewes does not. As well as the six original essays, this edition includes Lewes’s rational and sceptical response to them and Wilkie’s final rejoinder. As with other works published by the Wilkie Collins Society, ‘Magnetic Evenings at Home’ has never before been republished. Readers today will be among the first to see it for 150 years.

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1 Republished by the Wilkie Collins Society, July 2000

2 *The Letters of Wilkie Collins* William Baker and William Clarke, Cambridge 1999 I p82

3 *Victorian Periodicals Review* XV No.1 Spring 1982 pp20-29

4 ‘A Terribly Strange Bed’ *Household Words* 24 April 1852, V No.109 pp129-137.

5 ‘My Black Mirror’ *Household Words* 6 September 1856, XIV No.337 pp169-175, reprinted in *My Miscellanies* 1863.

## MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME

LETTER I.—TO. G. H. LEWES

YOU have asked me to give you an account of some extraordinary experiments in Animal Magnetism, which I witnessed during my recent Christmas visit to Somersetshire. In complying with your wish, I intend to confine myself as strictly as possible to simple narrative—or, in other words, to be the reporter, rather than the judge, of the proceedings of which I was a spectator. Had those proceedings been publicly exhibited for hire, I should certainly not have taken the notes of them from which I am now about to write. But they were of a private nature; they were only shown from motives of hospitality and kindness; and they were directed by a gentleman whose character I knew to be above all suspicion. Under these circumstances, I thought it well worth while to write down, at the time all that I saw; and I gladly commit my materials to press, in their present form—knowing that they have been carefully collected; and believing that they will furnish specimens of evidence, which the opponents of Animal Magnetism will find it much easier contemptuously to reject than fairly to confute.

On the first of this month, after a pleasant dinner with my Somersetshire friends, in honour of the New Year, I went to drink tea at the house of Count P—, accompanied by two gentlemen—one a clergyman, the other a barrister. The Count had been known to the family with whom I had dined, for fifteen years; his wife (an English lady) was a friend of still longer standing. I mention these particulars, in order to show at the outset what confidence might fairly be reposed in the character of my host; what guarantee was given me on the unimpeachable testimony of my friends and his, that, let the experiments to be shown appear what they might, they were performed by a gentleman of honour and integrity, whose position placed him above the slightest imputation of acting from a motive of personal advantage—or, indeed, from any motive at all but the wish to study a science in which he felt a deep and natural interest.

We found the Count, his wife, and a young French lady who lived as companion to the Countess, seated round the tea-table when we entered. The young lady (Mademoiselle V—) had been a member of the Count's family for five years. She was first made the subject of magnetic experiments two years since, and certainly looked anything but a martyr to them. Her complexion was fresh and clear, her eyes lively and intelligent, and her whole appearance that of a person in the full vigour of youth and health. She described her sensations on being awakened from the magnetic sleep as invariably those of one who had enjoyed a good night's rest; and told us with her own lips that, before she had been selected as a subject for magnetic influences, she was pale, thin, and weakly; and that, since that period, her constitution had altered quickly and permanently for the better. These, and all other particulars which we learnt from her, she related readily and simply. On our first introduction to her, it was not easy to imagine that this young girl, so quiet and natural in her manner, so gentle and good-humoured in her expression, was soon to display before us all the mysterious phenomena of magnetic influence—soon to open to our view glimpses into the dim, dark regions of the spiritual world.

During teatime I had an opportunity of ascertaining generally what our host's ideas were on the subject of Animal Magnetism. He very frankly described himself, at the outset, as an enthusiast for the science. "How the magnetic influence acts," said he, "may be seen, but cannot easily be explained. My idea about it is briefly this. We consist of three parts—the organic matter (*i. e.*, bodily structure), the vital principle which animates it, and the soul. We feel that the soul has

many of its divinest prerogatives suspended in this life, through its connection with the bodily part of us. To find out such a means of acting on the vital principle, without injuring or destroying it, as to render the organic matter perfectly passive, and thereby to weaken, if not suspend, its influence on the soul, is to give back to that soul, for the time, some portion of its inherent and higher nature—its immortal capacity to overstep all mortal boundaries of time and space. This object I think the magnetic influence achieves, in different degrees of perfection, as applied to different persons; and in this way I explain the phenomena of what we term *clairvoyance*. As to what constitutes the essence of the influence thus communicable from one individual to another, I believe it to be simply electricity! But I must repeat that I am only a student in the science; that we are all groping in the darkness of a mystery which is still unrevealed. The relation between cause and effect is not yet traced out in Animal Magnetism. With regard to the practical purpose to which it may be directed, I think it might be used as a curative agent in more forms of disease—especially nervous diseases—than I can well reckon up. Without entering into particulars, one great boon I know it can confer on humanity—it can produce sleep; a sleep from which every one awakens refreshed. Think of the disorders fatally aggravated by want of sleep, or inefficiently relieved by the short, unhealthy sleep produced by opiates. Think of what might be effected in the earliest stages of insanity, by procuring for the patient a long sleep, that could be made to last, if necessary for days together. This I know might be done in the vast majority of cases; and surely this alone is something! But let us get from speech to action. I will first throw V— into the magnetic sleep; and after that you can take your choice of the experiments that shall be tried. I must premise, however, that I do not promise to succeed in all. She is not the same on every occasion under the magnetic influence. An experiment which succeeded last night may not succeed to-night, and vice versa. Nevertheless, we will try anything you like.”

The manner of putting V— to sleep was singular enough. While we were talking, she had been at work joining two lace cuffs to make a collar. The Count took her thimble and magnetized it with his hand. She was to put it on her finger again, and by its influence she was to be thrown into the sleep. But while it still remained on the table, a watch was put before me, and I was desired to fix in my own mind the time she should go to sleep in—of course, without communicating the decision to any one. The time I thus secretly determined, was five minutes. No one prompted me to this choice: it was understood at the outset, that I was free to select any time, long or short, that I chose.

I was close by her when she took up the thimble. Exactly at the instant when she put it on her finger, I marked the position of the minute hand on the dial of the watch. I was left free to take any means I chose of trying to keep her awake—not merely by talking to her, but by clapping my hands, if I chose, before her face. We sat close together: she at one side, I at the other, of the same corner of the table. For the first three or four minutes, I kept her almost incessantly laughing and talking: she looked at me and spoke to me, as usual. But, as the fourth minute passed a change came, which no talking could avert. First, her articulation began to grow thick and low; very different from the clear rapid utterance of a Frenchwoman. Then her eyes got strangely dim and dull when she raised them to me. She still went on with her work; but slowly, and with increasing hesitation. The next alteration was in her mouth; her lips became firmly compressed, and grew pale like the lips of a corpse. Her complexion changed to a dull, unnatural, clayey hue; her brow suddenly contracted; her hands rapidly trembled; her eyelids dropped heavily—she had fallen into the magnetic sleep.

I immediately looked at the watch. Eight minutes exactly had passed since she first put the thimble on. Not betraying to any one, either by word or gesture, that she had exceeded the time I

had fixed on by three minutes, I next tested the fact of her being really asleep, by calling out close at her ear, and clapping my hands before her eyelids—neither proceeding produced the smallest effect, outwardly; I especially remarked that her eyelids did not tremble or twitch in the slightest degree, when I tried to startle her by clapping my hands within almost a hair's breadth of them. She could hear and answer a whisper from the magnetiser at the other end of the room, which was too faint to be audible to any of us. To every one else present—say what they might, as loudly as they chose—she was deaf and dumb.

She was now questioned as to the matter of time by the Count. Had she gone to sleep in the time I had fixed on?—No. In a longer or a shorter time?—A longer. How long a time was it?—Eight minutes. What time had I fixed on?—Five minutes.

When the last answer was delivered—and not till then—the Count asked me whether she was right or wrong, and reported my reply to her. I know as well as I know the fact of my own existence that neither by an involuntary word, look, or sign, did I betray to any one present what time I had fixed for her to go to sleep in—or what difference there was between the period I had settled on, and the period she had actually occupied in falling asleep. Two inferences and two alone, could be drawn from this first experiment. The perfect correctness of all four answers was either really produced by the magnetic influence, working within her by operations which can neither be understood nor reasoned on; or what we had heard was merely the result of pure guess-work. I confess, for my own part, that I have not credulity enough to believe in four random guesses following close on each other, all turning out perfectly right!

She now complained of cold, and was removed to a large, old-fashioned arm-chair, with a high back, which stood near the fire. We were then shown how to place ourselves in communication with her, so that she might hear what we said. To do this, it was only necessary to touch any part of the chair in which she sat, while speaking to her. Thus addressed, she smiled and answered immediately. Great amusement was produced while we were trying her in this way by one of my friends, whose hearty English jokes, translated literally into very English French, appeared to astonish and delight V— beyond measure. She was sometimes literally in fits of laughter when he touched the chair and spoke to her. When he did not touch it, nothing that he said produced the smallest outward effect on any feature. I watched her closely, and could be certain of this.

The next experiment failed. The Count took a piece of sugar and desired me to write down and show him what I wished her to believe the sugar to be. I first wrote “An olive,” and then “Chocolate.” He magnetized the sugar in both instances; and in both instances, when he gave it to her and asked what it was, she answered at once, “Sugar.” He could not account for this; perhaps we had tried the experiment too soon; perhaps she had not been magnetized enough yet; all he could say was that he had succeeded an evening or two before, where he had failed now. My friends saw, in this very failure, a guarantee of the genuineness of the proceedings; and I agreed with them. A conjuring trick would have been better rehearsed before it was exhibited to the spectator.

