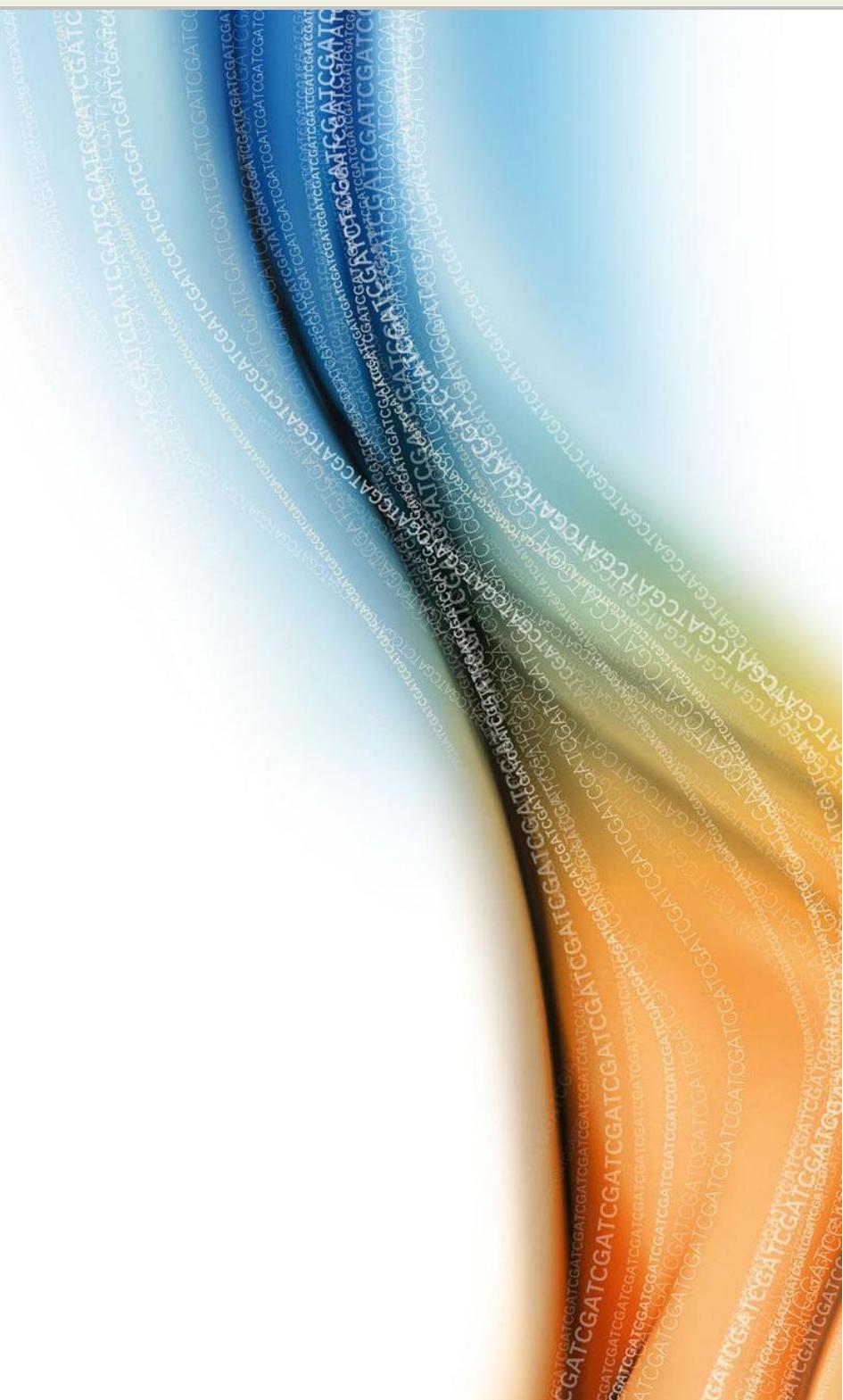


The process of precipitating handwritten letters explained



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OF ALL PHENOMENA PRODUCED BY OCCULT AGENCY in connection with our Society, none have been witnessed by a more extended circle of spectators or more widely known and commented on through recent Theosophical publications than the mysterious production of letters. The phenomenon itself has been so well described in *The Occult World* and elsewhere, that it would be useless to repeat the description here. Our present purpose is more connected with the process than the phenomenon of the mysterious formation of letters. Mr. Sinnett sought for an explanation of the process and elicited the following reply from the revered Mahatma, who corresponds with him:

. . . bear in mind that these my letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated, and then all mistakes corrected . . . I have to think it over, to photograph every word and sentence carefully in my brain, before it can be repeated by precipitation. As the fixing on chemically prepared surfaces of the images formed by the camera requires a previous arrangement within the focus of the object to be represented, for, otherwise — as often found in bad photographs — the legs of the sitter might appear out of all proportion with the head, and so on — so we have to first arrange our sentences and impress every letter to appear on paper in our minds before it becomes fit to be read. For the present, it is *all I* can tell you.¹

¹ [These passages may be found in *The Occult World*, American ed., pp. 143-44. Since the publication of *The Mahatma Letters to A.P. Sinnett*, however, we have additional information on the letters from which these passages have been taken. The first brief sentence is from a letter of Master K.H. received by Sinnett in the latter part of November 1880, apparently in answer to his own letter of November 19th. It is Letter No. V in the published volume, and the actual sentence is on page 19.]

