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The Watseka Wonder

By

Dr. E. Winchester Stevens

Probably the most remarkable case of Spirit Return and Manifestation ever recorded in history. Fully Authenticated by a multitude of witnesses. Over 100,000 copies sold. A girl dead and buried 12 years comes back, identifies herself and lives for 3 months and ten days as the recognized daughter of her parents.

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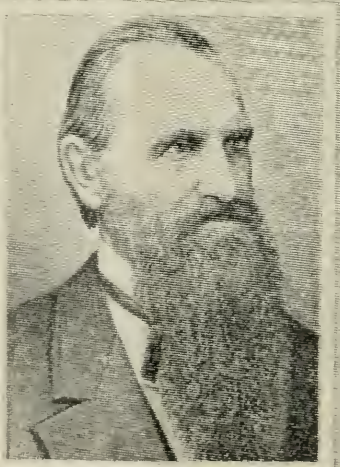
MARY ROFF

LURANCY VENNUM



E. W. STEVENS, M. D.

IN APPRECIATION

After a life devoted wholly to the service of his fellowkind, Winchester Stevens, the narrator of these phenomena, passed to the Summerland December 9, 1885, at the age of sixty-three years.

Honest and candid, kindly of heart and pure in thought, of great beneficence, and of rare skill in his profession, enriched by years of experience, the good deeds and the influence of Dr. Stevens are still sensed in the common heart of the world, in lives made better.

"The good that men do lives after them."

Illinois Historical Survey

INTRODUCTION

By J. M. Peebles, M.D., M.A.

Not only is this an age of investigation, research and original discoveries, but it is an age of skepticism and persistent doubt touching all such realities as relate to the invisible. The sense perceptions are far more to the front than the aspirational, uplooking, spiritual faculties. Sad to say, the masses live more in the back and selfish side brains than in the coronal soul-parlors open to spiritual visitants and angelic impressions.

Had not the inspirational and erudite B. F. Austin, A.M., D.D., of Rochester, N. Y., been psychically directed to the preservation of these remarkable phenomena occurring in the Roff family, Watseka, Ill., they would, no doubt, have been relegated to the hazy dream-land of myth, companion of the martyred Man of Nazareth, the Swiss William Tell, the Indian Pocohontas, Joan of Arc and others noted for strange, astounding phenomena. There are those in our midst who will not only question the knowledge of their peers, but they will actually invent miracles to get rid of the plain truth—a truth testified to by the wisdom of the ages: that the spirits of our dead are alive, and that under given conditions they can not only bring us living messages, but as in the case of Mary Roff, they can temporarily inhabit another body, and dwell for a time for a special purpose in the earthly home of her friends, to their almost unbounded joy.

Through the medical treatment of Mr. Roff, it was my privilege to not only visit Watseka, Ill., but to become personally acquainted with the Roff family—a family not only highly respected, but moving in what was denominated the "first society." And further, I was honored by knowing personally

Dr. E. W. Stevens, a most excellent and cultured gentleman, gifted with strong magnetic power; which power was intensified by a smypathizing circle of influencing spirits. As is well known, this Dr. Stevens was a Spiritualist and a conscientious and deeply religious man, honored by all who personally knew him.

The remarkable facts related in this book, "The Watseka Wonder," embodying the psychic relations between Lurancy and Mary, were so new that many Spiritualists held it was impossoble for one spirit to enter into the vacated body of a living mortal and manifest through it. And there are certain Spiritualistic laggards to this day, who talk of the "impossible" upon this and kindred matters.

But can a spirit in the spiritual spheres, under any conditions, enter into the vacated body of a living mortal and manifest through the forty-two phrenological brain organs, the sinews, muscles and nerves—was this ever done?

What Is The Spirit?

Poets and prophets are ever in advance of the priests. This was true in Hebraic times, and it is true today. That old prophet who compiled the Book of Proverbs exclaimed in an inspirational moment: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord." And it is the office-work of the candle, or lamp, to light the room and its furniture. So the conscious spirit, symbolized by the candle-lights, manifests through the forty-two brain organs, through fleshly body of muscles, sinews, nerves. Remember that the body is a bit of transitory machinery, conceived and built up by the conscious intelligent spirit; but this spirit-builder in the process of construction did not so build and fixedly mortise itself into the body that it could escape only through death. This would be a living, suicid-

al burial. No; this conscious spirit is not necessarily wedged and fixed in a few feet of mortality. It can in dreams and visions temporarily leave the body, visiting different parts of this planet, Mars and the stars that glitter and shimmer above us. And so, Lurancy Vennum having through wise guides left her body, Mary, of the Roff family, actually left the spiritual world and, descending, dwelt for a time in the body of Lurancy, taking it to her former home and enjoying the sweets of love, and friendship, and family relations. She virtually lived several months in two worlds, in the earth and in the spirit land; vibrating between, enjoying both, and receiving lessons in the meantime from the angels that delight to do the Father's will.

There was no "double consciousness" in this case. There is in no case. The consciousness is a unit. Such phrases as "duplex consciousness," "sevenfold personalities," and the "super-conscious subliminal," while explaining nothing, confuse and darken speech.

Once I asked a very exalted spirit intelligence these questions:

Can you, while entrancing this medium, see the real spirit?
No, I can not. I only sense and see the spiritual body.

When entrancing a mortal in the body, do you cause the owner of the body to vacate it?
Not necessarily; entrancement is little more than mesmeric influence.

Can you really see—can you describe the unfleshed, unclothed spirit of this body?
I cannot. The most that I can say through this instrument, is that it seems to be a distinct entity, looking like a fiery diamond —a brilliant point of dazzling brightness shining through a very ethereal white fluid, connected in some way, sympathetically and vibratorially, with the body that it owns.*

*See this matter more fully explained on page 45 of "The Pathway of the Human Spirit" (Peebles): Austin Publishing Co., Los Angeles, California.

How little the wisest of us know of the mighty power of the spirit! In fact, all power is spirit power, invisible and ever-persisting; and the witnessing of this unseen power—these mighty phenomenal forces as were manifest for months in the Roff family—demonstrates the certainty of a future life, carrying with it the memories and the purer, unselfish loves of this life.

These remarkable and unquestionably authenticated phenomena transpiring in the families of the Vennums and Roffs, were not supernatural: but natural to that higher plane of spiritual consciousness. Blessed be Spiritualism! Its star of progress is in the ascendant. Its sun will never set. And as relating to the great hereafter, it will be said, sooner or later, by all sane persons: "Gone—gone in appearance only to join

> The choir invisible
> Of those immortal dead who live again
> In minds made better by their presence."

Spiritualism, with its living Father-Mother in Heaven; its beautiful brotherhood of man; its present and perpetual ministry of spirits; its paternal chastisements for wrong-doing; its open heart towards all reforms; its sweet charity for human misfortunes; its encouraging, inspiring words to the sick; its comforting voice to the sad-hearted mourner, and its musical whisperings of love and precious messages from those who have crossed the crystal river, putting on immortality—summering in the eternal verdure and bloom of the elysian fields of the blest, where souls never lapse nor suns ever set—is of God. I repeat, this Spiritualism is of God. It has come to stay, and it will stay and stand forever.
Battle Creek, Mich.

EDITORIAL NOTE

In no one line of human activity today is the progress of humanity more marked than in the increased interest of the people in matters pertaining to our mental and spiritual powers, and their unfoldment. This is a most hopeful sign of the times, and betokens the fact that, while outwardly we are much given over to materialism, that in our newer and real life we are mounting upward towards "nobler things."

A thousand signs of the times indicate the significant fact that, despite the mad rush for money and power of our commercial and political life, a great spiritual hunger has come upon the soul of humanity, and one that no amount of material food can ever satiate. We have the authority of the great Nazarene teacher for saying that spiritual hunger is a blessing, and that it must and will find ample satisfaction.

No better indicator of public opinion and of the trend of thought and desire of the people can be found, than the public press; and this indicates a rapidly increasing interest in all matters of psychic research and questions regarding man's present and future unfoldment. The leading dailies of the great cities are now vying with one another in attempts to supply the ever-increasing demand for authentic facts and incidents bearing on the intercommunion of the two worlds. The great mass of attested incidents collected by the Society for Psychical Research has—as all must see—a direct relation to the Problem of Immortality. The great magazines—a few years since rigidly closed to all occult matters—are now finding it to their interest to supply their readers with the latest and best in psychic research. And the end is not yet.

No more fiitting time could have been chosen, therefore, for bringing out a new and enlarged edition of the "Watseka Wonder," a story of actual, yet most wonderful happenings in Watseka, Illinois, U. S. A., over fifty years ago, which is attested by such a multiude of credible witnesses—some of them living today—that to doubt the story is to impeach all human testimony.

The facts have been inquired into by many leading psychologists and psychic researchers, including the late Dr. Richard Hodgson, with but one result: a ready acknowledgment of the authentic character of the story. If the story be true, earth and heaven are not far separated; mortals and spirits do communicate, and the principal contentions of the Spiritual Philosophy are indisputably established.

We send forth the new edition with an Introduction by the venerable Dr. James M. Peebles of Battle Creek, Mich., who knew the chief characters of the story, and Reminiscences of the three months' visit of Mary Roff, in spirit, to the home of her people in the borrowed body of Lurancy Vennum, by Mrs. H. H. Alter, of Watseka, Ill., her sister, with the hope that it may interest and instruct humanity and help to solve the problem: "If a man die shall he live again?"

The Publishers.

THE WATSEKA WONDER

Facts are the basis of philosophy;
Philosophy the harmony of facts
Seen in their right relations.—T. L. Harris.

*** * * The springing up of Spiritualism and Theosophy on grounds burned over by the fires of the orthodox hell, and right in the teeth of the east winds that blow from the cheerless seas of doubt, testify to the hunger of men for some assurance that the loved and departed are not also lost. Rev. M. J. Savage, in a sermon on "Immortality and Modern Thought," delivered at the Saratoga Convention of Unitarians, September, 1886.**

*** * * There may be in what is called Spiritualism, and the mind cure, and many other new developments, the germs of a something higher; and we should be willing for the new theory to take its place, and under the great laws of life, to work out its destiny; and not, Pharaoh-like, seek to "kill the young child." It may be that in the first appearances of many of these new ideas, that they are crude, and that those who receive them and advocate them do not themselves understand all their real meaning... * * * Let us rejoice that the continuity of life seems to some to be a demonstrated fact; and that to others there seems to be possible a higher law of mental healing; and that in one way and another, and by all ways the truth is coming to our world, and our world is coming to the truth. * * * —H. W. Thomas, D. D., in "Religio-Philosophical Journal," (for December 25, 1886).**

Rationally studied and interpreted, unmixed with delusions self-generated or imposed by others, Spiritualism is the one safeguard against all superstitions. It shows that the unseen world is as much within the sphere of universal nature as our own; it is the solvent of all mysteries that have perplexed philosophers.—Epes Sargent, in "Scientific Basis of Spiritualism."