Three experiments were tried after this, and all with success. In performing the first, the Count placed himself behind her chair, in a position where she could not see him, unless she raised herself and turned round. At a sign from me, as I stood by his side (also out of her sight), he made her alternately sensible and insensible to the touch; each time by a single gesture with his hand, which it was physically impossible, from her position, that she could see. Sensible, she smiled when her hand was taken—insensible, you might squeeze it, pinch it, hold it up above

her head, and let it drop violently in her lap, without producing the smallest effect. This done, the magnetiser, after making some preliminary passes (still standing in the same position), drew his right hand slowly upward. Inch by inch, as it moved, her right arm raised itself, until it was extended, stiff and straight, at its full stretch, above her head. There it remained, until he moved his hand sideways and then it followed the direction thus given—just as a needle would have followed a magnet—sometimes to the left, and sometimes to the right. When he dropped his hand (quite noiselessly), her hand fell at the same instant into her lap. I was in front of her during this experiment, looking close under her eyes; and satisfied myself that her eyelids were firmly closed. The back of her head was against the back of the chair, behind which, at a distance of full three feet, the Count was standing.

The third experiment was still more curious. The magnetiser was now about to fix her, beyond the possibility of being moved, in her chair. Before he began we each took her by the shoulders and lifted her with ease; she laughed excessively as we did so. Then, after the Count had made one pass with his hand (still behind her), we tried again. I tried first. She was reclining in the chair, with both her hands on her lap. I grasped her by both shoulders, and pulled; but only succeeded in moving the chair. Then placing my knees against it, to keep it steady, and to serve me as a lever as well, I made another effort with all my strength. I might as well have endeavoured to pull the Monument towards me—I could not move her, even in the slightest degree. Both my friends tried (one of them a tall, powerful man), and with no more success. I closely observed her face at this time. It bore a perfectly placid expression; a calm, unconscious look. Her colour did not betray even so much as an approach to heightening. She seemed to be slumbering as calmly and as sweetly as a child.

She was now in a highly magnetized state, so much so as to complain from time to time of oppression in her head, which was relieved by passes. The Count proposed a fresh experiment, as likely to succeed in her present condition. This new evidence of the power of magnetic influence was so painful to behold, that I much doubt whether we should have been willing to see it, could we have known what symptoms were to be displayed beforehand.

W. W. C.

January, 1852.

*(To be continued.)*

## MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME

LETTER II.\*—TO G. H. LEWES

THE experiment to which I referred, at the close of my last letter, as being of a more extraordinary nature than any we had yet beheld, was this:—Our host proposed to make V— exhibit all the effects of having taken poison—any poison I chose to indicate—by magnetizing a glass of water, with the *will* that she should believe, on drinking it that she was really drinking a poisonous liquid. Before, however, the experiment began he made two provisos. The first was, that I should select no poison the effects of which were immediately fatal when it was taken in ordinary doses; the second, that instead of whispering the name of the poison chosen to him, or afterwards to my friends, I should write it down on a piece of paper and only show that paper to him and to them. The Count insisted on this arrangement, as tending to prevent the possibility of any deception, in case we might still suspect that V— could overhear what was said in the room. Even when none of us were placed in communication with her. These preliminaries agreed on, a sheet of paper was placed before me, and a glass of water was procured from a jug standing on the sideboard, out of which some of the persons present had already been drinking.

The poison I chose, and wrote down was *Strychnine*. In the first place I knew that this poison was not immediately fatal, and, in the second place, I was aware that “cases” exhibiting its effects were rare in medical practice, and that, consequently, those effects must be little, if at all, known to “the general public.” When the Count read what I had written he shook his head as a sign that he was unacquainted with the nature of Strychnine, and asked me whether I was quite sure that I had strictly complied with the terms of his first proviso: if I had any doubt on the subject, he said he would decline pursuing the experiment; for he dared not assume a responsibility which, under those circumstances, might perhaps lead to a fatal result. I reassured him on this point and he then magnetized the glass of water without further delay.

When it was given to V— she smelt it; an expression of disgust came over her face; and she refused to drink. It was only after the Count had made several passes over her, and had insisted on her obeying him, that she could be induced to taste the water. Then, in obedience to the irresistible influence of his will on hers, she drank a very small quantity, with extreme reluctance, and with a visible contraction of the throat after each sip. When the water was taken away, I put myself in communication with her, and asked what was the taste of the liquid she had just been imbibing. She answered rather faintly: “An intensely bitter taste.” At the same moment, I looked carefully at her complexion, and touched her hand and cheek: as yet, there was no appearance whatever of unusual paleness and the temperature of her skin was at its natural degree of warmth.

Soon, while we watched her, we saw that she began to move uneasily from side to side in her chair. Then she took her handkerchief and wiped her lips with it; repeating this action incessantly, though there was not the slightest moisture about her mouth. Her complexion got paler and paler, until at last it grew perfectly livid—livid to her very lips. I touched her face now: her skin had become cold and clammy. I took her hand; it felt like the hand of a corpse. Ere long—while she still wiped her mouth from time to time, and still moved painfully from side to side in her chair—spasmodic contractions appeared about her brow and lips, and spread to her chest, her shoulders, and her arms. Her legs, too, began to stretch out rigidly before her; and she complained, in a faint, gasping whisper, of violent pains in the abdomen, and of a



disposition to vomit. We lifted her eyelids, and found that her eyeballs wer [sic] dilated; the pupils being insensible, and turned far upward. The dull, glassy glare of the distorted eye was positively fearful to behold. What further symptoms might have soon appeared, it is impossible to say; for, at this point, we all agreed that the experiment must stop. It was then about ten minutes from the time when she had first tasted the magnetized water.

She was relieved—but very slowly—of the pain in her stomach, by passes; and after that, complained of a sensation of coldness and numbness in her legs. When this also had been removed, she begged for something to quench a great thirst that she felt; and being asked what drink she wished for, answered; “Lukewarm milk.” The Count poured out a fresh glass of water, magnetized it, and gave it to her. She eagerly drank it off at a draught and, in answer to a question from me, said that she was drinking lukewarm milk. After this she sank back in the chair; and, desiring to be left to repose, appeared to fall immediately into a deep sleep. Before she was restored to this state of tranquillity she had engaged the magnetiser’s attention for double the time he had ever occupied before in recovering her from experiments of a similar nature.

The next morning, I consulted Taylor’s *Medical Jurisprudence* (Ed. 3, 1849, pp. 181-183) to ascertain exactly what were the symptoms of poisoning by Strychnine. For the information of persons unacquainted with chemistry, it must be premised, that Strychnine is nothing but a concentration of the poisonous properties of Nux Vomica, which Taylor states to have “an intensely bitter taste”—the very taste, observe, that V— complained of to me. The first case related of poisoning by Strychnine, is that of a young man, aged seventeen, who took *forty* grains (!); and died in an hour and a half after swallowing this tremendous dose of poison, the first symptoms having appeared in a quarter of an hour. The second case is the case of Dr. Warner, who died in fourteen minutes from the effect of the smallest dose on record—half-a-grain. A third instance is then cited of a person who recovered from a dose of seven grains. Thus it appears, from medical evidence, that the quantity of Strychnine required to destroy life, the time when the symptoms of having taken it first appear, and the period that elapses before a dose becomes fatal, vary so much in different persons, as to defy any previous computation whatsoever.

Among the symptoms exhibited by the who man who took the dose of forty grains, Taylor describes—lividness of the skin, prominence of the eyeballs, dilatation and insensibility of the pupils, and spasms of the chest. Among the symptoms of poisoning by Nux Vomica (which the author of *Medical Jurisprudence* informs us “*closely resemble*” those of poisoning by Strychnine) are mentioned—vomiting, pain in the abdomen, and a stretching out of the limbs. We have here, then, no less than seven symptoms, detailed on medical authority, as symptoms produced by taking the poison that I wrote down for our magnetic experience, every one of which we saw exhibited by V—. Others of a more aggravated nature might have appeared, had we not stopped the experiment when we did. I, for one, never desire to witness its repetition, under any circumstances whatever.

Now, how are we to account for such a phenomenon as I have just described? People who keep a large stock of ready-made assertions always on hand to answer any emergency, would solve the mystery at once, by saying that V— was acting. Setting aside, for mere argument sake, the weight of evidence which the mere character of the young lady herself, and of the friends under whose care she was living, would bring to bear against the possibility of any deception being practised by her,—what am I obliged to believe, if I believe that she was acting? First, I must believe that she is the most consummate actress in Europe; for I have never seen, on the stage,

any simulation of the physical effects of poison-taking comparable for a moment to *her* simulation. Rachel's performance in the last act of "Adrienne Lecouvreur" was, in regard to those parts of it which were confined to the simple representation of the outward effect of poison on the human frame, tricky and artificial by comparison with V—'s. Secondly, remembering that I saw with my own eyes the livid paleness come over V—'s face, and felt with my own hands the clammy coldness of hers, I must believe that, at little more than a minute's notice, she could *act* away all colour from her cheeks, and *act* away the natural vital warmth from her hands—a perfection of histrionic art to which no other actress, from Mrs. Siddons downwards, has, I venture to assert, ever attained! Thirdly, I must believe that she had "got up" beforehand all the symptoms produced by taking all the known poisons in chemistry, so as to be quite prepared for any selection I might choose to make. And fourthly, I must believe that she knew what poison I had really chosen, though I have no recollection of the name of it having been even faintly whispered by anybody in the room, until she had been awakened out of the magnetic sleep.

Which is the most credulous man—the man who believes all this, or the man who believes in the magnetic influence?

But how could this influence possibly act in the case now under review? Admitting the sympathy between the magnetizer and the person magnetized—the limitless power of the will of the one over the will of the other—how was it, if neither the Count *nor* V— knew anything of the nature or effects, on the human system, of Strychnine, that such results as I have mentioned were produced? Here was some strange influence working on the intellectual faculties, the nerves, and the whole vital principle—the question is *how* did it work? I cannot tell! Neither can I, nor anybody else, explain several other mysteries which every human being knows to be existing within himself. I have a thinking machine about me, commonly called a "brain"—by what process is it set working? What power, when I am asleep, and my will is entirely inactive, sets this thinking machine going—going as I cannot make it go, when my will is active, and I am awake? I know that I have a soul—what is it? where is it? when and how was it breathed into the breath of my life? *Is* Animal Magnetism the only mystery which the medical profession, and strong-minded unbelievers in general, cannot scientifically and logically explain? Shakspeare [sic] thought not—

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy."