The balance of the text quoted is from Letter No. VI, received by Sinnett at Allahabad about December 10th, 1880. As it has minor variations, as compared with the version in *The Occult World*, we quote below the entire paragraph:

"No — you do not 'write too much.' I am only sorry to have so little time at my disposal; hence — to find myself unable to answer you as speedily as I otherwise would. Of course *I have to read* every word you write: otherwise I would make a fine mess of it. And whether it be through my physical or spiritual eyes the time required for it is practically the same. As much may be said of my replies. For, whether I 'precipitate' or dictate them or write my answers myself, the difference in time saved is very minute. I have to *think* it over, to photograph every word and sentence carefully in my brain before it can be repeated by 'precipitation.' As the fixing on chemically prepared surfaces of the images formed by the camera requires a previous arrangement within the focus of the object to be represented, for otherwise — as often found in bad photographs — the legs of the sitter might appear out of all proportion with the head, and so on, so we have to first arrange our sentences and impress every letter to appear on paper in our minds before it becomes fit to be read. For the present, it is *all I* can tell you. When science will have learned more about the mystery of the *lithophyl* (or lithobiblion) and how the impress of leaves comes originally to take place on stones, then will I be able to make you better understand the process. But you must know and remember one thing: we but follow and *servilely copy nature* in her works."

It is interesting to note that this Letter, No. VI, is precisely the one which gave rise to the so-called "Kiddle Incident." It should be read together with Letter XCIII, pp. 420-29, in the published volume wherein Master K.H. fully explains how this "incident" arose. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

Since the above was written, the Masters have been pleased to permit the veil to be drawn aside a little more, and the *modus operandi* can thus be explained now more fully to the outsider.

Those having even a superficial knowledge of the science of mesmerism know how the thoughts of the mesmeriser, though silently formulated in his mind are instantly transferred to that of the subject. It is not necessary for the operator, if he is sufficiently powerful, to be present near the subject to produce the above result. Some celebrated practitioners in this Science are known to have been able to put their subjects to sleep even from a distance of several days' journey. This known fact will serve us as a guide in comprehending the comparatively unknown subject now under discussion. The work of writing the letters in question is carried on by a sort of psychological telegraphy; the Mahatmas very rarely write their letters in the ordinary way. An electro-magnetic connection, so to say, exists on the psychological plane between a Mahatma and his chelas, one of whom acts as his amanuensis. When the Master wants a letter to be written in this way, he draws the attention of the chela, whom he selects for the task, by causing an astral bell (heard by so many of our Fellows and others) to be rung near him just as the despatching telegraph office signals to the receiving office before wiring the message. The thoughts arising in the mind of the Mahatma are then clothed in word, pronounced mentally, and forced along the astral currents he sends towards the pupil to impinge on the brain of the latter. Thence they are borne by the nerve-currents to the palms of his hand and the tips of his finger, which rest on a piece of magnetically prepared paper. As the thought-waves are thus impressed on the tissue, materials are drawn to it from the ocean of *ākas* (permeating every atom of the sensuous universe), by an occult process, out of place here to describe, and permanent marks are left.

From this it is abundantly clear that the success of such writing as above described depends chiefly upon these things:

- 1 The force and the clearness with which the thoughts are propelled, and
- 2 The freedom of the receiving brain from disturbance of every description.

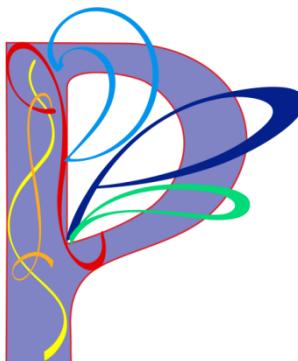
The case with the ordinary electric telegraph is exactly the same. If, for some reason or other the battery supplying the electric power falls below the requisite strength on any telegraph line or there is some derangement in the receiving apparatus, the message transmitted becomes either mutilated or otherwise imperfectly legible. The telegram sent to England by Reuter's agent at Simla on the classification of the opinions of Local Governments on the Criminal Procedure Amendment Bill, which excited so much discussion, gives us a hint as to how inaccuracies might arise in the process of precipitation. Such inaccuracies, in fact, do very often arise as may be gathered from what the Mahatma says in the above extract. "Bear in mind," says He, "that these my letters are not written, but *impressed*, or precipitated, and *then all mistakes corrected*." To turn to the sources of error in the precipitation. Remembering the circumstances under which blunders arise in telegrams, we see that if a Mahatma somehow becomes exhausted or allows his thoughts to wander off during the process or fails to command the requisite intensity in the astral currents along which his thoughts are

projected, or the distracted attention of the pupil produces disturbances in his brain and nerve-centres, the success of the process is very much interfered with.