Watseka, Illinois, has been swept by a tidal wave of excitement, on account of the presumed insanity of one Lurancy Vennum, a young girl belonging to an unpretentious family in the suburbs of the city. Her insanity, as it was thought to be, dates from July 11, A. D. 1877; and the remarkable phenomena continued until her perfect restoration through the aid of friendly Spiritualists and spirits, on May 21, 1878.

Thus, for ten months and ten days, did these phenomena continue to excite and agitate the people.

The following is a true narrative, and as full as the facts collected from the parents and relatives of the parties named herein and observations made by the writer, will warrant.

Thomas J. Vennum was born May 7, 1832, in Washington Co., Penn.; Lurinda J. Smith (his wife), was born October 14, 1837, in St. Joseph Co., Ind. They were married in Fayette Co., Iowa, December 2, 1855.

Mary Lurancy Vennum, daughter of the above named Thomas and Lurinda J. Vennum, was born April 16, 1864, in Midford township seven miles south of Watseka.

The family moved to Iowa, July 12, 1864, and returned to the vicinity eight miles from Watseka, in October, 1865. In August, 1866, they removed to Milford, twelve miles south of Watseka, and remanied there till March 1, 1870; then moved out two and one half miles from Milford until April 1, 1871, when they moved into Watseka, locating about forty rods from the residence of A. B. Roff, the spirit daughter of whom, according to all the facts and representations every way tested, is the principal character in this remarkable narrative. The family remained at this place during the summer. The only acquaintance ever had been between the two families during the season, was simply one brief call of Mrs. Roff, for a few minutes, on Mrs. Vennum, which call was never returned; and a formal speaking acquaintance between the two gentlemen. Since 1871, the Vennum family had lived entirely away from the vicinity of Mr. Roff's, and never nearer than now, on extreme opposite limits of the city.

"Rancy," as she was familiarly called, had never been sick, save a light run of measles in 1873. A few days before the following incidents took place, she said to her family: "There were persons in my room last night, and they called 'Rancy! Rancy!!' and I felt their breath on my face." The very next night she arose from her bed, saying that she could not sleep, that every time she tried to sleep persons

came and called "Rancy! Rancy!!" to her. Her mother went to bed with her, after which she rested and slept the rest of the night.

On the eleventh day of July, 1877, Lurancy had been sewing carpet a part of the afternoon, when at about six o'clock she laid by her work, as her mother said: "Lurancy, you had better commence getting supper." The girl replied: "Ma, I feel bad; I feel so queer," and placing her hand on her left breast, she immediately went into what seemed like a fit, falling heavily on the floor, lying apparently dead, every muscle becoming suddenly rigid. Thus she lay five hours. On returning to consciousness she had said she felt "very strange and queer." The remainder of the night she rested well. The next day the rigid state returned, and passing beyond the rigidity, her mind took cognizance of two states of being at the same time. Lying as if dead, she spoke freely, telling the family what persons and spirits she could see, describing them and calling some of them by name. Among those mentioned were her sister and brother, for she exclaimed, Oh, mother1 can't you see little Laura and Bertie? They are so beautiful!" etc., etc. Bertie died when Lurancy was but three years old.

She had many of these trances, describing heaven and the spirits, or the angels as she called them. Sometime in September she became free from them and seemed to the family to be quite well again.

On the twenty-seventh day of November, 1877, she was attacked with a most violent pain in her stomach, some five or six times a day; for two weeks she had the most excruciating pains. In these painful paroxysms, she would double herself back until her head and feet actually touched. At the end of two weeks, or about the eleventh of December, in these distressed attacks, she became unconscious

and passed into a queer trance, and, as at former times, would describe heaven and spirits, often calling them angels.

From this time on until the first of February, 1878, she would have these trances and sometimes a seemingly real obsession, from three to eight and sometimes as many as twelve times a day, lasting from one to eight hours, occasionally passing into that state of ecstasy , when as Lurancy, she claimed to be in heaven.

During the time recorded, up to about the middle of January, 1878, she had been under the care of Dr. L. N. Pitwood in the summer and Dr. Jewett during the winter. These M. D.'s are both eminent allopathic practitioners, and residents of Watseka. Mrs. Allison, Mrs. Jolly and other relatives and friends believed her insane. The Rev. B. M. Baker, the Methodist minister in charge at Watseka wrote to the insane asylum to ascertain if the girl could be received there. It seemed to be the general feeling among all the friends save the parents and a few who were only sympathetic observers and thinkers, that the girl should go to the asylum.

There were in the City of Watseka at this time, persons who had more humanity than bigotry; persons who believe, in the language of a Spiritualist lecturer, that "disease has a dynamic or spiritual origin;" persons claiming to understand something of the occult forces and phenomena of mind, and the diseases incident to a false conception of, and opposition to, its potencies; persons who believe God being "no respecter of persons" and "without variableness or shadow of turning," that power exists today, as in the days of the Nazarene, to cast out devils. Among this class were Asa B. Roff and his wife, who, with others, became thoroughly aroused to the importance of arresting the movement, to take a lovely child from the

bosom of an affectionate family, to imprison her among maniacs, to be ruled and cared for by ignorant and bigoted strangers, who know less of catalepsy than a blind materialist does of immortality. These good people ventured in the most gentle and Christian spirit, to counsel with the parents and advise other treatment, different from any that had been administered.

These earnest, self-sacrificing souls, imbued with the conviction that uncultivated spirits had something to do with the case, plead with the many friends of the child to withold her from the asylum until it could be better shown whether the girl was really insane or her unfortunate condition might be attributable to foreign minds.

Mr. Roff after much persuation, obtained the consent of the girl's father, to visit her and bring with him Dr. E. W. Stevens, of Janesville, Wis., to investigate the case. Dr. Stevens, who, for several months, at frequent intervals, had been in the city and a silent listener to the scoffs and scandals thrown out towards the Spiritualists on account of their opinions regarding the case, and the universal foment of mind in the city over it, was formally invited by Mr. Vennum, through Mr. Roff to visit the family.

On the afternoon of January 31 1878, the two gentlemen repaired to Mr. Vennum's residence, a little out of the city. Dr. Stevens, an entire stranger to the family, was introduced by Mr. Roff at four o'clock p. m.; no other persons present but the family. The girl sat near the stove, in a common chair, her elbows on her knees, her hands under her chin, feet curled up on the chair, eyes staring, looking every way like an "old hag." She sat for a time in silence, until Dr. Stevens moved his chair, when she savagely warned him not to come nearer. She appeared sullen and crabbed, calling her fath-

er "Old Black Dick," and her mother "Old Granny." She refused to be touched, even to shake hands, and was reticent and sullen with all save the doctor, with whom she entered freely into conversation, giving her reasons for doing so; she said he was a Spiritual doctor and would understand her.

When he asked her name she quickly replied:
"Katrina Hogan."
"How old?"
"Sixty-three years."
"Where from?"
"Germany."
"How long ago?"
"Three days."
"How did you come?"
"Through the air."
"How long will you stay?"
"Three weeks."

After this system of conversation had proceeded for some time, she modified her manner very much, appearing to be a little penitent and confidential, and said she would be honest and tell the doctor her real name. She was not a woman; and her real name was Willie. On being asked what was her father's name, she replied, "Peter Canning," and her own name was Willie Canning, a young man; ran away from home, got into difficulty, changed his name several times and finally lost his life and was now here because he "wanted to be," etc. She wearied with answering questions and giving details. Then she turned upon the doctor with a perfect shower of questions, such as, "What is your name? Where do you live? Are you married? How many children? How many boys? How many girls? What is your occupation? What kind of a doctor? What did you come to Watseka for? Have you ever been at the South Pole? North Pole? Europe? Australia? Egypt?

Ceylon? Benares? Sandwich Islands?" and by a long series of questions evinced a knowledge of geography. She next inquired after the doctor's habits and morals by questions like the following: "Do you lie? get drunk? steal? swear? use tobacco? tea? coffee? Do you go to church? pray?" etc., etc. She then asked to have the same questions put to Mr. Roff. She declined to ask them direct, herself, but through the doctor. They must also be repeated through him to Mr. Vennum; making the while, some very unpleasant retorts.

When at about half-past five o'clock, p. m., the visitors arose to depart, she also arose, flung up her hands and fell upon the floor, straight, stiff and rigid, as sensitives fall with the "power" in Methodist revival meetings; and believing it to be of the same nature, the doctor took occasion to prove it, as he has done on those smitten with the "power," by controlling body and mind and restoring them to a normal and rational state, despite the "power."

The visitors being again seated, he took her hands as they were held straight upward, like iron bars, and by magnetic action soon had the body under perfect control and through the laws of Spiritual science was soon in full and free communication with the sane and happy mind of Lurancy Vennum herself, who conversed with the grace and sweetness of an angel, declaring herself to be in heaven.

In this condition she answered the doctor's questions with reference to herself, her seemingly insane condition and the influences that controlled her, with great rationality and understanding. She regretted to have such evil controls around her. She said she knew the evil spirit calling itself Katrina and Willie and others. The doctor continued to suggest to her mind, things to prepare the way for a change of influences, by enlightening and instructing her now while her mind was

clear and in this superior condition, and then asked her, if she must be controlled, if it would not be better, if it were possible, to have a higher, purer, happier, and more intelligent or rational control. She said she would rather, if it could be so. Then on being advised, she looked about and inquired of those she saw, and described, and named, to find some one who would prevent the cruel and insane ones from returning to annoy her and the family. She soon said: "There are a great many spirits here who would be glad to come," and she again proceeded to give names and descriptions of persons long since deceased; some that she had never known, but were known by older persons present. But, she said, there is one the angels desire should come, and she wants to come. On being asked if she knew who it was, she said: "Her name is Mary Roff." Mr. Roff being present, said: "That is my daughter; Mary Roff is my girl. Why, she has been in heaven twelve years. Yes, let her came, we'll be glad to have her come." Mr. Roff assured Lurancy that Mary was good and intelligent and would help her all she could; stating further that Mary used to be subject to conditions like herself. Lurancy, after due deliberation and counsel with spirits, said that Mary would take the place of the former wild and unreasonable influence. Mr. Roff said to her: "Have your mother bring you to my house and Mary will be likely to come along, and a mutual benefit may be derived from our former experience with Mary." Thus reaching the sane mind of the girl and through her, the sane minds of a better class of spirits, a contract or agreement was made, to be kept sacred by the angels in heaven and heaven's agents in the flesh, by which a mortal body was to be restored to health; a spirit, unfortunate in earth-life, with twelve years' experience in spirit-life, to have an amended earthly

experience, a child to be spiritualized and moulded into a fine medium, and an unbelieving and scoffing city to be confounded, and the greatest truth the world has ever sought, established beyond doubt or cavil. How far the contract has ever been kept by the spirits and their faithful co-laborers here, the sequel will show.

The object of the visit now being attained, Dr. Stevens asked:

"How long do you want to stay in heaven?"