You will, I doubt not, wish to be informed of the condition in which V— appeared when she was awakened from the magnetic sleep, after having been the subject of the painful experiment which I have just related. She was not aroused for another hour and a half at least. During that period, other magnetic experiments were tried on her, which I shall mention hereafter, when I have more space to occupy than is now at my disposal. It was past midnight—more than three hours from the time when she had been first thrown into the sleep—when the process of awakening her began.

The passes made by the magnetizer were at first quick, but very gentle. Then he twice drew his hands sharply away from before her head, towards the ground. The second time he performed this action, she awoke; her eyes opened wide in an instant. They showed the same brightness and intelligence that we had remarked in them three hours ago, before she had fallen into the magnetic sleep. The change from the calm, blank, statuesque repose of her face in the magnetized state, to the lively, good-humoured expression of her face, in the waking state, was accomplished with the rapidity of a flash of lightning. There was no external appearance of any

intermediate process whatever: looking at her countenance, you saw her, in obedience to a noiseless action of the magnetizer's hands, pass from fast asleep to wide awake, before you would have had time to count one!

She had no idea whatever of anything that had passed since she had been first magnetized at nine o'clock. I asked whether she felt any pain anywhere. No! not the least pain of any kind. What were her sensations at the moment? No sensations particular—nothing but the feeling that she generally experienced when she was getting up in the morning—the feeling of being perfectly well. Had she really no faint recollections of having said, done, or felt anything, during the last three hours?—no vague idea, for instance, of having dreamt that she had been, at one time, in a state of great pain? Not the least! She remembered putting on the magnetized thimble, and then going on with her work after tea; and from that point all her remembrances stopped. It was always so with her; she never knew anything about what she did, or said, or felt, in the magnetized state, unless other people told her.

Here our questions and answers were interrupted by the noisy impatience of a little dog in the room. The animal was waiting to go home with me, and was growing very unwilling to wait longer. Earlier in the evening, this dog had accidentally produced a very curious exertion of V—'s extraordinary perceptive powers, while in the magnetic sleep. His master (at whose house I was then staying) had come in, as one of the guests, late in the evening, when V— had been nearly an hour asleep. After a short time, he departed; and his dog, having followed him to the house, followed him again out of the room. More than half an hour afterwards, in the middle of an experiment, V— suddenly became restless, and frowned. No one being able to imagine what produced this alteration in her, she was asked to explain what was the matter, and answered—“There's something in the room that annoys me.” “What is it?” “A dog.” “Why, the dog went away half-an-hour ago,” cried one of my friends. A search was instituted; and, sure enough, the dog (a little terrier) was found coiled up asleep in the darkest corner of the room. He had followed his master out; but not, as we all supposed, home. He was very fond of me; had determined to go home with me; and had quietly crept back into the room—so quietly, that nobody could imagine how or when he had entered—to wait my departure. While I was looking for the dog the Count was pursuing his questions with V—. “What sort of dog is it?” “A little dog.” “Whose dog is it?” “He has not followed his master home.” “I ask you *whose dog* it is?” “The dog belongs to Mr. —,” mentioning the name of the dog's owner. This gentleman, as I have already said, had only come to the house after V—'s eyes were fast closed in the magnetic sleep.

\* See *Leader*, No.95.

W. W. C.

(*To be continued.*)

## MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME

LETTER III.—TO G. H. LEWES

I AM about to shift the scene of my narrative, and introduce to you a whole host of new characters. Hitherto, the locality of our magnetic experiments has been a cottage by the sea-shore. You must now accompany me inland, through the fertile valley ground of Somersetshire, to a country parsonage. As yet, the only spectators present at the “magnetic evenings” have been three gentlemen, very silent humdrum people, merely intent on arriving at a fair estimate, from what they saw with their own eyes, of the real merits of Animal Magnetism. You must now be introduced to a room full of young ladies, anything but humdrum people, and (I may conscientiously add) anything but silent either! In my last two letters, the subject of our experiments has figured as a person accustomed to be submitted to the magnetic influence for a period of some two years. In my present letter, the subjects presented to you will be persons who had never been magnetized before in their lives.

This was the circumstance which produced our visit to the parsonage:—

An evening party was given, at which our friend, Count P—, was present. The topic of Animal Magnetism was started; and a pretty strong disbelief in the science was expressed by the company in general. One young lady, who had never been magnetized, volunteered to give the Count an opportunity of practically refuting his opponents: he took it, and threw her into the sleep. Still the disbelievers disbelieved as sturdily as ever. The room (they said) was hot; the young lady must be naturally a little excited by the amusements of the evening; it was extremely probable that she had just felt a little faint, and had so sunk back with her eyes closed. Consequently, there was no proof of magnetic influence: and, consequently, they would not believe! Under these circumstances, it was arranged by one of the company, to whom the anti-magnetic system of logic was not quite satisfactory, that the Count should prove that he could put the young lady into the magnetic sleep the next afternoon, at her own home, away from all heat and excitement, and under the eyes of her own parents, relatives, and friends. It was in pursuance of this arrangement that we were now all gathered together in the drawing-room at the parsonage house.

Circumstances could hardly have been more unfavourable to the magnetizer’s success than they were when our new experiment began. No plans, no entreaties, no paternal injunctions, could procure quiet. Imagine, first of all, that Misses A., B. and C., are inveterately bent on whispering and laughing with Misses D., E. and F. Then picture to yourself a small detachment of children, who cannot possibly be persuaded to eat their dinner quietly in the dining-room, who *will* carry the drawing-room door by storm, and *wont* [sic] stop in the drawing-room more than a moment after they have entered it. Further, fancy this said drawing-room door to have a creaking hinge, the noise of which the most artful process of opening and shutting is quite powerless to silence. And then, when this combination of noises in the room accidentally ceased, once or twice, for a moment or so at a time, imagine a set of new noises, *out* of the room, always mysteriously ready to fill up the vacancy of silence. For instance, when the children had been got out of the way, then the dogs were sure to bark in the garden, or to whine and scratch at the door. When the young ladies had relapsed into “solemn silence”—when one gentleman had gone to sleep, and another gentleman had taken to looking steadfastly out of window, then the servants were certain to knock down something heavy in the kitchen

underneath. Realize in your own mind all these elements of disturbance, and you will agree, I think, with me, that circumstances were the reverse of favourable to magnetic experiments, under the roof of our kind entertainers at the parsonage.

Nevertheless, in three minutes from the time when the Count and the young lady sat down opposite each other, she was in the magnetic sleep!—fairly, palpably in the magnetic sleep, in spite of every interruption, just at the very time when the interruptions were all at their height!

At first she suffered from hysterical pantings and catchings of the breath,—there seemed to be some obstruction in her throat, and her expression was certainly a painful one. She was soon relieved, however, by the magnetizer; and then, as she breathed freely, she raised her hands in the attitude of prayer, and a look came over her face which no one, even among those who had known her longest, had ever seen on it before.

She was a remarkably pretty girl,—a thoroughly English beauty. Hair, eyes, complexion. and outline of face were all eloquent of her native land. Her natural expression was anything but a sad or a serious one,—*that* was English, too, in its unaffected happiness and good-humour.

“A rosebud set with little wilful thorns,  
And sweet as English air could make her, she.”

But now, the natural expression was all gone, and in its stead was something so calm, so solemn, so spiritual in its rapt loveliness,—something so beautiful, yet not with the beauty of earth, that a great hush stole over us all, while stood before her. It was as if the soul was, at that moment, looking out from the calm young face, clearer and nearer to our eyes than they had ever yet beheld it;—a look that silenced us,—a look not to be forgotten. Never have I seen before, on any other human face, the indescribable divinity of earthly beauty which Raphael has given to his Madonnas,—I saw it then on hers.

She was asked whether she felt quite happy, and free from all pain, and faintly answered, “Yes ! quite happy !” “Did she wish to be awakened?” “No.” She then remained for about ten minutes, still in the same reclining position, still with the same expression, and with the hands uplifted in the gesture of prayer. No further experiments could be tried with her, for, shortly after this, her mother desired that she might be awakened. The process was easily accomplished, she opened her eyes, and resumed her old expression again, with the same suddenness, and the same absence of any appearance of an intermediate condition between sleeping and waking, which I mentioned in my last letter, as characteristic of V—, under similar circumstances.

As soon as she was awake, I asked whether she had any recollections of her condition while in the magnetic sleep. She answered just as V— answered on a former occasion “No recollections whatever.” She had no idea, for instance that her breathing had been painfully impeded, until we told her so.

The next two experiments that were tried on two of the other young ladies present, proved unsuccessful. In one case, the Count expressed his own conviction, beforehand, that the temperament was peculiarly unsusceptible to magnetic influence. In the other, the young lady herself declared that she was once or twice on the point of losing all consciousness when a whisper, or an accidental noise in the room, disturbed and startled her. The third attempt, after the two first had been abandoned, was made on one of the gentlemen present, who had never before been magnetized. The result proved to be of a very unexpected and a very startling

nature: it was not repose which was produced in this instance, but agitation—agitation so violent as to excite the liveliest apprehensions in every one present.

At the time when the new patient submitted himself to the magnetizer, the scene was one of the most picturesque I ever remember to have witnessed. It was now evening—a still, cold, clear winter evening. Dim shadows were gathering over the room; contrasted on one side by the ruddy firelight, on the other by the last rays of the setting sun, floating through the window. The positions of the spectators, as they anxiously watched the progress of the new experiment; the strange, wild contrasts of light and shade falling on every figure; the beauty and variety of the attitudes into which the children and the young girls accidentally fell, as they sat, reclined, or stood together; the natural harmony and grace in the formation of the different groups, made the room a perfect school for painters, a treasury of beautiful compositions, waiting to enrich with new material the resources of Art. Beyond the spectators, appeared the figures of the magnetizer and the patient placed apart, just before the window, darkly and grandly relieved in their still positions by the mysterious evening light; while, without, the background to the whole scene was formed by the twining, weird shapes of leafless trees; the wave of the deep blue hills beyond; and the blood-red sun above, just glowing its last under a canopy of towering purple clouds. Rembrandt alone could have painted such a picture as the drawing-room at the parsonage-house presented at this moment.