It is to be very much regretted that the illustrations of the above general principles are not permitted to be published. Otherwise, the present writer is confident that facts in his possession alone would have made this paper far more interesting and instructive. Enough, however, has been disclosed to give the public a clue as to many apparent mysteries in regard to precipitated letters. It ought to satisfy all earnest and sincere inquirers and draw them most strongly to the path of Spiritual progress, which alone can lead to the knowledge of occult phenomena, but it is to be feared that the craving for gross material life is so strong in the western Society of the present day that nothing will come to them amiss so long as it will shade off their eyes from unwelcome truth. They are like Circe's swine

Who not once their foul deformity perceive,¹

but would trample down Ulysses for seeking to restore them their lost manhood.²



¹ [Quoting Milton's *Arcades*, Comus, line 74]

² [The most comprehensive article on the rationale and methods of Precipitation is one from the pen of William Q. Judge entitled "Occult Arts." It was published in three instalments in *The Path*, Vol. VIII, October, November, and December, 1893, and will repay careful study. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

[The above can be found under the title "Insights to the Occult Arts," in the same series. — ED. PHIL.]

Editorial Notes by Boris de Zirkoff

In order to round out the picture, and to provide the serious student with additional information concerning the subject of Precipitation and cognate phenomena, it has been thought advisable to include at this point an article which appeared a couple of months earlier in the pages of *The Theosophist*, under the title of "Some Scientific Questions Answered."

To make the subject-matter of this article intelligible, certain historical facts must be briefly outlined.

Professor John Smith, of Sydney, Australia (whose biographical data will be found in the Bio-Bibliographical Index to this volume), who had joined the Theosophical Society in 1882, and had met H.P. Blavatsky in Bombay, receiving on that occasion a brief communication from the Master, desired to obtain further proof of the occult powers possessed by the Brothers. He had gone to Europe on a visit and wrote to H.P. Blavatsky from Naples, Italy. To quote his own words:

. . . Wishing to get, if possible, additional evidence of the command over the forces of nature possessed by the adepts or brothers who co-operate with Madame Blavatsky, I wrote to that lady from Naples in March last year [1882], and enclosed a brief note to the Brother from whom I had received the former communication. I wished that this might be answered without being opened, and so I got my wife to stitch up the note, which she did most effectually with a double thread of coloured silks, a specimen of which I preserved. The note could not be opened to read without either cutting the paper or undoing the stitching; and if the stitching had been undone, it was impossible by any known means to restore it to its original condition . . .¹

H.P. Blavatsky's reply, dated Bombay, July 23rd, 1882, journeyed to Melbourne, then to London, and finally came into Professor Smith's hands at Cannes, France, on January 18th, 1883. In her reply, H.P. Blavatsky announced the failure of Prof. Smith's experiment, giving as a reason the dislike of the Brothers to anything of the nature of a test, but asking him not to be angry with them on that account. We shall let Prof. Smith speak for himself again:

. . . Following this last remark there was a sarcastic sentence written in red ink, in the same hand as the letter I got last year, to the effect that this was very kind and considerate advice. Inside Madame Blavatsky's letter was a smaller one addressed to me in red ink. The envelope was so curiously folded and gummed that I could find no proper opening, and I had to cut it with a knife. Inside this envelope was the note I had sent to the Brother, absolutely intact. I examined it with great care, using magnifying glasses, and I got some ladies (including my wife who had sewn it up) to examine it, and we all came to the conclusion that the sewing had not been disturbed, nor the paper tampered with in any way. I then slit open the paper along one side and extracted a piece of blue Chinese paper, about six inches by five, folded three times. The paper

¹ *The Harbinger of Light*, Melbourne, August 1883

had a faint picture on it of the nature of a watermark, and some writing in red ink round the margin, beginning thus:

“Your ladies, I see, are unbelievers, and they are better needle-women than our Hindu and Tibetan lasses,” with a few words more, having reference apparently to the letter I got from the same writer in India. I say the “same writer” because the handwriting and signature were identical.¹

Prof. Smith wrote to Madame Blavatsky from Nice, January 31st, 1883 and explained to her what had happened. It is probable that some time later, whether still in Europe or upon his return to Australia, Prof. Smith must have sent the editor a number of questions concerning the rationale of such phenomena, and it is in connection with such questions from him that the following article, with its introductory note, appeared in *The Theosophist*.



¹ *op. cit.*