She answered.

"Always, sir."

"But you will come back for the sake of your friends?"

"Yes, sir."

"When will you come back?"

"At twelve o'clock."

"But the family will want rest. Can't you come sooner?"

"Yes, sir, I can."

"How soon can you come?"

"At nine o'clock, sir."

"Will you come at nine?"

"I will."

And so she did.

After nearly three hours of careful investigations, conversation, and the application of the laws of Spiritual science and harmony, Mr, Roff and the doctor retired, leaving the family satisfied that a new foundation of light and source of help had been reached. A new beam of truth reached and touched the hearts of the sorrowing family—and to use the language of Mary Roff, "Dr. Stevens opened the gate for her," and for the inflowing of light where before was darkness.

On the following morning, Friday, February first, Mr. Vennum called at the office of Mr. Roff and informed him that the girl claimed to be Mary

Roff and wanted to go home. To use Mr. Vennum's wards: "She seems like a child real homesick, wanting to see her pa and ma and her brothers."

It now became necessary in the relation of this narrative to give a brief sketch of the life of Mary Roff.

Mary Roff, daughter of Asa D. and Ann Roff, was born on the eighth day of October, 1846, in Warren Co., Ind. The family moved in November of the same year to Williamsport, Ind., thence in September, 1847, to Middleport, Ill., where they resided till June, 1857, when they removed to Victoria, Texas, in search of relief for a sick child. In March, 1858, they returned to Gilman and remained there and at Onarga, Ill., till the building of the Toledo, Poeria and Warsaw Railroad, when they returned to Middleport, November 8, 1859, and built the first house in the new town of South Middleport which is now part of the City of Watseka, where they still reside.

In the spring of 1847, when about six months old, Mary was taken sick and had a fit, in which she remained several hours. After the fit, she became conscious and lay several days without the family having much hope of her recovery. In two or three weeks she seemed to have entirely recovered. A few weeks later she acted, on one occasion, like a child going into a fit. The pupils of her eyes dilated, the muscles slightly twitched; but it only lasted a few moments. From the age of about six months, she had these spells as described, once in from three to five weeks, all the time increasing in force and violence, until her tenth year, when they proved to be real fits, having from one to three and sometimes four or five of them within a period of three or four days, when they would cease, and she would enjoy good health until the next period approached. At these times, she for a few days would

seem sad and despondent, in which mood she would sing and play the most solemn music (for with all the rest of her studies, in which she was considered well advanced, she had learned music), and almost always would sing that beautiful song, "We Are Coming, Sister Mary," which was a favorite with her.

When she was fifteen years old, and the violence of the fits had increased, the parents said they could see her mind was affected during the melancholy periods prior to the fits. Dr. Jesse Bennett, now residing at Sparta, Wis., and Dr. Franklin Blades, now Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit of Illinois, and resident of Watseka, were employed to attend her. Dr. N. S. Davis, of Chicago, and several other prominent physicians, had examined her. They kept her in the water cure at Peoria, Ill., under the care of Dr. Nevins, for eighten months, but all to no purpose.

In the summer of 1864 she seemed to have almost a mania for bleeding herself for the relief, as she said, "of the lump of pain in the head." Drs. Fowler, Secrets and Pitwood were called and applied leeches. She would apply them herself to her temples, and liked them treating them like little pets, until she seemed sound and well.

On Saturday morning, July 16, 1864, in one of her despondent moods, she secretly took a knife with her to the back yard, and cut her arm terribly, until bleeding excessively, she fainted. This occured about nine o'clock a. m. She remained unconscious till two o'clock p. m., when she became a raving maniac of the most violent kind, in which condition she remained five days and nights, requiring almost constantly the services of five of the most able bodied men to hold her on the bed, although her weight was only about one hundred pounds, and she had lost nearly all her blood.

When she ceased raving, she looked and acted quite natural and well, and could do everything she desired as readily and properly as at any time in her life. Yet she seemed to know no one, and could not recognize the presence of persons at all, although the house was nearly filled with people night and day. She had no sense whatever of sight, feeling or hearing in a natural way, as was proved by every test that could be applied. She could read blindfolded, and do everything as readily as when in health by her natural sight. She would dress, stand before the glass, open and search drawers, pick up loose pins, do any and all things readily and without annoyance, under heavy blindfoldings.

Near the time, in 1864, when she cut her arm, while blindfolded she took Dr. Trall's encyclopedia, turned to the index, traced the column till she came to the word "blood," then turned to the page indicated and read the subject through. On another occasion she took a box of her letters received from her friends, and sat down, heavily blindfolded by critical, intelligent, investigating gentlemen, examined and read them without error or hesitancy. When Rev. J. H. Rhea, Editor A. J. Smith, Mr. Roff and others misplaced and promiscuously arranged some of their own letters with Mary's she at once proceeded to correctly draw out the intruded letters and examine them. If wrong side up she would quickly turn them, and read the address thereon, and throw violently away every letter not her own; and re-arrange twenty or thirty letters in the order she desired to have them. Rev. J. H. Rhea was the Methodist minister in charge at the time; A. G. Smith was editor of the Iroquois County "Republican," now editor of the Danville (Ill.) "Times." She was also investigated by all the prominent citizens of Watseka at that time.

With the physicians her peculiar state or condition was called catalepsy. With the clergy it was one of the mysteries of God's providence, with which we should have little to do. With editors, who are obliged to be wise or silent, it was fits or some unaccountable phenomenon. All, with untiring effort, tried to solve the mystery and learn what it was that produced such strange and wonderful manifestations. The editor of the Danville "Times," in a recent issue writes:

Now as to Mary Roff, it was our fortune to know the sweet girl, who was herself a cataleptic, and who died twelve years ago. Disease dethroned her reason and maddened her brain until she sought her own and others' lives, and the modest young lady was transformed into a screaming maniac. She had periods of exemption from raving, and thus her aberrant mind conceived fancies of the queerest hue, creating the most impossible beings for associates, and conversing with them, she maintained her own side of the conversation in a usual tone of voice, while imagination supplied her created associates with language and intelligence. When in this condition, her father and mother asserted the discovery that Mary could read a book with its lids closed, and they desired us to test the correctness of what they claimed. We therefore took from our side pocket a letter inclosed in an envelope, and holding it before her bandaged eyes, said to her, 'Mary, read the signature to that letter.' Immediately the proper name was pronounced.

After remaining in the clairvoyant state above related for three or four days, she came again to her normal condition and in good health as she usually was, except the fits. From this time she continued as she had been prior to cutting her arm. Her fits increased, and her parents were advised to place her in the insane asylem.

On July 5 1845, while her parents were at Peoria, Ill., on a three days' visit, she ate a hearty breakfast, and soon thereafter lay down on her bed, and in her usual health went to sleep. In a few minutes she was heard to scream, as was usual on taking a fit. On approaching her bedside, they found her in a fit, and in a few moments she expired.

We now return and take up the original narrative where we left it, dating February 1, 1878, when it was first seen that Mary Roff had control of Lurancy's body, and teasing to go home. Could it be possible the gulf of death had been bridged! the gates of heaven left open? Had Mary, like Moses and Elias, returned to a transfiguration? Or, like the spirit of "one of the prophets," had she come with revelation to the grotto of darkness in this benighted Patmos? Were the unnumbered facts of scriptural ages repeating themselves now? Can we say with Job, "A spirit passed before my face?" Ezekiel and Isaiah talked with the departed, Saul conversed with Samuel, Paul and the shepherds with spirits in the air, and can we talk with Mary? And the friends of the family went up to see, and answered, "Yes!"

From the wild, angry, ungovernable girl, to be kept only by lock and key, or the most distressing watch-care of almost frantic parents; or the rigid, corpse-like cataleptic, as believed, the girl has now become mild, docile, polite and timid, knowing none of the family, but constantly pleading to go home. The best wisdom of the family was used to convince her that she was at home, and must remain. Weeping, she would not be pacified, and only found contentment in going back to heaven, as she said, for short visits.

About a week after she took control of the body, Mrs. A. B. Roff and her daughter, Mrs. Minerva Alter, Mary's sister, hearing of the remarkable change, went to see the girl. As they came in sight, far down the street, Mary, looking out of the window, exclaimed exultingly, "There comes my ma and sister Nervie!" the name by which Mary used to call Mrs. Alter in girlhood. As they came into the house, she caught them around the necks, wept and cried for joy, and seemed so happy to meet

them. From this time on she seemed more homesick than before. At times she seemed almost frantic to go home. Finally some friends of the family insisted on their sending her to Mr. Roff's, which they reluctantly consented to do; reluctantly because the girl was so much trouble and care, as she had been all winter; so much so that Mrs. Vennum was nearly prostrated, and could not have survived the care and anxiety many months longer, under the same state of affairs. They felt that it would be an imposition to send the girl to be cared for by strangers, and especially so by Mrs. Roff, as she was not able to take charge of and care for a girl that made so much trouble as this one had for Mrs. Vennum.

Mr. and Mrs. Roff, with their hearts ever full of the milk of human kindness, more ready to forgive than to censure, and braving the sneers and taunting innuendoes of an uneducated bigotry, with no other motive but one of mercy and kindness, opened their doors and hearts to receive the unfortunate girl with her new control, having no hope or desire for reward but in the sense of a just sympathy for right and truth. They remembered the precept, "Forget not to entertain strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels."

On the eleventh day of February, 1878, they sent the girl to Mr. Roff's, where she met her "pa and ma," and each member of the family, with the most gratifying expressions of love and affection, by words and embraces. On being asked how long she would stay, she said, "The angels will let me stay till sometime in May;" and she made it her home there till May twenty-first three months and ten days, a happy contented daughter and sister in a borrowed body.

After the girl was at Mr. Roff's, the Rev. Mr. Baker said to Mr. Vennum, "I think you will see

the time when you will wish you had sent her to the asylum." Mrs. Jolly said if she ever came home she would be more thouble than ever. Another relative, more religious than humane, said, "I would sooner follow a girl of mine to the grave than have her go to Roff's and be made a Spiritualist." Dr. Jewett called it catalepsy number two, which is as definite and convenient in explanation of this case as is "humbug" in explanation of any newly discovered scientific truth unacceptable to popular ignorance. He said: "Humor her whims and she will get well." Some prudent, two faced people would say, with a non-committal air, "What strange freaks!" Others, with an exalted opinion of their wonderful perceptions, would say, "It is all put on," etc., etc. Yet none of the persons expressing such opinions had ever called to see the girl, or derived any information from those in charge of her.

The girl now in her new home, seemed perfectly happy and content, knowing every person and everything that Mary knew when in her original body, twelve years to twenty-five years ago, recognizing and calling by name those who were friends and neighbors of the family from 1852 to 1865, when Mary died, calling attention to scores, yes, hundreds of incidents that transpired during her natural life. During all the period of her sojourn at Mr. Roff's she had no knowledge of, and did not recognize any of Mr. Vennum's family or neighbors, yet Mr. and Mrs. Vennum and their children visited her and Mr. Roff's people, she being introduced to them as to any strangers. After frequent visits, and hearing them often and favorably spoken of, she learned to love them as acquaintances, and visited them with Mrs. Roff three times. From day to day she appeared natural, easy, affable and industrious, attending diligently and faithfully to her

household duties, assisting in the general work of the family as a faithful, prudent daughter might be supposed to do, singing, reading or conversing as opportunity offered, upon all matters of private or general interest to the family.