We were all very silent just now. The children were getting weary, and consequently quiet; and considerable expectation was excited among their elders by the chance now afforded them of seeing how the magnetic influence acted upon a man. The first interruption to the stillness prevailing among us was of a very merry nature—the patient began to laugh. This was attributed, naturally enough, to his sense of the curious position in which he was placed, and to the apparently odd gestures of the magnetizer. His laughter was infectious; everybody joined it, until it gradually became so loud, harsh, and incessant, as to awaken a general suspicion that “something must be wrong.” The next moment it grew frightfully shrill and vehement; and the next, rose to piercing hysterical screams. This was an example of the power of the magnetic influence which nobody had anticipated, and which caused considerable terror among the young ladies, who had been all laughing heartily but a minute before. The Count ordered the window to be opened immediately; and, making the passes necessary to relieve the patient, ordered him, in a firm voice, to be quiet.

The effect was nearly instantaneous; his screams sank to a few low, inarticulate sounds; and he soon became perfectly tranquil. His face, during the attack, was flushed to a deep red, almost turning towards purple: it seemed more than probable that in another minute or so, the hysterics would have ended in convulsions but for the presence of mind and experience which enabled the magnetizer at once to hit on the right process for restoring the agitated nervous system to its proper tone.

The Count’s explanation of the scene which had just taken place was, that it had been produced by a too exclusive direction of the magnetic influence to the region of the head—an error into which he had fallen from ignorance of the peculiarities of temperament in the person whom he was magnetizing. The patient’s own account of the sensations he had experienced during the attack, fully bore out this theory. He described his condition as that of a man feeling a painful sensation of heat in the head—a red-hot air pouring, as it were, into his brain from the Count’s hands. Throughout the rest of the evening he suffered from a sense of oppression in his head, and occasionally felt a disposition to burst into tears, which it was not very easy to control.

No attempt was made to continue this experiment, and to produce (by magnetizing the patient, away from his head) the sleep which had just been interrupted by the hysterical attack. It was growing late in the evening, and we were obliged to separate. Compared with the cases which I have mentioned in former letters, the two cases here described contain, I am well aware, little that is remarkable in themselves. But they are, I think, of some importance in their bearing on the general subject; for they tend to prove, by the fairest possible test, the actual existence of such a phenomenon as the magnetic influence. Here were two persons selected for experiment who had never before been magnetized. One of these persons—in three minutes, and in the midst of incessant interruption and confusion—is thrown into a sleep which entirely alters the natural expression of her face, and from which no noise whatever can possibly awaken her. The other (a man, be it remembered) is affected with a fit of hysterics—a species of attack from which he had never suffered on any previous occasion. These, assuredly, are real tangible effects—effects produced by one person standing opposite to another, steadily regarding him, steadily making certain gestures with the hand, and steadily exercising the whole time a strong effort of will. If there be no such thing as the magnetic influence, what produced the phenomena which I have just been describing?

In my next letter, I shall return to V—, and shall have to relate some new experiments that were tried upon her—experiments in *clairvoyance*.

W. W. C.

*(To be continued.)*

## MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME

LETTER IV.—TO G. H. LEWES

WHEN I entered the house of Count P—, on the evening, appointed for our experiment in *clairvoyance*, one of the first objects which attracted my attention in the drawing-room, was a piece of wood that lay on the table, shaped like a hand-mirror. On taking it up, I observed a highly-polished oval piece of coal attached to one side of the wood, instead of the ordinary looking-glass, which I had expected to find there. The history of this strange mirror was as follows:—

An old friend of the Count's preserved, among his other curiosities the celebrated "wishing-stone," formerly possessed by Dr. Dee. Convinced that the old Doctor's evil reputation among his contemporaries as a sorcerer had been solely derived from his knowledge and practice of animal magnetism, in days when new sciences of all kinds were fathered upon the devil, as a matter of course, our host conceived the idea of procuring as good an imitation of this "wishing-stone" as could be obtained, and of rivalling the magic achievements of Dr. Dee, by applying to it the magnetic process necessary to produce the phenomenon of *clairvoyance*. A piece of "Cannel coal" was procured, as the nearest available approach to the mysterious "wishing-stone;" it was polished and fixed to the wood by an ordinary artisan. Placed in the hands of V—, when she was magnetized, it proved quite as fertile a source of marvels as the Doctor's original instrument of sorcery,—in other words, it was found to be a very useful aid to experiments in *clairvoyance*.

This coal-mirror was now placed on the table, in case we wished it to be used as a matter of curiosity. The experiment on which we were about to enter could be carried on just as easily without it. V— would see the perfect stranger to herself whom we might wish her to see, if a vacant chair were placed before her, on which she might behold the absent person; or if that person's visiting-card were put into her hand. But if, as a matter of antiquarian amusement, we desired that the vision should appear to her in the "wishing-stone," there it was, ready for use, just as Dr. Dee might have used it in the olden time.

We chose the "wishing-stone" by general acclamation. It was already magnetized; so that V would be thrown into the sleep by merely taking it in her hand, and looking at it. She was placed by her own desire with her back to the table, and with the candles put behind her. By this arrangement the coal-mirror was thrown into complete shadow, when she took it up and held it before her. As soon as she was comfortably seated, I was asked to indicate the person whom I wished her to see. I wrote on a sheet of paper (keeping well behind her, at the further end of the table) "my brother;" knowing him to be then in London, some hundred and thirty miles away from us, and to be perfectly unknown to V—, the Count, and, indeed, to everybody present except one gentleman, a mere spectator like myself and quite as determined as I was that the proceedings of the evening should be subjected to the severest possible test. The Count looked at the two words I had written down, (they were never, from first to last, even whispered by any of us,) and simply said to V—, "I desire that you will see and describe the person whom that gentleman has indicated to me." She nodded her head as a sign of acquiescence, and, in about ten minutes after, her eyes were fast closed in the magnetic sleep.



She held the mirror before her, at the distance from her face that she would have held a book—keeping it in the same position (heavy as it was) for the whole two hours during which she was in the magnetic state. The first thing she did was to take out her handkerchief, and wipe the surface of the coal, over and over again, very carefully, and with a very anxious, searching expression of countenance. Then she changed her position in the chair several times, shifting the mirror from side to side, and occasionally holding it quite close to her face, as if to see more clearly, though—as I took care to satisfy myself, by the closest inspection—her eyelids were tightly closed. All this time, she yawned incessantly; an unaccountable peculiarity which we were told she invariably displayed on all similar occasions. The next action that we saw her perform was very suggestive: she dropped the handkerchief into her lap and began slowly and anxiously to trace shapes with her forefinger on the surface of the mirror.

This was the signal for beginning to interrogate her. I must premise, that all the questions were not asked by the Count: some of the most important were put by me; others by my friend. I took down in writing, at the time, everything that was said; and can be quite certain that my report of our proceedings is perfectly correct.

*Question.* What do you see? *Answer.* Something round in the middle of the mirror. *Q.* What more? *A.* Something under the round shape, which prolongs itself. (She saw other forms, which she could not describe but which she followed carefully with her forefinger. Then she pointed steadily to one particular place; and the moment after, with an anxious, impatient expression, wiped the mirror once more with her handkerchief. Still, she said she saw nothing but vague shapes, and complained of headache and pain in the brows. She was relieved by magnetic passes, and then questioned again.)

*Q.* Do you see anything more? *A.* The shapes begin to form themselves: I see a hand and an arm—the right arm (to me) as I look at it. I see a leg now—the right leg. (Here the painful expression which had hitherto appeared on her face entirely left it; and she began to laugh.) *Q.* Why do you laugh? *A.* It is so ridiculous to see an arm and leg, and nothing else! (Wiped the mirror again.) *Q.* Why do you wipe the mirror? *A.* Because there is a mist over it that makes it dull. *Q.* What are you laughing about again? *A.* At the other arm and leg. (Complained of headache; removed as before.) *Q.* What is it that you are still unable to see? *A.* The body and head. I only see two arms, hands, legs, and feet; the rest is hidden by mist. It is a horribly ugly sight to see nothing but legs and arms. *Q.* Why can't you see the head? *A.* It takes a long time to see the head. *Q.* Can you explain exactly what you see now? *A.* I see everything now but the head. I see the body perfect, up to the neck. Seen so it looks hideous. On the neck is the round shape that I saw at first in the mirror—a dim, formless thing on a perfect body, from the feet to the neck. *Q.* Can you see nothing about the head yet? *A.* Yes; it shapes itself! It *was* like a ball; it is getting like a head; but the mist is over it still.

Here she began again to trace with her finger on the mirror; then laughed and said: I see one side of the face—the right side; now I see the ear quite clearly. (She shifted the mirror obliquely.) *Q.* Why do you shift the mirror? *A.* To see the other side of the face. Stop!—now I see it; I see all; but the mist of the figure has not gone yet. I cannot see clearly enough to describe from. *Q.* Tell us when you see more clearly. *A.* Now I see more clearly; I see him looking at me. *Q.* Why do you say *him*? *A.* Because I see a man. (She laughed excessively.) *Q.* What are you laughing about? *A.* The man in the mirror laughs at seeing me. *Q.* Does he know you? *A.* No. *Q.* Can you go on with the description? *A.* Give me time; I see him a long way off just yet. Now he gets bigger; but I see him in miniature still. *Q.* Must I command you to see him

at his natural size? *A.* No; I see him better already. His arms are long (*this was right*); his hand is small for a man's hand (*right*); his feet, too, are small; and he is of middling stature, neither tall nor short, (*right*.)

*Q.* How old is he? *A.* He is young; but I don't know him; he is a perfect stranger to me. I see his face very well; it is what one would call a long-shaped face (*right*); his expression, I should say, was generally serious (*right*); his forehead is high, and not at all hidden by his hair, (*right*.) Stop!—something curious occurs to me about his face; surely I ought to know him by his face; and yet I am certain that he is a perfect stranger to me. *Q.* Can't you find out something more about him? *A.* Wait; I am trying to make out what is the colour of his hair.

(Circumstances made this last answer—given, you will perceive, without any question that led to it—somewhat remarkable. One of the most striking peculiarities about the person chosen to test V—'s powers of *clairvoyance*, consisted precisely, as my friend and I alone knew, in the colour of his hair.)

*Q.* (continued.) What can you tell us about his hair? *A.* It is so very curious!—he reminds me of some one whom I have seen; and yet I don't know who. If he were a little nearer to me, I could tell so much more about him! *Q.* I command him to come nearer. Now look—what do you see? *A.* It is all black round his head; I can't see—magnetize the mirror. *Q.* Now I have magnetized it; is the blackness gone? *A.* A little of it. *Q.* Now; what about his hair? *A.* It has the appearance of being dark. *Q.* Can't you speak more positively about it? *A.* I am trying to find out the colour of his hair, but it puzzles me: it is so very dark all round him. *Q.* Can't you disperse the darkness? *A.* Yes; it is going, (*wiped the mirror*.) Now, his hair does not look dark; it seems light. *Q.* Be more particular: which is it, dark or light? You said it was dark just now. Why? *A.* Because it was dark then over his hair. Now it is clearer, I see that his hair is light. *Q.* What sort of light hair?

She waited some time without answering this question; then suddenly exclaimed:—"If that gentleman—I forget his name—would give me his hand I think I could find out everything." She was asked which of the two gentlemen present she meant—was it my friend "No!"—Was it Mr. C—? (mentioning my name.)—"Yes!" Remembering that my brother was the person whom I had secretly chosen that she should see, you will easily imagine how deep an interest was excited by V—'s request. It was the first palpable manifestation of the mysterious instinct which was now gradually directing her aright to the object of her search.

Turning over the task of writing down the questions and answers to my friend, I gave V— my hand, without saying anything. Almost immediately afterwards, I felt the magnetic influence communicating itself from her to me. The sensation was precisely like that produced by a mild shock from a galvanic battery—*i. e.* a slight feeling of *tingling* in the hand, and of numbness all up the arm. Whenever I felt this sensation at all on the increase, I changed the hand I gave to V—: otherwise, I think it more than probable that I should have been soon thrown into the magnetic sleep myself!

Shortly after V— took my hand, her brow contracted, and a nervous twitching appeared in the muscles of her face. The questions were thus continued:—*Q.* Why did you wish Mr. C— to give you his hand? *A.* I don't know yet; it was an idea that occurred to me. Wait! There is some connexion between Mr. C— and the man I am looking at in the mirror: I don't know what connexion—but—(*here she paused, and smiled*.)—Yes! I have found out: they are a little alike! *Q.* Alike in what? *A.* Something alike in their faces, (*right*.) I was certain, from the first, that

the face in the mirror reminded me of another face that I had seen. *Q.* Can you tell us anything more about the hair? *A.* I have told you already that it is light hair. Magnetize the mirror for me: I want to find out what these two gentlemen are to each other. (*A pause here.*) *Q.* How is the man in the mirror dressed? *A.* In grey trousers, and in a dark (it looks black) morning coat and waistcoat. (*This was subsequently found to be right.*) I am getting very tired; I wish the gentleman who holds my hand would think of the man I see in the mirror; it would help me to find out about him. *Q.* What are you laughing at now? *A.* I can't help laughing at Mr. C—, he forgets he is in communication (*en rapport*) with me, and is telling his friend my answers in a whisper, as if he thought I could not hear him!

(This was the fact! I *had* forgotten that I was in communication with her, and that, whisper as faintly as I might, she could now hear every word I said!)

*Q.* (continued) Can you not tell us something more about the man in the mirror? *A.* His nose is rather long; his eyes are blue; his mouth is of middling size, his skin is fair, his complexion is pale, (*Right in every instance.*) Stop! I have discovered it! HE IS THIS GENTLEMAN'S BROTHER! *Q.* You are right. Now go on describing the man in the mirror—has he any whiskers? *A.* Yes: light whiskers, (*right,*) I see his hair very clearly now; it is of a lightish red (*right.*)

(It may be useful to state here, that the resemblance between my brother and myself is only what is termed "a family resemblance." While mentioning *his* personal appearance in detail, she could get no hints from *mine*. In expression and general outline of face, we are considered to be alike; but in every other respect—as to eyes, hair, complexion, and so on—we differ completely.)

On the questions being resumed, she complained of excessive fatigue, and of the re-appearance of a mist on the mirror. She was asked to describe more fully my brother's dress. Her answers were now given unwillingly and painfully; and subsequent inquiry showed them to be wrong. She was so thoroughly wearied, as to be almost incapable of holding up the mirror; and, between each interrogation, she constantly petitioned to be released from any further exertion. The points on which she was mistaken were these:—1st. In describing my brother as a little older than I was. 2nd. In saying that he wore a scarf round his neck. 3rd. In asserting that he had rings on the fingers of his left hand. But I must again repeat, that these three mistakes (her *only* mistakes, be it observed) were made after her faculties had been kept for two hours incessantly on the stretch; after she had herself told us that fatigue was overpowering her; and after it was perfectly obvious to every one present, from her voice and manner, that her attention was flagging over her task from excessive fatigue. Accordingly, after she had given the answer numbered "3rd," further questioning was abandoned as useless in her then exhausted condition. She was awakened at ten minutes past eleven; and our second experiment in *clairvoyance* was put off till the next evening.

W. W. C.

(*To be continued.*)

## MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME

LETTER V.—TO G. H. LEWES

YOU will not be surprised to hear that the result of our first experiment in *clairvoyance* had the effect of making my friend and myself ardently desirous of witnessing a second. Nothing we had hitherto seen on any previous evening had (to use a common but expressive phrase) so “completely staggered us” as this last phenomenon of the magnetic second sight. To attempt to reason about it seemed perfectly hopeless: there was something too weird and supernatural about the whole process of *clairvoyance* for the sort of discussion which men give to practical everyday-wonders. The mysterious shaping of the vision seen by V—; its gradual growth on the mirror, from a round spot to separate arms and legs, and thence to a perfect human figure—that figure the exact similitude of a person whom the *clairvoyant* had never seen; the working of the occult spiritual sympathies which taught her (unaided by the faintest hint, the slightest betrayal of emotion from any one present), first, vaguely to connect the vision she saw with *me*, then instinctively to assist herself by contact with my hand and connexion with my thoughts, in discovering the relationship which had been rigidly and entirely kept a secret from her—these were marvels that defied logical analysis as completely as they outraged logical probabilities. All that we had seen and heard literally passed belief; and yet, what was to be done but believe it? Disbelieve it! you will say. So I would willingly if I could only believe, to begin with, that the intimate friends of *my* intimate friends were impostors, and that my fellow spectator and I were both of us fools. Other people may be able to assume this comfortable hypothesis—I, unfortunately, cannot!

One impression was strongly conveyed by V—’s manner and language during the progress of our experiment—viz., that her spiritual sympathies and mental instincts were so extended in range, and so sharpened in intensity, while she was in the magnetic state, that her mind could act and her thoughts move in the most intimate connexion with the minds and thoughts of others. It is, I am well aware, a sufficiently perilous and daring assertion to say, that one human being is really able under any circumstances, to “read the thoughts” of another; yet to this conclusion every word and action of V—’s, at the time when she asked me to take her hand and think of the person whose name I had written down, seems inevitably to lead. If any rational explanation can be given of the wonders of *clairvoyance*, it must, I think, be sought for in this direction; it must start from the assertion, that the *clairvoyant* possesses a mysterious insight into the mind, a mysterious sympathy with the inmost feelings of the individual whose duty it is to think of the person, or the place appointed to test the capabilities of the magnetic second-sight. A, for instance, secretly thinks of some friend or relative, a perfect stranger to B, whom B is to behold and describe. B, however, is able to think with the thoughts and feel with the feelings of A; and, guided by that sympathy, goes aright, therefore, to the discovery the object which A has appointed for search. This mode of explanation might, perhaps, be made to throw some little light on the mysteries of *clairvoyance* but even if it be admitted as satisfactory, how much that is incomprehensible and marvellous must still remain unelucidated! The subject, after all, defies any analysis—the mystery is to be seen, yet not to be penetrated. It is best asserted by the practical results that we can really and truly see and hear for ourselves. To those results, therefore, let me return.

On the evening of our second experiment, the black mirror was dispensed with. V— was placed in an easy chair by the fireside, and magnetized in the usual manner. The duty of selecting the

new test for her capabilities was then accorded to my friend, Mr. S—, the gentleman whom I have mentioned as having been present on the occasion of our former experiment.

Mr. S— had only a few days since returned from Paris. The card of one of his French friends happened to be in his pocket, and he gave it to V— as the object of the new search in which we were now to employ her. The Count and I looked at this card before it was handed to the *clairvoyante*. The letters on it were so faintly and minutely printed in what the writing masters call “hair-strokes” that it was very difficult to read them by candle light. When we at length succeeded in doing so, we found that the name was perfectly unknown to both of us—perfectly unknown indeed to every one in the room but Mr. S—. I further inquired of that gentleman whether he had mentioned his French friend’s name, or any subject in immediate connexion with it—either by letter, during his absence, or personally, on his return to England—to any relatives or friends in the town where we were now staying. He assured me that he had not. He had even forgotten that he had brought away the card in his pocket, until he accidentally drew it forth a moment ago; and he was, moreover, quite certain that he had neither directly nor indirectly mentioned to a single soul in England under what circumstances he had seen his French friend, when that friend gave him the card.

The first question asked of V— was, whether she could read the name. She sat with her eyes closed, as usual, away from the candles, and holding the card in her lap. After a long pause, she said that the writing was so small and indistinct that she could not read it correctly; two things, however, she could discover—the name was a French name, and the name of a man.