Three days after she came to Mr. Roff's, while looking at him and seeming to have been in a sort of retrospective revery, she asked, "Pa, who was it that used to say 'confound it?' " and laughing very heartily when she saw that he understood it to be himself, that being a common expression of his in the time of her girlhood, twelve years ago.

One day she met an old friend and neighbor of Mr. Roff, who was a widow when Mary was a girl at home. Some years since the lady married a Mr. Wagoner, with whom she yet lives. But when she met Mrs. Wagoner she clasped her around the neck, and said, "O Mary Lord, you look so very natural, and have changed the least of any one I have seen since I came back." Mrs. Lord was in no way related to the Vennum family, and lived close by them, but Mary could only call her by the name by which she knew her fifteen years ago and could not seem to realize that she was married. Mrs. Lord lived just across the street from Mr. Roff's for several years, prior and up to within a few months of Mary's death; both being memebrs of the same Methodist church, they were very intimate.

Some days after Mary was settled in her new home, Mrs. Parker, who lived neighbor to the Roff's in Middleport in 1852, and next door to them in Watseka in 1860, came in with her daughter-in-law, Nellie Parker. Mary immediately recognized both of the ladies, calling Mrs. Parker "Auntie Parker," and the other "Nellie," as in the acquaintance of eighteen years ago. In conversation with Mrs. Parker, Mary asked, "Do you remember how Nervie and I used to come to your house and sing?"

Mrs. Parker says that it was the first allusion made to that matter, nothing having been said by any one on that subject, and says that Mary and Minerva used to come to their house and sit and sing, "Mary had a little lamb," etc. Mrs. Dr. Alter (Minerva) says she remembers it well. This was when Mr. Roff kept the postoffice, and could not have been later than 1852, and twelve years before Lurancy was born.

One evening in the latter part of March, Mr. Roff was sitting in the room waiting for tea, and reading the paper, Mary being out in the yard. He asked Mrs. Roff if she could find a certain velvet headdress that Mary used to wear the last year before she died. If so, to lay it on the stand and say nothing about it, to see if Mary would recognize it. Mrs. Roff readily found and laid it on the stand. The girl soon came in and immediately exclaimed as she approached the stand: "Oh, there is my head-dress I wore when my hair was short!" She then asked "Ma where is my box of letters? Have you got them yet?" Mrs Roff replied, "Yes, Mary, I have some of them." She at once got the box with many letters in it. As Mary began to examine them she said, "Oh, Ma, here is a collar I tatted! Ma, why did you not show to me my letters and things before?" The collar had been preserved among the relics of the lamented child as one of the beautiful things her fingers had wrought before Lurancy was born; and so Mary continually recognized every little incident of her girlhood.

It will be remembered that the family moved to Texas in 1857. Mr. Roff asked Mary if she remembered moving to Texas or anything about it. "Yes, pa, and I remember crossing Red River and of seeing a great many Indians, and I remember Mrs. Reeder's girls, who were in our company." And thus she from time to time made first mention

of things that transpired thirteen to twenty-five years ago. On the nineteenth of February Mr. Roff addressed the writer as follows:

"You know how we took the poor, dear girl Lurancy (Mary). Some appreciate our motives, but the many, without investigation and without knowledge of the facts, cry out against us and against the angel girl. Some say she pretends; others that she is crazy; and we hear that some say it is the devil. * * * Mary is perfectly happy; she recognizes everybody and everything that she knew when in her body twelve or more years ago. She knows nobody nor anything whatever that is known by Lurancy. * * * Mr. Vennum has been to see her, and also her brother Henry, at different times, but she don't know anything about them. Mrs. Vennum is still unable to come and see her daughter. She has been nothing but Mary since she has been here, and knows nothing but what Mary knew. She has entered the trance once every other day for some days. She is perfectly happy. * * * You don't know how much comfort we take with the dear angel.

The child has often said she likes Dr. Stevens next to her father, because he opened the gate for her to come in, and because he has done so much for her father and mother, and her brothers, and for Lurancy's body, and feeling that gratitude, she wrote him a letter by permission of her parents, on the twentieth of February, in which she said:

I am yet here. * * Frank is better. * * Nervie is here for dinner; Alice Alter is going to stay all night; Mrs. Marsh was here today and read a beautiful letter to us. I wish you could spend the evening with us. * * I would like to have your picture to look at. * * Please write to pa when you get time. * * We all send our love to you. * * I like it here very much, and am going to stay all the time. * * I went to heaven and staid about an hour. * * It seems a long time since I saw you. * * * Forget me not. Good night.

MARY ROFF.

She wrote the doctor again on February twenty-first, of which the following is an extract:

I have just finished a letter to brother Frank. He went back to his store feeling quite well. The boys have gone out to play for a dance. * * In the evening I went to heaven, and I saw some of the beautiful things, and talked with the angels, * * and be sure I don't forget when I go to heaven and come back. * * 'Fear the Lord * * depart from evil.'—Proverb 3:7.

MARY ROFF.

It may have been said it was frequently the case that when Mary went to heaven, as she called it, other spirits sometimes, by permission, would come and present themselves, and speak freely their own language and sentiments. Mr. Roff writes under date of March, as follows, of a communication through another young lady at his house: . . . .

A lady came through ——— at our house, who claimed to have have lived and died in Tennessee, and says she was afflicted from eight years of age till twenty-five, when she died with a similar disease, and in a similar way that Mary died. She says that Mary has control of Lurancy Vennum, and will retain control until she is restored to her normal condition, when Mary will leave. Mary is happy as a lark, and gives daily, almost hourly, proofs of being Mary's intelligence. She don't recognize Lurancy's family or friends at all. She knows and recognizes everything that our Mary used to know, and nothing whatever of what the Vennum girl knows. She now enters the trance without any rigidity of the muscles whatever, very gently, and at her own will, describes heavenly scenes, etc., etc. We think all will be well, and Lurancy restored to her orthodox friends yet. * * Some of the relatives are yielding by Mary's calling their attention to things of thirteen years ago, that transpired between her and them. It wakes them up. * * It is wonderful. * * It would take a volume to give the important items that have occurred.

Mrs. Dr. Alter, under date of April 16, 1878, writes of Mary as follows:

My angel sister says that she is going away from us again soon, but she says she will be often with us. She says Lurancy is a beautiful girl; says she sees her nearly every day, and we do know she is getting better every day. Oh, the lessons that are being taught us are worth treasures of rare diamonds; they are stamped upon the mind so firmly that heaven and earth shall pass away before one jot or one title shall be forgotten. * * * I have learned so much that is grand and beautiful, I cannot express it; I am dumb. * * * A few days ago Mary was caressing her father and mother, and they became a little tired of it, and asked why she hugged and kissed them. She sorrowfully looked at them, and said, "Oh, pa and ma! I want to kiss you while I have lips to kiss you with, and hug you while I have arms to hug you with, for I am going back to heaven before long, and then I can only be with you in spirit, and you will not always know when I come, and I cannot love you as I can now. Oh, how much I love you all!"

Mary wrote to Dr. Stevens, in an envelope with Mr. Roff, under date of May seventh, as follows:

Dear Doctor:—I thought I would write you. I am at Aunt Carrie's; am going to take dinner with her. * * * Yesterday I went and spent the day with Mrs. Vennum. She had a dreadful headache and I rubbed it away. Pa is quite busy in his office today. Ma is feeling a good deal better. * * * I am feeling quite well, except my breast hurts me some today. It commenced hurting me last night. * * * I treat ma in the morning and Nervie at night for hard colds and cold feet. We all went to the Reform Club last Saturday. Aunt Carrie's essay was splendid, and very affecting. * * * We all read that letter in the "Religio-Philosophical Journal" from your daughter, and liked it very much.

MARY ROFF.

In the same letter Mr. Roff writes:

I want to give you a little scene; time Monday morning, May sixth; place, A. B. Roff's office, Watseka; present, A. B. Roff at table writing; Frank Roff at table at the right of A. B. R.; door behind A. B., and a little to the left; enters unheard the person of Lurancy Vennum; places her arm around the neck of A. B. Roff, kissing him and saying, "Pa, I am going with Mrs. Vennum to visit today;" A. B. Roff looks around and discovers standing in the door Mrs. Vennum, Lurancy's mother, looking on the scene. The girl then bade an affectionate good-by to Frank; A. B. R. asks: How long will you stay?" She replies, "Till two or three o'clock." Mrs. Vennum then said to Mr. Roff: "If she does not get back at that time, don't get alarmed, we will take care of her." Exit Mrs. V. and the girl. You don't know how my heart aches for that poor mother, yet she is much happier than she was last winter with Lurancy as she was. * * *

On May seventh, the day of writing the last letter, Mary called Mrs. Roff to a private room, and there in tears told her that Lurancy Vennum was coming back. She seemed very sad, and said she could not tell whether she was coming to stay or not; that if she thought she was coming to stay, she would want to see Nervie and Dr. Alter and Allie and bid them good-by. She sat down, closed her eyes and in a few moments the change took place, and Lurancy had control of her own body. Looking wildly around the room she anxiously asked:

"Where am I? I was never here before."

Mrs. Roff replied:

"You are at Mr. Roff's, brought here by Mary to cure your body."

She cried and said:

"I want to go home."

Mrs. Roff asked her if she could stay till her folks were sent for.

She said:

"No."

She was then asked if she felt any pain in her breast. (This was during the period that Mery was suffering pain in the left breast; continually holding her hand, pressing it.) She replied:

"No, but Mary did."

In about five minutes the change was again made, and Mary came, overjoyed to find herself permitted to return, and called, as she often had, for the singing of her previous girlhood's favorite song, "We are Coming, Sister Mary."

The child seemed possessed of all the natural affection for the family that a daughter and sister of fine feelings and cultured tastes might be supposed to possess after an absence of twelve years and she often took occasion to demonstrate that affection by endearing names and kindly words. When walking with Mrs. Alder her sister Nervie as she called her, she would say, "Nervie, my only sister put your arm around me." Or, "Come, Nervie, put your arm around me and we will take a little walk in the garden or the grove, for I cannot be with you much longer and I want to be with you every minute I can." When Mrs. Alter would ask her when or where she was going, she would say, "The angels tell me I am going to heaven, but I don't know just when. Oh, how I wish you could live here at home with us as you used to when I was here before." She thought a great deal of Dr. Alter, the husband of her sister, but could hardly seem to realize that Nervie was married and had

had a family for eleven years. She said when she got into this body she felt much as she did when here twelve years ago. This body seemed as natural to her as though she had been born with it, yet she could not do with it as she would like to. She did not seem to realize at first, but that this was her own original, physical body, until the angels explained it to her, and she had received information and instructions from her parents, sister, brother and friends about it. So natural did it seem to her, after knowing all the facts, that she could hardly feel it was not her original body born nearly thirty years ago.