Finding her so far right, Mr. S— inquired of our host whether V— would be able to tell him where and under what circumstances he had last seen his French friend. The Count replied that he had no doubt she could; and recommended Mr. S— to place himself in communication with her; and ask all the necessary questions himself, as the person present best qualified to put them. Mr. S— took the advice. Except in one or two unimportant cases, it was he and not the magnetizer who interrogated V—. I took down the questions and answers myself as they passed. You will find the results of our second experiment which I am now about to submit to you, even more extraordinary and more startling than those which proceeded from our first.

*Question.* Where did I last see the French gentleman? *A.* At Paris, (*right.*) *Q.* In what place did I see him; was it out of doors or in? *A.* In doors; in a room, (*right.*) *Q.* At what time of day did I see him? *A.* In the morning, (*right.*) *Q.* At what sort of visit was it that I saw him? *A.* At a breakfast visit, (*right.*) *Q.* How many people were seated at table? *A.* Seven, (*right.*) *Q.* How many ladies and how many gentlemen were there in the company? *A.* Four gentlemen and three ladies, (*right.*) *Q.* Tell me something more about the ladies; were they married ladies or unmarried ladies? *A.* One was a married lady; the two others were not, (*right.*)

All these answers, to the astonishing correctness of which Mr. S—’s memory bore witness, were given by V— without hesitation! She sat erect in the chair, holding head upright in its usual position, twisting the card about incessantly in her lap, but never raising it towards her face. It was only when the next question was asked that she appeared to hesitate and become confused.

*Q.* What were the ages of the two unmarried ladies? *A.* I can’t tell exactly; one, perhaps, might be eighteen or nineteen the other twenty-two or twenty-three. *Q.* You have made a mistake. If you tried again, could you not tell me their ages more correctly? *A.* (*after a pause.*) Yes. I was wrong. Why did you say *unmarried ladies*? Surely, they are still *little girls*! I should say that

one was thirteen years old and the other eight. (One, as Mr. S— informed us afterwards, *was* thirteen; the age of the other was six years.) *Q.* Was the husband of the married lady with her at the breakfast? *A.* I think not. (Mr. S— signed to us that this was wrong, by shaking his head. He then waited a minute or so without asking another question. During this short delay, V— corrected herself, and said, of her own accord, “the husband of the married lady was with her at the breakfast.”)

*Q.* (continued.) At what part of the table were the husband and wife sitting? *A.* I cannot tell you. *Q.* Why not? *A.* Because the breakfast table was a round table, (*right.*) How can I describe people’s positions at a *round* table? *Q.* Can you describe the room? Can you tell us whether it was at all like the room we are now in? *A.* It was so unlike that I can’t compare it. Supposing I were sitting by the fireplace in the French room, as I am sitting here, the door would be in that position (pointing to the place she meant; and indicating it, as Mr. S— said, quite correctly).

After this answer, a general wish was expressed to hear her describe the positions of the guests at the breakfast-table. The great difficulty was (as V— had herself told us) to distinguish in any clear and certain manner, the places occupied by seven people at a round table. This was, however; completely obviated by a suggestion of the Count’s, that a china basin standing on the sideboard should be placed in V—’s lap, that she should be told to consider the basin as representing the round table; and to be occupying Mr. S—’s place at the breakfast, she should describe the positions of the guests, exactly as they were ranged on either side of him. Our host’s plan was adopted. At first V— laughed excessively at the substitute for the real round table, which was deposited on her lap. She then became silent and thoughtful for a few moments; and after that, began very readily to give the required description, addressing it to Mr. S—, who sat close by her.

First, assuming to Mr. S—, as she had been bidden, that she was occupying his place at the breakfast-table, and keeping her left hand on that supposed place, she touched the rim of the basin all round with her right forefinger at certain distinct intervals, mentioning, at each touch, the sex of the person whose position she was thus representing. In this manner she described, without a single error, the manner in which the married lady and the two little girls, present at the breakfast party, were distributed among the four gentlemen; the different places occupied by the husband and wife; and in short, the whole arrangement of the guests at the table, exactly as Mr V— remembered it to have been organized! My friend was quite certain that none of his recollections on this point were in the slightest degree doubtful; for the breakfast party in question took place on the day before his departure from Paris. It was the last social gathering in the French capital at which he “assisted:” it was a more than usually pleasant meeting of friends; and he had, in consequence, the most vivid recollection of all the circumstances connected with it.

This remarkable experiment was, unfortunately, not carried any further, after V— had concluded her description of the manner in which the breakfast party were assembled round the table. It was decided, in order to suit the convenience of one member of the company present, who could not attend on any subsequent occasion, that we should proceed at once to our next experiment; instead of deferring it to a future evening. Accordingly, after allowing V— an interval of repose, it was secretly agreed that we should make trial of her powers of *clairvoyance* in quite a new manner, by requiring that she should behold and describe the late Sir Robert Peel. The name was written down, and she was briefly desired to exert her faculty, as usual; an empty chair having been previously magnetized, and placed before her.

At first, she saw the chair covered by the same mist which had covered the mirror on the former evening. Gradually, this mist faded, and she beheld a human form, seated in the chair. On being asked what this figure was like, she replied, to the unmeasured astonishment of every one present, that it was the figure of a young lady! No comment was made on this very unexpected result of our experiment. She was questioned in the usual manner about the person who had appeared before her. Her answers comprised the most minute description of the young lady; of her features, her complexion, her age, her dress, and even of her slightest peculiarities of physiognomy. On being asked to mention her name, V— at once replied, “Miss S—,” the sister of the Mr. S— who was present that evening. She also informed us, that she had only once met the young lady out of doors, crossing the road, with her veil down, so that it was impossible to distinguish any of her features. The next question was the important one, and was thus expressed:—“We wished you to see the late Sir Robert Peel; why did you see, instead, the sister of Mr. S?” She replied directly:—“Because Mr. S— has been sitting immediately behind the empty chair which you placed before me. (*This was the case.*) Mr. S— has some influence over me, in that position, close to the chair, which I cannot explain—an influence which made me think of somebody, and see somebody whom he is often accustomed to think of. I can’t tell you anything more about it, except that I saw Miss S—. because her brother influenced me, sitting where he now sits.”

Is this answer a confirmation of the opinion I have ventured to express at the beginning of my letter? Or does it only add one more mystery to the other unfathomable mysteries of *clairvoyance*?

W. W. C.

(*To be continued.*)

MAGNETIC EVENINGS AT HOME.—(*Concluded.*)

LETTER VI.—TO G. H. LEWES

ON looking over my notes, I find that I have hitherto omitted to mention some of our experiments, which, though perhaps of minor importance in themselves, are nevertheless not ill-calculated to assist in developing the widely-extended range of the magnetic influence in its action on the human subject. The experiments to which I refer, tended to show the power of Animal Magnetism in immensely increasing the muscular energy; in suspending the organic functions of persons in a perfectly wakeful state; and in aiding the painter or sculptor, by a special exertion of its influence in the studio, to work from the “living model.”

The proof of the increase of muscular energy, to be produced at will by the application of magnetism, was thus displayed:—While V— was in the magnetic state, the Count desired me to give her my hand, asserting at the same time, that he would make her clasp it with the grasp of a vice,—with a grasp from which he alone could free me. The appearance of V—’s hand, which had evidently never been exercised in any harder work than needlework, rendered this assertion very difficult to credit; but the event soon proved, in anything but an agreeable manner to *me*—or, as it seemed, to *her*—that the power of the magnetic influence had, in this instance, not been one whit overrated. The magnetizer made one “pass” over V—’s hand, when she took mine; and immediately after, I felt it beginning to close—tighter, tighter, tighter!—until her arm quivered all up to the shoulder; and the pain I felt from her grasp grew so intense that—“setting my manhood aside”—I fairly begged to be released from a sensation which most men consider to be a remarkably agreeable one—the squeeze of a young lady’s hand! Two deep red impressions of that squeeze left in my skin, and a coldness and distortion of my fingers, which lasted full a quarter of an hour, were tolerably fair guarantees to the spectators of this experiment that I had certainly not “cried out before I was hurt.”

The Count assured my friends who were present, that, if the practical illustration of his assertion which they had just witnessed, were not sufficient for them, he would be quite willing to experiment on the stoutest boatman they could call into the house from the beach outside, just as he had experimented on me. And he laughingly offered, at the same time, to lay a wager with anybody, pledging him—by merely placing one of V—’s hands on this said boatman’s chest, and the other against his shoulder blade—to make her inflict such a pressure on the man, as should, in the most literal acceptance of the phrase, reduce him to “roar for mercy.” It is hardly necessary to say that, after what the company had already seen, nobody was willing to take up the Count’s bet!

The capabilities of the magnetic influence in suspending the exercise of particular organs were very curiously exemplified in reference to the organ of speech. While we were all standing one night, talking round the fire, after the experiments of the evening were over, and V— had been awakened out of the magnetic sleep, the Count suddenly made a few “passes” close before her lips. Immediately afterwards, her articulation thickened; then ceased to be comprehensible: she could murmur; but could not pronounce a single word. In order to verify this experiment by our eye, as well as by our ears, I asked her to open her mouth; and found her tongue reduced to less than its natural length, swollen to considerably more than its natural thickness, and presenting a curiously twisted, convulsed appearance. On touching it afterwards with the finger, it felt quite



hard. Fairly judged by the tests of hearing, seeing, and touching, she was at that moment perfectly and palpably “tongue-tied.”

The third experiment at which I have hinted, as tending to prove that Animal Magnetism might render real practical assistance to those who cultivate the fine arts, requires a word or two of preface, addressed to readers who may never have witnessed the progress of a picture on the easel, or the gradual construction of the clay model from which the marble statue is afterwards formed. Persons in this position, who only become acquainted with works of art in their finished state, have, very naturally, hardly an idea of the technical difficulties which at all stages beset the production of a picture or a statue, whatever the genius, however long the practice, of the producer may be. Among these technical difficulties, one that ranks as chief, is the difficulty of working from the living model, of painting or modelling from the life. In the first place, it is physically impossible, under any ordinary condition, for any human being to keep in the same position even for five minutes together, without insensibly moving a little, so as to embarrass the artist; to whom changes of this sort, so slight as to be inappreciable to the ordinary spectator, are always visible. In the second place, the effort on the part of the model to “sit” as still as possible, produces a constant sense of fatigue. Perhaps at the very moment when the painter or sculptor is working his best, the sitter discovers that he or she can sit no longer, and must absolutely take a rest; and the unfortunate artist finds his labour interrupted exactly at the point where his own interests demand that it should be continued. The more difficult the position of the model, the more frequent these minor miseries of the studio become. Sometimes when, for instance, the sitter’s arm is long kept in an outstretched direction (most probably by tying it to a support), positive injury is sustained by cramps and stiffness, which often affect the limb that has been maintained too continuously in one arduous position. Some years since, a serious accident of this kind happened at the Royal Academy. A model in the “life school” had been standing for a considerable time, with one of his arms (artificially supported) extended, in the action of holding a bow. He was told to put his arm down, and rest. “I’m afraid, gentlemen,” was the reply, “that I can’t rest, for I can’t put my arm down.” It was found that the limb had stiffened in the socket, and the assistance of a surgeon was obliged to be called in to restore the arm of the unfortunate model to its natural position by his side.

Such accidents as these, such difficulties in the artist’s way as those above-mentioned, Count P— assured us could be entirely obviated by magnetizing the “model,” and then using the magnetic influence to fix him (or her) with the stillness of a statue, in the same position—no matter how difficult—for any number of hours required; and this, as all experience proved, without the slightest sensation of stiffness being felt by, or the smallest injury accruing to the health of, persons so treated, on their being restored to the waking state. He practically illustrated the assertion, while we were discussing the subject during a morning visit at his house.

V— was magnetized, and placed, sitting on the edge of her chair, with her body inclined sideways thoroughly out of the perpendicular, and one of her arms extended and raised towards her head. The magnetizer then made one “pass” over her; and she remained in this position, as perfectly still as if she had been turned to marble (her outstretched arm not moving by a hair’s breadth), for full ten minutes; or, in other words, until the spectators were tired of watching any longer. Should any readers consider that our want of patience to sit out the half-hour, during which the Count had himself suggested that we should wait, vitiated the completeness of this experiment, I recommend those ladies or gentlemen to put themselves in V—’s position, as above described, and to try to sit quite still in it for three minutes together by a watch; allowing a friend, at the same time, to keep an eye on the arm they will have to extend, for the purpose of

noting whether it moves or not during that interval. I have myself occasionally officiated as amateur model to artist-friends, and know therefore, by experience, what the difficulty is of keeping a limb extended, or the body inclined, without support, in anything like a still position, even for so short a time as three minutes.

V— was awakened immediately after this experiment. I asked her whether she felt any sensation of stiffness in the arm which she had held out. The reply was, “None whatever;” and she proved its truth by immediately taking up and resuming her “crochet” work, which our visit had interrupted. Some idea may be formed of the extent to which this petrifying power of the magnetic influence can be carried, by the fact (communicated by letter a few days ago) that Count P suddenly stopped V—, and struck her perfectly motionless, by a strong act of will, merely expressed by a single “pass,” *while she was dancing the polka!* Incredible as this must appear to most people, it is nevertheless true. Besides the young lady’s partner in the dance, other persons were present who saw the thing done.

I have now communicated to you the nature and result of all the experiments in Animal Magnetism which my stay in Somersetshire gave me an opportunity of witnessing—of all at least, which I find preserved in my notes. In some few cases, I unhappily omitted to make my usual record on the spot; and to those cases, accordingly I shall not direct your attention. I am unwilling to trust only to my recollection, however vivid I may consider it to be, in writing such a narrative as the present narrative which I should consider to be quite valueless, unless I knew it to be throughout literally true.

In closing this short series of letters, I can merely repeat what I wrote on commencing them. Having been allowed by Count P— to make public, in any form I chose, the experiments which he was kind enough to show me, I availed myself of that permission, because I considered that I had enjoyed, at his house, an unusually favourable opportunity for fairly estimating, by the fairest practical demonstration, the real merits of Animal Magnetism. The proceedings which I thus resolved to report, were proceedings conducted by a gentleman who followed the science only for its own sake, and for whose character and position, I had the best and amplest guarantee. It is on this account, quite as much as on account of the internal evidence to their genuineness which I believe the experiments here reported to contain, that I venture to think my narrative at least worthy of attention from persons who will do me the common justice to read it with minds unprejudiced, either one way or the other.

As to the future of Animal Magnetism, it seems to me to be already assured. The science has, of late years, gained a vast hold on the convictions of men of intellect and men of honour in all quarters. As such persons continue to study it, year by year, more closely, and to extract from it more clearly the practical uses to which it may assuredly be directed for the benefit of humanity, so will the circle of believers, whose belief is worth gaining, inevitably widen and widen; and so will the masses, who follow, but never lead, be drawn into that circle after them. Leave the science to work its way honestly, and boldly by its own merits, its visible, actual results; and it will certainly continue to advance, as it has already advanced. Angry partisanship will not avail it anything; public exhibitions of it, displayed to gaping crowds at so much a head, will lend it no assistance that is of real value. Let it be studied by each man who desires to know it, quietly and reverently, as a mystery too perilously important to be trifled with for mere amusement. Let the results of such studies as these, communicated by competent writers, and attested by competent witnesses, be the only sources whence persons who doubt the science (and can doubt it fairly) seek their *primary* information or encouragement. Thus practised, and

thus examined, Animal Magnetism need ask no more; for then will have been conceded to it the only privilege that it ever required—the privilege of being justly judged.

W. W. C.

## THE FALLACY OF CLAIRVOYANCE

BY G. H. LEWES

BELIEVERS in mesmerism and its “higher phenomena,” claim our credence for the “facts” which they bring forward declaring themselves to be comparatively indifferent as to the explanations they or you may give of those facts. But every man who has made any scientific researches will know how excessively difficult it often is to recognise a fact—to know it for what it is. The facts of clairvoyance may seem simple and appreciable enough to persons who “believe their eyes,” as they say; but scientific men know the truth of Dr. Cullen’s sarcasm, that people are never so little to be believed as when narrating what they have seen. Nevertheless, it must not be concealed that several scientific men have examined clairvoyance, and recorded their belief in it; the testimonies are of such a character, and the “facts” so abundant, that no cautious mind will hastily dismiss them as unworthy of examination.

I have already, on several occasions, expressed my opinions in this journal on mesmerism; but it may be as well briefly to recapitulate for the simplification of the present paper. For the leading facts of mesmerism, or *coma* the evidence seems to me ample, convincing. For the facts of clairvoyance there seems to me no evidence at all. I throw no sort of doubt on the veracity of the narrators, but in the authenticated cases that have come under my observation I miss the requisite elimination of all sources of error—I see no *crucial instance* to force my conviction. To go no farther than the letters which have recently appeared in these columns under the title of *Magnetic Evenings at Home*—when my friend C. narrated the substance of those letters to me, I at once offered them publicity, though expressing to him my complete *suspension of opinion* with regard to the facts related. C., known to the public as a distinguished writer, and known to me as a man of unimpeachable veracity, was certainly entitled to a most respectful hearing, even of marvels. But the facts did not carry the least persuasion to my mind. I am ready to believe, and publicly to avow my belief, the instant a *crucial instance* has been obtained; and not being in any way committed to anti-clairvoyance, I have sought on all sides for this proof, but sought in vain. If Dr. Haddock of Leeds, whose “Emma” has made such revelations, will undertake to assist me to this proof, I hereby undertake to publish the result in these columns. The challenge is made in an earnest desire to get at the truth, and I hope will be accepted in that spirit.

But to my present object. C. narrates how a card given to the clairvoyante was sufficient for her to tell *when* the card was given *where* it was given, at what kind of entertainment, the persons present there, the ages, sex, and social position of the persons, and their respective seats at the table. That was astounding; but convincing? Not to me. I believed then, and I believe still, that, in point of fact, the gentleman from whom the card was received *told* the clairvoyante all that was necessary for her to tell him—told it, by leading questions, by anxious expressions, by intonations, by the hundred suggestions of voice and manner. He would not accept this explanation, and declared he had been wholly passive. I resolved to try a *crucial instance*. I resolved to test the clairvoyante when she knew nothing, when her operator knew nothing, when no other human being but myself knew what the real case was. If she succeeded in that, my doubts would end.

Accordingly, I wrote a letter, requesting to be told what I had done on the Sunday when that letter was written. To render even a proximate answer more difficult I signed the letter

*S. Lawrence*. The magnetizer, in transmitting her reply remarks: “The selection of your friend for an experiment in clairvoyance is not advantageous. It does not bear upon any particular thing upon which one could direct the attention of the somnabule to rest. It generalizes too much. Had he set about doing some particular thing at a given hour, and required that the clairvoyante should see what it was, I think there would have been better chance. I think it probable, that had Mr. Lawrence done anything remarkable in the course of the day the voyante would have seen it; but all that she has said *he did* is, as you will see, the general quiet Sunday-routine of most men; and supposing that all she has said should be right, people would say it was guess work. I am anxious to know how far she has been right.” He was told she had not been right. But let me give the clairvoyante’s reply. It is her magnetizer who writes:—

I placed the mirror in V’s hands, *willing* her to see ‘Mr. Lawrence.’

As usual in looking into it she went to sleep in a few minutes, and at the end of about twenty or twenty-five minutes she said she saw Mr. Lawrence, and described him as follows:—‘He has the face of a young man about thirty years of age. He is standing before me, looking at me. He looks serious, that is to say, he does not laugh nor even smile. I see him in the mirror, but in the distance, as when one looks through the wrong end of an opera-glass. He is rather tall; his face rather long, and his eyes are grey; he has a dark complexion and hair; a nose rather long and thin—when I say this I mean not large—and an ordinary mouth. It seems that he has a dark-coloured pantaloon, and nothing particular in his general dress.’