In conversation with the writer about her former life, she spoke of cutting her arm as hereinbefore stated, and asked if he ever saw where she did it. On receiving a negative answer, she proceeded to slip up her sleeve as if to exhibit the scar, but suddenly arrested the movement, as if by a sudden thought, and quickly said, "Oh, this is not the arm; that one is in the ground," and proceeded to tell where it was buried, and how she saw it done and who stood around, how they felt, etc., but she did not feel bad. I heard her tell Mr. Roff and the friends present, how she wrote to him a message some years ago through the hand of a medium, giving name, time and place. Also of rapping and spelling out a message by another medium, giving time, name, place etc., etc., which the parents admitted to be true. I heard her relate a story of her going into the country with the men, some twenty odd years ago, after a load of hay, naming incidents that occurred on the road, which two of the gentlemen distinctly remembered.

In one of those beautiful trances which rendered her entirely oblivious to all physical surroundings, appearing in a state of happy ecstasy, and, so far as manners and movements are concerned, perfect-

ly normal and graceful, with visions and senses fully open, she went to heaven as she called it, in company with another young lady in like condition, whose name must be reserved until the wonderful history she is making, shall be made public by the consent of all. They saw and conversed about the beautiful scenes before them, pointing out individuals, giving names, relationship, histories, facts, etc., describing places and things. Mary pointed out and described some with titles of royalty, such as Mary, Queen of Scots, Henry IV., King of France, and others of equal note, showing a rich biographical and historical reading or experience and acquaintance in spirit-life. Then bowing low, and kneeling with hands folded, and heads together, as if in the most devout and solemn devotion remained in listening silence for some time, then rising, the unnamed girl said:

"He came to bless, didn't he, Mary? a bright beautiful angel."

After talking of the different classes they were observing, and the "lovely children" attracting so much of their attention, Mary seemed to take in her arms a very little, tender infant and said: "This is sister Nervie's baby; how sweet and beautiful it is. Don't you think it is a sweet little angel?" The other, in softest accent said, "Yes, but it seems to me they are all too pure to be touched by such as we," and after some time the babe was carefully handed back to the care of the angels. Mrs. Alter, who was present, had recently lost by death, a beauiful babe and had scarcely recovered from her confinement. The whole scene was one of uncommon interest, very affecting and impressive beyond description.

For the discovery of facts unknown to others, Mary seemed remarkably developed. One afternoon, she, with much concern and great anxiety,

declared that her brother Frank must be carefully watched the coming night, for he would be taken very sick, and would die if not properly cared for. At the time of this announcement he was in his usual heatlh, and engaged with the Roff Bros.' band of music up town. The same evening, Dr. Stevens had been in to see the family, and on leaving was to go directly to Mrs. Hawks, far off in the Old Town, and the family so understood it. But at about nine and a half o'clock the same evening, Dr. Stevens returned unannounced to Mr. Marsh's, Mr. Roff's next neighbor, for the night. At two o'clock in the morning Frank was attacked with something like a spasm and congestive chill, which almost distroyed his consciousness. Mary at once saw the situation as predicted, and said, "Send to Mrs. Marsh's for Dr. Stevens." "No, Dr. Stevens is at Old Town," said the family. "No," said Mary, "he is at Mr. Marsh's; go quick for him, pa." Mr. Roff called, and the doctor, as Mary said, was at Mr. Marsh's. On his arrival at the sick bed, Mary had entire control of the case. She had made Mrs. Roff sit down; had provided hot water and cloths and other necessaries, and was doing all that could be done for Frank. The doctor seconded her efforts and allowed her to continue. She saved her brother, but never made a move after the doctor's arrival, without his co-operation or advice.

Mary often spoke of seeing the children of Dr. Stevens in heaven, who were about her age and of longer residence there than herself. She said she was with them much, and went to his home with him. She correctly described his home, the rooms and furniture, gave the names and ages of his children, and as evidence of her truthfulness, told of a remarkable experience of Mrs. E. M. Wood, one of the doctor's married daughter, which, on account of its peculiar features, and the faith of some of the

relatives was not intended for the public, yet was a beautiful evidence of angel guardianship. She stated the story minutely, saying that was where and when she got Mrs. Wood's name, for she was present with others she named.

The doctor's daughter Emma Angelia, who had been in spirit-life since March 10, 1849, sought through Mary to take the body she was controlling and go home with her father to Wisconsin, to visit the family for a week, and Mary was disposed to let her do it; she asked Mr. and Mrs Roff if she should let Emma Stevens have the body for a week to go with her father to see and be with her mother, sisters and brother, so they could realize it was Emma? But no one thought it advisable.

To show the ease with which Mary controls, or goes in and out, as it is said, and the perfect medium the body of Lurancy is, a single instance will suffice. On the twenty-first day of April, in the parlors of Mrs. Roff, in the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Roff, their hired woman Charlotte, Dr. Steel and wife, Mrs. Twing of Oregon, Mrs. Alter, Mr. and Mrs. M——, and the writer, manifestations of a very peculiar and happy character occurred. Mary being the last one to join the company in the parlor, took the only vacant seat, next to a gentleman friend. Dr. Steel became influenced by a brother of one of the persons present, and made a very striking address, with a good deal of energy and pathos. On his becoming disentranced and entering into the general conversation, Mary voluntarily disembodied her controlling power, and leaving the girl's form like a corpse, with the head resting against the shoulder of her friend, immediately took control of Dr. Steel, and in every possible way required proved it to be herself; she then through that manly form, turned in a jovial way and laughed at the position of the seemingly untenanted body and its

limp condition, with a pleasant jest at the friend who supported it. She soon, however, returned to her own proper control and seemed to enjoy the trick she had played, in the control of the gentleman.

In a few moments she appeared peculiar, and calling the hired woman to follow her, they left the room. Soon she returned clad in an old-fashioned way, with gown, cap, cape and spectacles, etc., leaning on the arm of Charlotte as if bowed down with many years. Not one trace of the girl could be seen save in the youthful skin of the face. Taking a seat in the old arm chair, she began to talk as an old lady of olden times might be supposed to do, representing herself as the grand-mother of Charlotte, giving her name, inquiring after all the relatives, old and young, asking by name for those belonging to families the girl could have known nothing about. Said she died of cancer near the right eye and temple; called for tepid water and soft cloth, which being furnished, proceeded in the most natural manner to bathe and dress the cancer. She called for food and ate it, apparently without teeth, smoked after it, as she used to do, because her food always hurt her if she did not. She asked for knitting work. It being furnished, she found fault because the knitter did not know how to knit. Raveling out and taking up again she knit, at the same time telling Charlotte how to knit without looking at it. She next asked for mending and other things to do, looked at the fabric of the ladies' dresses, asking the prices, etc., etc. She looked out at the window, remarked how pleasant a place it was, and so continued for a full hour, never for a moment showing any sign of deception, but a veritable, honest, experienced domestic old lady. Numerous other personalities might be related, but this is sufficient.

When inquired of as to form materialization she said it was a truth, though she had never tried it

because she did not know how, but should learn how when she found an opportunity.

During her stay at Mr. Roff's her physical condition continually improved, being under the care and treatment of her supposed parents and the advice and help of her physician. She was ever obedient to the government and rules of the family, like a careful and wise child, always keeping in the company of some of the family, unless to go in to the nearest neighbors across the street. She was often invited and went with Mrs. Roff to visit the first families of the city, who soon became satisfied that the girl was not crazy, but a fine, well-mannered child.

The manner in which she acted for a considerable time after coming into Mr. Roff's family was very strange to many. Sitting down to the tea-table on one occasion, Mrs. Roff said:

"Now, Mary, what shall I help you to?"

She answered:

"Oh, nothing, I thank you, ma. I'll go to heaven for my tea."

Suiting the action to the word off she went into a quiet trance or to heaven as she termed it and so remained till the family had eaten when she returned to her normal state. Being again asked she said she had been to tea and the question was put:

"Mary, what do you eat, and how do you eat it?"

Her answer was:

"O ma, if I could tell, you could not understand it."

And thus for some time she only ate in that way, except a very little occasionally, to pacify the anxious family. As her system became in better condition, she ate more freely, and for many weeks towards the last she ate, drank and slept as a healthy person should.

As the time drew near for the restoration of Lurancy to her parents and home, Mary would sometimes seem to recede into the memory and manner of

Lurancy for a little time, yet not enough to lose her identity or permit the manifestation of Lurancy's mind, but enough to show she was impressing her presence upon her own body.

On being asked, "Where is Lurancy?" she would say, "Gone out some where," or, "She is in heaven taking lessons, and I am here taking lessons too."

On Sunday, May nineteenth, about half-past four o'clock p. m., Mr. Roff and Mary were sitting in the parlor, Henry Vennum, Lurancy's brother, being in the sitting room, another room and hall between. Mary left control, and Lurancy took full possession of her own body. Henry was called in and she caught him around his neck, kissed and wept over him, causing all present to weep. At this juncture Mr. Roff was called and asked Lurancy if she could stay till Henry could go and bring her mother (she had expressed a desire to go and see her father and mother.) She said, "No," but if Henry would go and bring her, she would come again and talk with her. She immediately left and Mary came again. When Mary was asked where she had been, she replied, "I have seen Dr. Stevens and he looks as good as ever again."

Mrs. Vennum was brought within an hour, and on her arrival, Lurancy came into full control, when one of the most affecting scenes ever witnessed took place. Mother and daughter embraced and kissed each other, and wept until all present shed tears of sympathy; it seemed the very gate of heaven.

On the morning of May twenty-first, Mr. Roff writes as follows:

Mary is to leave the body of Rancy today, about eleven o'clock, so she says. She is bidding neighbors and friends good-by. Rancy to return home all right today. Mary came from her room upstairs where she was sleeping with Lottie, at ten o'clock last night, lay down by us, hugged and kissed us, and cried because she must bid us good-by, telling us to give all her pictures, marbles and cards, and twenty-five cents Mrs. Vennum had given her, to Rancy, and had us promise to visit Rancy often. She tells me

to write to Dr. Stevens as follows: "Tell him I am going to heaven, and Rancy is coming home well." She says she will see your dear children in spirit-life; says she saw you Sunday last. * * * She said last night, weeping, "Oh, pa, I am going to heaven tomorrow at eleven o'clock, and Rancy is coming back cured, and going home all right." She talked most lovingly about the separation to take place, and most beautiful was her talk about heaven and home.

Mrs. Alter writes:

When the day came, and the angels told Mary that Lurancy was coming to take full possession of her body, it seemed to make her feel very sad. She went to the residences of Mr. L. C. Marsh and Mr. M. Hoober, to say good-by, telling them the angels had said the body was cured, and Lurancy was coming to go home and live with her parents again, all well; yet she says, "I feel sad at parting with you all, for you have treated me so kindly; you have helped me by your sympathy to cure this body, and Rancy can come and inhabit it."

This shows that the angels can help the children of earth. Mr. M. Hoober being a pious Christian gentleman, and loving Mary for her sweet influence in his family, came into the room and asked if she would like to sing with him and his good wife. She said:

"Yes, I am so sad, but when I go to heaven all tears shall be wiped away, and I will be happy."

After singing they all knelt down, and Mr. Hoober made a very affecting prayer, saying, "If it can be that an angel is in our midst, and about to leave us and go and join her own in spirit-life, will God in his goodness allow her to bear a message of love to my angel father and loved ones who may, for all we can see, be hovering around our household at this moment." He hoped we would all be better and wiser, and when Lurancy should come back to her normal condition, would be better for the strange and new lessons she has learned.

Mary has sent word to her sister Nervie to come to her father's to stay an hour with her, to say good-by, and when Rancy should come back at eleven o'clock, to take her to Mr. Roff's office, and he would

go to Mr. Vennum's with her. Mary said: "I will come in spirit as close to you as I can, and comfort you in sorrow, and you will feel me near you sometimes."

When eleven o'clock came she seemed loth to go or let Rancy go back. Mrs. Altar started to go home and Mary started with her. When in the yard, Mrs. A. said: "Mary, you have always done as you said you would, but as I don't understand these things, will you please let Lurancy come back just now, and then you can come again if you want to?" Mary said: "Yes, I will," and she kissed mother and sister good-by.

A voice said, "Why, Mrs. Alter, where are we going?" Then in a breath, "Oh, yes, I know, Mary told me!"

On the way they met Mrs. Marsh and Mrs. Hoober, who were the nearest neighbors and Mary's favorite friends; Lurancy did not seem to know them, but remarked, "Mary thinks so much of these neighbors." Then turning to Mrs. Alter, with whom Lurancy had been but slightly acquainted two years ago, she said, "Mrs Alter, Mary can come and talk to you nearly all the way home, if you want her to, and then I will come back." She spoke, and appeared like one slightly acquainted. Mrs. Alter said: "I have trusted you in the past, and of course I would love to talk with my sister."

The change was again made, and Mary said, "I do love to be with you so much."

She talked lovingly, and gave good advice about many things and family matters. The final change now took place at the time predicted, and Lurancy stated she felt something as though she had been asleep, yet she knew she had not. On reaching Mr. Roff's office, she addressed him as Mr. Roff, and asked if he would take her home, which he did.

May twenty-second, Mr. Roff writes me as follows:

Thank God and the good angels, the dead is alive and the lost is found. I mailed you a letter yesterday at half-past ten o'clock A. M., stating that Mery told us she would go away, and Rancy return at eleven o'clock the twenty-first of May. Now I write you that at half-past eleven o'clock A. M., Minerva called at my office with Rancy Vennum, and wanted me to take her home, which I did. She called me Mr. Roff, and talked with me as a young girl would, not being acquainted. I asked her how things appeared to her—if they seemed natural. She said it seemed like a dream to her. She met her parents and brother in a very affectionate manner, hugging and kissing each one in tears of gladness. She clasped her arms around her father's neck a long time, fairly smothering him with kisses. I saw her father just now (eleven o'clock). He says she has been perfectly natural, and seems entirely well. You see my faith in writing you yesterday morning instead of waiting till she came.

The Watseka "Republican" says:

The meeting with her parents at the home was very affecting, and now she seems to be a healthy, happy little girl, going about noting things she saw before she was stricken, and recognizes changes that have since taken place. This is a remarkable case, and the fact that we cannot understand such things, does not do away with the existence of these unaccountable manifestations.

The Danville (Ill.) "Times," in speaking of this case, says:

Mr. and Mrs. Roff are Spiritualists, and stoutly maintain that their daughter's ability to penetrate closed books and letters in the manner indicated, was imparted by the inhabitants of the unseen world. We have no fixed opinion as to whether Spiritualism is false or true. Certain it is, that occurrences are upon record which are hard to explain upon any natural hypothesis, but attributable to spirits' aid. Let those say who know, for we do not. In spite of all opposition, Spiritualists have increased in numbers, nor are they confined to the illiterate classes, but embrace poets, scholars and statesmen. Let us hope the unharmful truth will early assert a glorious reign, and illuminate the darkened understanding of men.

The Iriquois County (Ill.) "Times," under the head of "Mesmeric Mysteries," and in reference to Lurancy Vennum says:

Mr. and Mrs. Roff kindly offered to take charge of her until her mind would change, and she would become well again. She went there in February, and remained till about three weeks ago. Since then she has been Lurancy Vennum, and is healthy and full of intelligence. * * It was hard for even the most skeptical not to believe there was something supernatural about her. If she

was not prompted by the spirit of Mary Roff, how could she know so much about the family, people with whom she was not acquainted, and whom she had never visited? * * No stranger would have suspected her of being the victim of disease, though her eyes were unusually bright. * * There are yet numberless mysteries in this world, though science has dissipated many wonders, and philosophy has made plain many marvels. There is much that is unaccountable in the action of spiritualistic mediums, and they do many things that puzzle the greatest philosophers. Skeptical and unbelieving as we are, and slight as our experience has been, we have seen enough to convince us that Spiritualism is not all humbug. The case of Lurancy Vennum, a bright young girl of fourteen years, has been the subject of much discussion in Watseka during the past year, and there is a good deal in it beyond human comprehension.

The subject of this article has become familiar with the writer during the several months she was under his advice and the more kindly care and sympathy of Mr. Roff's family, speaking with him freely upon every subject necessary to her good and the courtesies of association, always, however, in the presence of members of the family. On Sunday, the second day of June, he met her with her parents at the house of a friend, who lived nearly two miles from Mr. Vennum's. Lurancy was introduced to him by Mr. Vennum. She seemed to be an entire stranger, and for two hours remained like a timid, unacquainted child. The next day, June the third, without notice to any one, the writer went to the house of a noted attorney, and as he enered the gate, Lurancy came out the door, stopped on the steps and said, "How do you do, Doctor? Mary Roff told me to come here and meet you. Somehow she makes me feel you have been a very kind friend to me;" and she would not let him into the house until she had delivered a long message from Mary. Since the last interview he has seen her several times, and she seems easy, affable, and as a young lady should.

On the twenty-fifth of June she wrote a beautiful letter, by the consent of her friends, saying among other things:

Dear Doctor:—I am feeling quite well today. I was up to Mrs. Alter's today; she is very well at present. This afternoon I called at Mr. Roff's office, and had quite a long talk with him; but of course it was about the loving angels that you and I love

so well. Let them twine around your neck their arms and press upon your brow their kiss. * * * Well, Doctor, you have many dear friends in this city who love you much. I saw Mrs. M.———. She said she would have died if it had not been for you, and you know about Mrs. I———. We know you saved her life. * * * Kiss your loving wife for me, and tell her we shall all meet in heaven if not on earth. * * * I shall visit Mrs. Roff tomorrow. * * * I shall have my picture taken and send it to you in my next letter. I get up early and take the morning air. I should like to have you write a line to me.

Your friend,

LURANCY VENNUM.

This letter, written in pencil, is very different in its make-up and penmanship form those written by the same hand, signed by Mary Roff, and gives evidence of another mind.

Since penning the foregoing, the writer has received the following letter from the mother of Lurancy, through the politeness of Mr. Roff:

Watseka, Ill., July 9, 1878.

Dear Friend:—Mary L. Vennum is perfectly and entirely well, and perfectly natural. For two or three weeks after her return home, she seemed a little strange to what she had been before she was taken sick last summer, but only, perhaps, the natural change that had taken place within the girl, and except it seemed to her as though she had been dreaming or sleeping, etc. Lurancy has been smarter, more intelligent, more industrious, more womanly and more polite than before. We give the credit of her complete cure and restoration to her family, to Dr. E. W. Stevens and Mr. and Mrs. Roff, by their obtaining her removal to Mr Roff's where her cure was perfected. We firmly believe that had she remained at home, she would have died, or we would have been obliged to send her to the insane asylum, and if so, that she would have died there and further, that I could not have lived but a short time with the care and trouble devolving on me. Several of the relatives of Mary Lurancy, including ourselves, now believe she was cured by spirit power, and that Mary Roff controlled the girl. MRS. LURINDA VENNUM.

On the tenth of July Mr. Roff writes:

Dear Doctor:—Mr. Vennum is out of town, but I have often talked with him, and I know his opinion, often expressed, that Lurancy and her mother would both have died if we had not taken the girl; he gives all credit to yourself and us for it. He believes it was spirit agency that did the work. Lurancy is in perfect health, and "much more womanly than before" (so her

mother says). She says she used to romp and play with her brothers, and with the horses, etc. Now she is steady; you can hardly imagine how the dear girl loves those who saved her. She sends you a letter today, but thinks it a little strange you have not answered her last letter. Yours, etc., A. B. Roff.

In the foregoing letter referred to, the child writes:

I am quite well, and much obliged that you showed my letter to your dear wife. I am sure there is nothing for me to be ashamed of. * * * I was down to Mr. M's store, and he told me you saved his wife's life, and they appreciate it. Will you want me to give you my description of heaven? I will sometime, when there are but few present. I can't write it, for I make so many mistakes. I made a short call at Mrs. Alter's. * * * Please ask your daughter to write to me. Can't you bring your wife when you come? Poor Mr. Wickersham still lives. We should pity such mortals. My aunt says I know all that has transpired, but none know but the angels and you. Your friend,

MARY L. VENNUM.

CORROBORATION OF THE NARRATIVE BY LEADING WITNESSES

On the evening of the sixteenth of July, 1878, in the parlors of Asa B. Roff and his wife, we, the undersigned, met and listened to the careful reading and consideration of the foregoing narrative, and declare it to be entirely true and correct in every respect; and further, that now after eight weeks of home life, Lurancy Vennum remains well and sound in body and mind.

(Signed) ASA. B. ROFF,
ANN ROFF,
THOMAS J.VENNUM,
LURINDA VENNUM.

Watseka, Iroquois Co., Ill.,
July 18, 1878.

To the Reader:—The writer has collected the foregoing facts from a mass of interesting incidents, which might be much enlarged upon, but he is satisfied with the few incidents that involve principles hitherto discussed by the philosophic world, and sends them out to make a chapter in the literature

of Spiritualism. He has this day seen the family, including the subject of the narrative. Mrs. Vennum has gone to Indiana for a week's rest and visit, and left Lurancy in charge of the family and house, a healthy, happy, noble girl.

E. WINCHESTER STEVENS.

July 19, 1878.