Thus far with the mirror. I then put Mr. Lawrence’s letter into V.’s hands, *willing* her to see what Mr. Lawrence did on Sunday 22nd inst. Her answers follow:—‘He went out in the morning after 10 o’clock, and in the morning also he went to church. Besides the letter, he wrote other things. He went to visit some one, a lady, at her own house. A man went also to see him and found him at home. He (Mr. Lawrence) had been also doing something which he was looking at very intently, but I do not know what it was. He has read a good deal. He dined in company with two other persons; he went out in the evening, and was in bed before eleven o’clock.’

Here she said she could see no more, and consequently I awoke her.

Those who know me will judge of the portrait. As to the details of what I did they are almost all incorrect. I had no visitor. I did not go to church. Instead of dining with two persons, I dined with *ten*; and when I add that Déjazet was one of the party, I say enough to indicate that the dinner was not one of “ordinary Sunday routine.” Finally, I did not go out in the evening, nor did I go to bed before eleven.

Although this experiment failed, I was willing to make every allowance to the objection raised by the magnetizer, as to my not having fixed an hour; moreover, I felt that the use of a false signature might have misled the clairvoyante, and certainly might be used as an argument to stultify the experiment. I therefore wrote a letter in my own name, and fixed the day and hour, asking what I did between the hours of half-past twelve and one; what kind of rooms I was in; and what persons, if any, were in those rooms. At last a *crucial instance* was obtained. The hour was fixed, no one was informed of what I had done, and I awaited the result with curiosity, for the series of things done by me at the hour named were such as defied all guessing—at least, in the order of their performance. This was the reply:—

MY DEAR FRIEND,—I write you here V.'s answers to the questions of your friend Mr. Lewes, which I this put to her last night whilst in the magnetic sleep:—‘What has Mr. Lewes been doing in London on Friday last, March 5th, between the hours of half-past twelve and one o'clock of the noon? What sort of room he was in, what he did there, and whom did he see, if anybody?’

*Answer.* ‘Mr. Lewes, he does himself magnetism, and he was, in fact, at that time, viz., between the hours of half-past twelve and one o'clock of the noon, magnetizing somebody—a man, whom he did not put to sleep. The room in which he was magnetizing is large; it has two windows, and one door; there is not much furniture in it; it was not furnished like a drawing-room, and there were quantities of written papers (*beaucoup de papiers*) lying about. There was nobody in the room besides Mr. Lewes himself and the person he was magnetizing.’ Here she said she saw nothing else.

I will first remark on the perfect good faith of the gentleman in question, and his readiness to have the experiment fairly tried. Had he had the slightest misgiving of the truth of clairvoyance, he might easily have evaded my test; but he met it in the frankest spirit of truth-seeking, such as inclines me to believe that there must be something in the facts which a man like this believes. I say so after the entire failure of both my experiments. The reply just quoted is, in no one particular, correct. But although these have failed, I am open to conviction yet. Let me place the conditions and I will abide the result.

In conclusion, let me say that the fallacy of clairvoyance is, I take it, the interpretation of a *dreaming* power as a *seeing* power. The clairvoyante (when not a charlatan) sees the objects of her dreams, and describes them; *what* those objects are depend mainly upon the suggestion of external stimulus, in the shape of words, tones, hesitations, &c. If she sees that a man's hair is black, and you tell her “no,” she corrects herself and will, in course of time, correct herself till she calls it red, if you make her. Once, when I “travelled” with a clairvoyante, *i.e.*, when she accompanied me in thought all over my house, I found that by simple assent to what was wrong, and by feigning an anxious surprise, I could make her say just whatever I anticipated she would say. If she were not duping every one, she was dreaming, and her dreams were swayed by what I said.

## THE INCREDIBLE NOT ALWAYS IMPOSSIBLE

TO G. H. LEWES

MY DEAR LEWES,—I have just read your article on the “Fallacy of Clairvoyance.” Certain portions of it seem to me to call for a rejoinder on my part as the writer of the series of letters, entitled “Magnetic Evenings at Home.”

In the first place, allow me to acknowledge the liberal and temperate spirit in which you have written; and let me further admit, that I consider you, personally, quite justified in your disbelief in clairvoyance by the failure of the personal experiment which you made as a test of its truth. I am not writing to remonstrate with *you*; but to defend myself—or, in other words, to show that, if *your* disbelief is founded on what you term “a crucial instance,” *my* belief is founded on “a crucial instance” too.

Referring to the experiment related by me, in No. 102 of this journal, you endeavour to account for the extraordinary results which I relate as having been obtained, by assuming that the *clairvoyante* was prompted in her answers by “leading questions, by intonations, by the hundred suggestions of voice and manner.” You further admit, that the gentleman who put the questions (not the magnetizer, remember), denied your explanation, and assured you that he had remained perfectly passive. His statement does not appear to have staggered you in your theory. I suppose you doubted whether the person who put the questions was the best witness as to how the questions were put. At any rate, you resolved to “test the *clairvoyante* when she knew nothing, when her operator knew nothing, when no other human being but yourself knew what the real case was.”

It is on this part of your letter that I wish to make one or two comments.

1. I beg to repeat what I have already stated in the “Magnetic Evenings”—*i.e.*, that in the case of clairvoyance now under review, and in the others which I have reported, I took down in writing the questions and answers as they passed, and sent them to press in the *Leader* from the notes thus taken. Is this evidence of the verbal correctness of my report of the questions, or is it not? Do scientific men, like the Dr. Cullen you quote, disbelieve other people’s ears as well as their eyes; and assume that the general public are as incapable of correctly writing down what they hear, as of correctly describing what they see? I can only say for myself, that I wrote down what I heard, exactly *as* I heard it; that whenever a question was repeated (and that was not often) it was repeated in the same words; that no observations of any kind intervened between the questions and answers in the part of the interrogatory which produced the most astounding results; and that no interference, by word, look, or gesture, proceeded from any of the audience—for the simple reason, that none of them knew whether the answers were right or wrong. I know all this just as well as I know that I am writing to you at the present moment.

2. Now let us examine the questions taken down under these circumstances. We will only revert to two of them, in order to save time and space. But, for the sake of the point at issue between us, we will select the two questions which elicited the most marvellous answers, and one of which I know to have been *immediately* followed by the answer. They are these, (I quote from my fifth letter):—“*Q.* How many people were seated at table? *A.* (given directly) Seven. (*right*). *Q.* How many ladies and how many gentlemen? *A.* (after a pause of perfect silence) Four

gentlemen and three ladies. (*right*)." First recapitulating the circumstance, that these questions referred to a breakfast-party at Paris, given while the *clairvoyante* was at a watering-place in Somersetshire; and that we knew, by every human means of knowledge, that no hint of the party, or of any matter connected with it, had been communicated to her, or to any one about her,—first recapitulating this, let me ask whether the two questions quoted are, in any sense of the word, "leading questions?" and whether they are not, on the contrary, studiously confined to the, simplest, baldest form of interrogatory? If you believe that from such questions any guess could be formed by anybody, of what the required answer ought to be, I have been wasting my time in writing this letter; but I know you don't.

Having done with the "leading question" part of your explanation, let us get on to your notion that "anxious expressions, intonations, and the hundred suggestions of voice and manner," had something to do in producing the answers that we heard. If, by "anxious expressions," you mean expressions in *words*, the questions, as they stand, dispose of that hypothesis; if you mean expression by *look*, I should like to know your idea of the "look" which can so eloquently accompany the question, "how many people were seated at table?" as to inform the questioned person (previously in a state of total ignorance on the subject) that the right answer was "seven?" Or, if you would rather, not tell me about the "look," perhaps you will inform me how an "intonation of voice" accompanying the same question, would be able to produce the same effect? I should like to hear you sound that "intonation," some day, after dinner, when we are in a comfortable state for judging of it,—say after a bottle of port apiece. The celebrated Irish echo, which, when a traveller says "How d'ye do?" always replies "Pretty well, thank ye" would be nothing to the "intonation!"

As for my friend's "manner" helping the *clairvoyante*,—I wish you had seen it! He sat with both his hands on the elbows of her chair all the time, certainly "suggesting" nothing in that direction. His face, whenever I looked at it, (and that was pretty often,) always wore the same expression of rigid attention,—nothing more; and he plied his interrogatories with as much coolness and deliberation as if he had been a practised hand. But, let his *manner* have been any manner you like, if—accompanying the two questions I have quoted—it could have helped to betray what the answers ought to be, then, assuredly, one of the easiest stage-directions ever given to an actor, is that renowned direction in the old melodrama:—"Here the miser leans against the side-scene, and *grows generous*."

3. If you have any doubt whether our friend could be quite certain that in selecting the subject for experiment he was testing the *clairvoyante* as you tested her, "when she knew nothing of the case, and when her operator knew nothing," and I may add, when nobody present and nobody not present connected with the magnetizer or his family circle, knew anything either—I refer you first, to our friend himself; and secondly, to the statement of the matter contained in my fifth letter. In both cases you will find the evidence as clear and direct as evidence can possibly be.

And now I have done. If after this you still believe that, because *your* experiment failed, there must necessarily have been some failure in *our* experiment which we could not detect, I must give up all hope of convincing you. But why then did *my* experiment fail? you will say. I again refer you to my letters. You will find failures faithfully reported there; and you will find the magnetizer himself quoted as saying, that what he succeeded in at one time, he did not succeed in at another. He has failed in your case—he succeeded with us: he has succeeded with dozens of other people—he may yet succeed with you, in the manner and under the circumstances which you would imagine least likely to produce success. In the mean time, I write this letter,



(my last) not with any wish to enter into a controversy on the general subject of *clairvoyance*, but simply to vindicate the special experiment to which you have referred in your letter, as a *genuine* experiment; and to try and show you, by clear straightforward evidence, that my friend and myself were not duped by our own imaginations—not misled by any deception of our own senses—and not unmindful of using every possible caution, as well as of raising every fair difficulty in selecting and prosecuting our test of the merits of *clairvoyance*.

W. W. C.

March 29<sup>th</sup>