SUPPLEMENTARY STATEMENT BY ASA B. ROFF

To the Editor of the "Religio-Philosophical Journal:"

Being almost daily in receipt of letters from readers of the "Journal," inquiring as to the truthfulness of the narrative entitled, "The Watseka Wonder," and not having time to fully answer all their questions, I am impelled to collect from them the prominent points of inquiry and objection, and briefly reply through the "Journal." Persons hereafter writing me, who do not receive an answer to their letters, will seek for the informatioon desired in this article.

One writer inquires: "Is it a fact, or is it a story made up to see how cunning a tale one can tell?" Another asks: "Can the truthfulness of the narrative be substantiated outside of yourself and those immediately interested? Can it be shown that there was no collusion between the parties, and no former acquaintance?" A reader of the "Journal" suggests: "It is a pretty big yarn, and there might be some arrangement between the parties, or they themselves deceived." Another after saying he has read the narrative, remarks: "I confess that I am not of your faith, and I am very doubtful whether newspapers are always embodiments of sacred truths, and I wish that under your hand, as a gentleman, you might confirm to me and other doubting friends, the strange, mysterious, and to me, fanciful, statements in those two papers. I write wholly to overcome a doubting feeling that exists within myself and

friends in regard to that remarkable and wonderful personation." A lady writes: "Is the account true in every particular? I hope there is a life beyond this, but I have never had any proof."

Reply

I furnished Dr. Stevens with all the material facts in the case, except such as were within his own knowledge. The history of the Vennum family (and Lurancy's condition up to the time he and I went to see her January 31st), I obtained from the members thereof, and the neighbors intimately acquainted with them. The narrative, as written by Dr. Stevens, is substantially true in every point and particular, yet the half has not been told, and never can be; it is impossible for pen to describe or language portray the wonderful events that transpired during the memorable fourteen weeks that the girl was at our house. The material facts of the case can be substantiated by disinterested witnesses, whose veracity cannot be questioned, and whose evidence would settle in a court of law. I refer you to Robert Doyle, Charles Sherman, S. R. Hawks, Lile Marsh, J. M. Hoober, and their wives, and to Mrs. Mary Wagoner, formerly Mary Lord, all residents of Watseka. As to "collusion," "arrangement," or "ourselves being deceived," that is simply impossible, as you will see if you carefully read the whole narrative over again. I, too, doubt whether newspapers are always "embodiments of sacred truths," but in this case I assure the writer, the "Journal" does embody a very sacred truth, that of man's immortality. * * *

Talking with Mary, we sometimes spoke of her death. She would quickly reply: "I never died," or "I did not die." She never tired of talking of the life beyond this. She would at any time leave her play, her reading or her jovial companions, to talk with her "pa" or "ma" about heaven and the angels,

as she termed spirit-life, and spirits that have left the body.

I have questioned Lurancy Vennum on different occasions, as to whether she remembered anything that occurred during the time that Mary had control of her organism, and she stated that a very few things occurring the last month that she was controlled, she recollects, but that in all cases the information was imparted by Mary.

In conclusion, let me say to those who doubt or disbelieve the "strange, mysterious and wonderful story:" Call to mind Lurancy's condition at her home last January, surrounded with all the kind care of parents, friends and physicians, every thing done to alleviate her suffering and perform a cure that human minds and hands could possibly do, yet growing continually worse (if that were possible), given up by her physicians, her friends without a ray of hope, the insane asylum ready to receive her, a condition terrible to behold! Then view her condition from May twenty-first until today, over three months, a bright, beautiful, happy, healthy girl, and then tell me what produced the change. The narrative furnishes the facts; account for them if you can on any other hypothesis, than power exercised through or by the spirit of Mary Roff having control of Lurancy's body.

I am now sixty years old; have resided in Iroquois county thirty years, and would not now sacrifice what reputation I may have by being a party to the publication of such a narrative, if it was not perfectly true. If any should desire testimonials of my standing, Colonel Bundy has some to use as he deems best.

ASA B. ROFF.

Watseka, Ill.,
August 23, 1878.

("Religio-Philosophical Journal," August 31, 1878).

HONORABLE MENTION OF ASA B. ROFF

The name of this gentleman has lately become of much interest to our readers in connection with the case of Lurancy Vennum. From a somewhat lengthy biographical sketch of Mr. Roff, published last January in the "Iroquois County Times," a paper printed at Watseka, we make the following extracts:

* * * A gentleman now in his sixtieth year, though with a heart as young and happy as that of a child; agreeable, generous and full of sympathy, he is respected by all who know him, while his more intimate friends love and honor him for his personal worth. * * * His present enviable standing among his fellowmen is entirely owing to his indomitable energy and integrity of purpose. His family is a most exemplary one; all who know them love them; no family in our community are more happy in their domestic relations. May it ever be so with them.

The above extracts in connection with the following letters, would seem to establish Mr. Roff's reputation for truth and veracity beyond all question:

Watseka, Ill., Aug. 22, 1878.

Editor "Religio-Philosophical Journal:"

Dear Sir:—Many inquiries are made of me as to the standing of Mr. Asa B. Roff. These questions are elicited through the publication in your Journal of Dr. E. W. Stevens's account of Mary Roff and Lurancy Vennum phenomena. I wish to say to you that no man in this community stands higher in the estimation of the people than Mr. Roff. He is a high-minded, honorable gentleman who would spurn to give currency to any thing not verified by facts. I don't believe Mr. Roff capable of a mean act. It is not in his nature. Very truly yours,

MATTHEW H. PETERS.

Mayor of Watseka, and Editor "Iroquois Times."

Chicago, Ill., Aug. 22, 1878.

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I have been personally acquainted with Asa B. Roff since the year 1858, and take pleasure in stating that his character and reputation for truth and veracity is good.

CHARLES H. WOOD.
(Ex-Judge) Twentieth Circuit of Illinois.
122 La Salle Street.

We have also received letters speaking in the highest terms of Mr. Roff and family, from the following gentlemen of Watseka: O. F. McNeill, Ex-County Judge; O. C. Munhall, Postmaster; Robert Doyle, Attorney-at-Law; John W. Riggs, Circuit Clerk; Henry Butzow, County Clerk; Thomas Vennum, former Circuit Clerk; Franklin Blades, Judge of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit; M. B. Wright, County Judge.

Editor "Religio-Philosophical Journal:"

Editorial Note!—Believing that those who read the account of Lurancy Vennum's case as published eight years ago, as well as thousands who will now read it for the first time, would be interested in tracing the subject of such unusual experiences through succeeding years, the publisher addressed a letter of inquiry to Mr. A. B. Roff. That gentleman having secured such information as he could from her parents and others, adds it to his own and brings the history of Lurancy Vennum down to date. His statement as given below can be fully substantiated and is entitled to confidence.

Watseka, Ill., Dec. 4, 1886.

In your letter to me of November ninth, you said:

"On July 16, 1878, you and others certified to Lurancy Vennum's good health and sound mind. Will you give me a brief statement of her history from then until now? Has she had any return of symptoms? Is she a medium now, or has she been since 1878, at any time? What is the state of her health, and what has it been since 1878? Has she any remembrance of her old experience while controlled by the spirits?"

For convenience I will not answer queries categorically, but in narrative form. Lurancy Vennum continued to reside with her parents in Watseka and vicinity, from May, 1878—when she re-

turned home from our house—until January 1, 1882, when she was married to George Binning, a farmer living three miles from Watseka, where they resided until they moved West in September, 1884, and they are now living in Rollins County, Kansas.

We met her often before we went West in June, 1879, and every year thereafter until they moved West in 1884, whenever opportunity afforded during our annual visits to Watseka; and then Mary would take control of Lurancy just as she did during the time she was at our home in 1878; we thus enjoyed many happy seasons together. Aside from this she had little opportunity of using her mediumship, her parents being afraid to converse with her upon the subject lest it should cause a return of the "spells" (as they called them), such as she had before Mary brought her to our house. Her husband, never having made himself acquainted with Spiritualism, furnished poor conditions for farther development in that direction; this, with the fact that her many household cares and busy life, together with the charge of her children, has made the exercise of her mediumship extremely difficult, except when she was thrown in the society of our family or others who chanced to furnish the necessary conditions.

Lurancy has what might be called, perhaps, a "remembrance" of her old experience while controlled by the spirit. She always speaks of it thus: "Mary told me," or "Mary made me acquainted," etc. She became acquainted with several persons while Mary controlled her, who were entire strangers to Lurancy Vennum. When the control left her, she continued the acquaintance thus formed, and has ever had a warm attachment for them. Mary, she says, told her these were good people, etc. She has never had any occasion for a physician since she left us—never having been sick since then; neither has there been a return of the old symptoms—no pain, no fits—in short, "she is clothed and in her right mind." That the spirit-world has charge concerning her, let the following forever settle, which can be fully substantiated by reliable witnesses: At the birth of her first child she was entranced, her eyes were turned heavenward, a beautiful smile played over her face, the work of deliverance went on painlessly, and not until the new soul voiced its presence, did she show any sign of consciousness of what had occurred. She then said: "Why, what is that?" When she was informed it was her baby, she said: "Is that so?" And was overjoyed to think that the Father—God—should send an angel to stand between her and that agony which every mother-soul so well understands.

I deem it a duty since Dr. E. W. Stevens has passed to the higher life, to relate an occurrence that would have been published in the "Watseka Wonder" at first, had it not been for Doctor's unwillingless to have anything in that publication rest wholly upon his individual testimony for proof. When Lurancy had been at our house under Mary's control about six or eight weeks she

said to Dr. Stevens in our presence:

"You are going to get a letter from heaven."

He asked, "When?"

"I don't know; but you will get one," she replied.

Two or three weeks later Dr. Stevens again came to our house and then related to Lurancy (Mary) and us that he had received the letter at some place where he stayed over night. He saw in the morning while making his toilet a letter, seemingly hanging in the air, yet in plain writing, and signed by a noted French physician (whose name we have forgotten), who died many years ago. The letter contained directions for treating a physical ailment of Lurancy, which Dr. S., had lost sight of. It was with difficulty that the family and the Doctor got the consent of the controlling spirit to have the body magnetized; however, the treatment was given, Dr. S., being under control of Peonomo, his Indian healer, and while he treated, Peonomo talked in his native language, and Mary interpreted for her parents. The conversation was about the diseased organs of which Lurancy was wholly ignorant. The letter referred to ordered five treatments, but three proved sufficient to reinstate natural action, and to make better conditions for the controlling spirit to finish the cure. Lurancy has had the strongest regard and affection for the family of Dr. Stevens and our family, and all of Mary Roff's friends ever since Mary relinquished her control, and Lurancy became herself again. The father and mother of Lurancy remain firm in the belief that it was spirit power that saved and cured their daughter.

Yours truly,

ASA B. ROFF.

REMINISCENCES OF MY SISTER MARY ROFF

By MRS. H. H. ALTER.*

It has often occurred to me that a recital of some of the incidents attending the home-coming of my sister, Mary Roff, might be of interest to others who have sisters inhabiting the Borderland. The joy that is ours when, after years of separation, we again meet the loved ones of this life, was intensified when from out of the misty depths come unannounced my own spirit sister Mary.

Up to that time, I had been led to believe that an insurmountable barrier shut out for ever the return of an inhabitant of that far-away home. What this

*Née Minerva Roff.

revelation meant to me, I can not express. With it came a new incentive, and a glorious sunshine that has ever lingered to brighten and harmonize all that is dear to me. This visitation was as real as if in some foreign land I had come face to face with the living, breathing sister of my earlier life—the kiss, the embrace, and the girlish laugh as palpable as when in the physical form.

I am now sixty-four years of age. I could have no purpose to deceive myself, or to mislead others. My life, while uneventful, has been a happy one. My confidence in the fulfillment of all hopes as to the future life, has grown year by year, with my age. And as the sunset approaches, I harbor no fear of the coming night: its shadows contain within their folds no demand to torment with horror the closing hour. I have come to know something tangible of the land to which we are all traveling; and I look for the sunrise in the morning of my other home with the same joy that gladdens my soul in this. The mystery of the out-going is not to me as perplexing as is the secret of the in-coming, into life. Whether we confess it or not, the knowledge most sought is that of another life; the interest in the parts we are now playing is submerged in the parts we are destined to play in the next stage of evolution. Every player in the great drama of existence has a particular rolé. The character of Katrina Hogan, as depicted by Dr. Stevens in the preceding pages, was clearly visible. When Katrina had possession of the body of Lurancy Vennum, previous to the occupancy of Mary Roff, my mother and I entreated her to desist from her course and vulgar control. We appealed to Katrina's better self, to withdraw her influence; pointing out the injury she was inflicting upon the divine girl-nature entrusted to our care. This appeal was not in vain. Katrina confessed her selfish purpose; she not only prom-

ised to abandon, but she did abandon, in a great measure, her pernicious interference. On this occasion she said, as I remember, "Mrs. Roff, I am not as bad as you think me to be . On earth I was possessed of a strong magnetic body. I loved to employ it to my purpose. I had a hand that could crush you with its strength; and it is through the exercise of this magnetic power that life has been sustained in the weakened body of Lurancy Vennum."

Such a part of the drama of every-day life you, my reader, might not care to take. You would prefer that your lines be woven into the fabric of finer character. Yet we each play a part commensurate to our development, and in touch with our sympathies. When the great poet wrote, "The world's a stage, and all the people players," he might well have added that when in this life the play is ended and the curtain-lights are extinguished, the performance is still continued: the invisible character coming and going, each repeating their lines, and the music of the orchestra, unheard by mortal ears, still floating in the vast Ampitheatre of Nature; and that yet further on, under the blows of a noiseless hammer, there are growing into life the stage-settings for another act; amid the rehearsals and repetitions each actor working out a rolé that is his alone.

It was at the final solicitation of the parents of Lurancy Vennum, that she became a temporary inmate of my mother's home; it was so desired by Mr. and Mrs. Vennum with the hope that they might avoid committing Lurancy to an insane asylum Lurancy was received with a far greater joy than would have characterized the homecoming of a daughter in this life. We realized that we were welcoming in the physical form a daughter and sister who had been dead twelve long years.

I remember that after the warm greeting was

over, Lurancy approached the piano, and said: "Oh, Ma! The same old piano—and the same old cover!" Then opening the case of the instrument, she attempted to play and sing as of yore. The songs were the ones of her youth; as we stood listening, the familiar notes were hers, although emanating from another's lips. The effect, however, was only partially successful. Turning with a smile to the family present, she remarked, "I can not make my fingers work just right."

Frequently my sister Mary would give us instructions as to what we should do to insure the return of health to the body of Lurancy Vennum in which she was then living. When these instructions were carried out, the results were always beneficial. At times she was permitted to visit other homes, and to associate with other girls. It was then that the conditions seemed to open the way for the intrusion of Katrina Hogan, and others; and after such absences, not until the harmonious influences of her old home were reached, would she emerge the same sweet sister Mary—clearly demonstrating that favorable conditions were necessary to her undisturbed tenancy of Lurancy's body. Here auto-suggestion may have been concerned; for if we retain memory in the life beyond, which we must do to again recognize anything on this plane, is it not reasonable to suppose that the same law governs there as here? But could auto-suggestion prearrange in all its detail the drama as it was being enacted? Impossible!

As before intimated, there was at times an incomplete hypnosis which might be likened to the lingering rays of the setting sun blending with the night. Neither personality at first stood out positively, clear and complete in itself.

It must be undersood that the ego—the conscious spirit—is an entity—an "individualized entity" that

no flesh-and-blood walls can confine when higher heavenly intelligence have some great purpose to accomplish.

During the three months that my sister Mary lived in the body of Lurancy, I was brought to feel that whatever solution we might choose to adopt, the unknown laws utilized were in accord with those governing my own existence. No strained relations existed between the unseen—spiritually—sister and myself. It did not seem strange to me that the crossing and re-crossing of the innumerable wires that kept us in touch with the other life, and which enable those of that other life, to sense this life, should transmit some things peculiar to their source. I can not but believe that my loved ones belong to me always, whether they are living in a physical plane or a spiritual body.

During Mary's visit, she and I spent many happy hours in going over the events of our girlhood days, many scenes of which I had forgotten until they were recalled by Mary. I remember that during one of these long talks, we were seated by the kitchen window overlooking a stretch of the garden in which my sister had played years before, and which surrounded the house in which she died. Suddenly Mary exclaimed: "Oh, Nervie! Do you remember the time when Cousin Allie Roff and I found an old hen with sore eyes under that currant bush—how we bathed her eyes in ointment, and did all we could to cure her?" I had forgotten this prank, and many others that Mary likewise called to mind for me.

Upon a certain occasion when Mary was being interviewed by Mrs. Sherman, to whom reference has been made by Dr. Stevens, she was questioned as one would question a traveler from a strange country, and requested to give an account of the personages she had met in the Summerland. Mary

gave to Mrs. Sherman the exact names of those who had composed her family, then long since dead, and also the names of many of Mrs. Sherman's neighbors and acquaintances who had passed out; mentioning in .particular the family of Rev. Mr Rhea, and stating the name of a child in spirit form unknown to Mrs. Sherman. From her intimate knowledge of the Rhea family, Mrs Sherman insisted that Mary was mistaken in this instance; but Mary stoutly maintained that the child named was resident in the life beyond, and later investigation proved this to be correct. The name given was one being considered when the babe at childbirth, or shortly afterwards, passed out.

If such occurrences as the foregoing do not possess positively the value of clear and direct communication with the spirit world, some other solution not involving auto-suggestion must be evolved. If the hypothesis of a subconscious, subliminal self be adopted, how much of a distinct personality may we claim to represent? And how do those who object to the spiritual hypothesis know to what extent their objections are due to this same auto-suggestion?

Is the brain the plaything of external forces that make or dismantle that which we each so proudly claim as especially our own—distinct personality?

If auto-suggestion accounts for the phenomena in the case of my sister, then must it account for much or all the phenomena we daily experience. Is the scientist less under the influence of this subtle agent, than the brain untutored? Are we dependent upon the character of our own mentality, or are our brains, as it were, but sensitized plates receiving and recording fleeting thought-pictures as they pass unbidden before us? These explanations are to me cumbersome and strained when compared with the distinct reality of spirit return, which

is simple and natural, and in accordance with the Principles of Nature as we are beginning to understand them.

As the time appointed grew nearer and nearer for the departure of my sister Mary, I was filled with anxiety as to when and how the conscious spirit of Lurancy Vennum would return and claim her own body. Unusual indeed in this life is the spectacle of two personalities alternately inhabiting and dominating one tenancy. My doubts and fears as to the outcome were intensified by the public criticism, naturally enough engendered; and this kept me in close scrutiny of all that was about to take place.

On a certain morning, my Mother and I were seated in Mother's bed-room, with Lurancy between us. We determined to test the possibility of the contemplated change; and we asked Mary if she could comprehend the purpose of her control of Lurancy's body, and when and how the personalities could be effected. "Mary," I said, you tell us that 'Lurancy is just on the outside'; can you demonstrate the change of characters?" "I understand why I am here, of course," she replied; "I will ask and see if Lurancy can come back." And in an instant, Lurancy—timid and shrinking, again in the physical, and in a strange home—was before us. The change in personality was complete in every way, and the situation was painfully embarrassing. Lurancy—the real Lurancy—again in her own body, demanded to know where she was. She recognized me, however; I had trained her with other girls in various church and social functions. But I had to introduce her to my mother. Lurancy asked to be taken home, and inquired most eagerly after her mother and the immediate family. We—Mother and I—explained that she had been ill and that she was with us for the purpose of being cured. Then in a

moment the personality was reversed and my sister Mary was speaking from Lurancy's body. Grasping me about the neck, she implored—"Nervie, do you longer doubt that it is I?" It was then that Mary informed us that within a week—naming the day—she would depart to her home in heaven.

Dr. Stevens has faithfully portrayed many events occurring in this wonderful history; and I might and would add many more that did not come under his notice, did I not feel that so to do could not further strengthen the evidence of an angel's visitation to my Father's home.

On the morning of the day that was named, I went, as instructed by Mary, to my parents' home for a final leave-taking; and from thence it was arranged that I should accompany Mary to my Father's office, and that Father should escort her home.

The sadness of a farewell is too well known to all mothers and sisters. Leaving the home arm-in-arm, Mary and I started on what was to me a most marvelous journey. Then did I fully realize the wonder of it; I knew that but few mortals could understand I was walking down the road in close companionship with a conscious intelligence that had dwelt in another world for twelve years. But it was very real to me.

After we had passed the home of Mrs. Marsh, where good-byes were said, and when I was oppressed by fears of something I could not define, I said to Mary, "Where is Lurancy now?" "Just on the outside, Nervie," she answered, as she had answered before; and like a flash there was another change, and Lurancy Vennum had returned. Startled and confused, in my efforts to pacify, I assured her we were on our way to her home; and then I prayed with all my might that Mary might be permitted to again come, and remain until we reached home. And

as instantaneously as before, there was yet another alteration: Lurancy was gone, and Mary was back at my side.

Together we entered my own home, which we passed to reach my Father's office, for the last time; and after we had rested for a few moments, and crowded into that brief space all the love and endearments we had so sorely missed from each other in a separation of years, the final kiss was given and returned—and in a moment Mary had left us for the last time.

Lurancy Vennum has grown to be a healthy, middleaged woman. She is the mother of eleven children, and is respected as a neighbor and honored as a friend. Of the part she played in a great drama staged by heaven and earth, and of what she experienced, she has but dim remembrance; but her attachment to her former friends has not lessened with the passing years.

Watseka, Illinois,
September 7, 1908.

fasted + ate little 40

Feb 1 - 1878 $\frac{8}{26}$
To Raffle " 11 - $\frac{}{27}$
Mary left May 21 11 a.m. 41 - 42
3 months and 10 days
41 "It did not die."