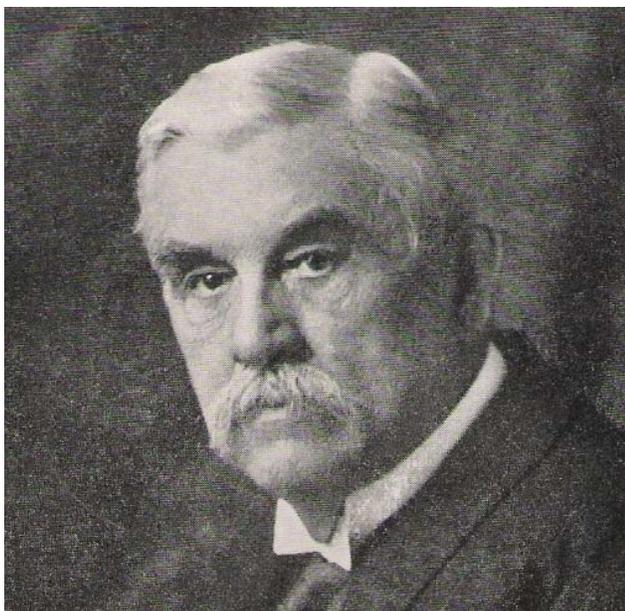


The Materializations of May King

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In his 1920 book, *Dawn of the Awakened Mind*, John S. King, a Toronto physician and president of the Canadian Society for Psychical Research, recorded phenomena that no doubt exceed the boggle threshold of most people, including even psychical researchers who have accepted the reality of spirit communication.



John S. King

While King (1843-1921) began investigating mediumship during the early 1890s, several chapters of the book focus on an eight-day period in November 1911, when he had four sittings with Etta Wriedt, a Detroit, Michigan direct-voice medium, and three sittings with Joseph B. Jonson, a Toledo, Ohio materialization medium.

The first sitting was with Mrs. Wriedt, referred to by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator

of Sherlock Holmes, as the best direct-voice medium in the world. In the direct-voice phenomenon, voices emanate from outside the medium, rather than from the medium's mouth and larynx, as is the case in the trance voice phenomenon. Darkness almost always provided for stronger voices, but there was often enough light that an investigator could keep an eye on the medium to rule out fraud. Vice-Admiral W. Usborne Moore, a retired British naval officer and psychical researcher, had many sittings with Mrs. Wriedt in England, and was convinced that she was a gifted medium. Both King and Moore reported seeing Wriedt talking to someone sitting next to her as the spirit voices were heard. At times, two spirit voices would be talking to different sitters in the room as Wriedt conversed with someone else in the room. This information is mentioned by the researchers because it was often claimed by skeptics that direct-voice mediums were expert ventriloquists.

At his first sitting with Mrs. Wriedt, 44 days after his wife, May, had died, King was greeted by the voice of Dr. Sharp, Wriedt's spirit control. "He pointed out that I could not do much for the departed spirit, but that it could do much for me; that my worrying and fretting, or sorrowing, would only tend to hinder or delay her progress or advancement," King recorded. "He also advised me to take care of myself, told me that Hypatia, my spirit guide, was with her (May) and would speak with me."

A deceased physician communicated briefly and then King's nephew, Jesse, spoke, offering some very evidential information while also telling King that it might be too early for "Auntie May" to speak clearly or distinctly. Jesse

was followed by Hypatia, who said that she had brought May. "Johnnie! Oh Johnnie! My dear Johnnie! It is I. It's May! It's your 'Babe!' I am not dead, I am alive. I told you I would come if I could, and I am here." King pointed out that the names "Johnnie" and "Babe" were their own private pet names and known to no one else.

May mentioned that she could not have succeeded in communicating without the help of Hypatia and Jesse. She spoke with Dr. King for some 15 minutes about personal matters, including some jewelry and personal belonging of hers that King had put in a safety deposit box. King noted that he had placed the items in the safety deposit box two days earlier and considered this strong evidence. There was specific reference to one item and to specific relatives and friends. May asked that her thanks be given to one particular friend for assisting in preparing her body for burial, another very evidential item which King was certain the medium could not have known. "She talked as naturally about these things as she ever conversed with me in her home life, and she was always known as a shrewd business woman," King wrote. Before ending the conversation, May told her husband that she would materialize for him in Toledo.

The following day, King again sat with Mrs. Wriedt, and May communicated again. As a test, King asked his wife to tell Mrs. Wriedt what she gave him for Christmas last. The voice coming through the trumpet said, "I had a grip made for the Doctor's instruments, and had his initials, J.S.K. printed in gold letters on the outside; and a Christmas card with printed greetings and written on by myself, which card I placed on the inside of the grip. He found it on the chair at breakfast time." King recorded that this was "absolutely correct." King also heard from his old-time friend, MacRoberts at that sitting.

King then went to Toledo that same day and sat with Jonson that night. He had sat with Jonson before, had closely inspected the room, the

materializing cabinet, the furniture and the single window in the second-floor room, taking every precaution to rule out fraud. While skeptics assume the cabinet is nothing more than a dressing room for a fraudulent medium, it is well established that the cabinet in materialization mediumship is used for the complete darkness required for the spirit to use the medium's ectoplasm in building up a materialized form.

There was a circle of six, including King, Jonson, Jonson's wife, and three others at that first Toledo sitting. After each of the other sitters had fully-materialized visitors from the cabinet, May emerged, caressed her husband, said a few words and then dematerialized in front of him. "As I stood there looking at her she got shorter and shorter in stature, and while still looking me in the face, she went down and down, in sight of all sitters, till she disappeared in the floor," King recorded. "Her voice in this, her first materialization, was not as strong as when speaking through the trumpet at Mrs. Wriedt's."

King's deceased brother, who had died at age 18 months, then materialized as an adult as did King's daughter who had died at birth 20 years earlier. Although King did not recognize either, he was able to ask them questions and confirm that they were who they said they were. The brother told King that he had been present along with many other relatives when May entered the spirit world. Still another materialized spirit for King was a man who had worked with King some years before and had died about three years earlier.

For his third sitting with Jonson, King had a stenographer accompany him to record the communication and happenings. There were 19 separate manifestations that night. May King was the eleventh to materialize. The stenographer recorded: "Beautiful and strong, and so convincingly natural as to overcome a strong man's self-control, Dr. King's wife stood materially before him, speaking the following comforting words: 'Don't cry, dear Johnnie. My dear, this life is

beautiful on our side...(more discussion about what to do with her jewelry)...Oh, Johnnie dear, I feel my strength going...."

King later recorded that his wife appeared normal in size and voice on the third materialization, having noted that she had appeared shorter than her normal height in the first one. Her form, feature, voice, and mannerisms, he stressed, were all those he had become familiar with over his 25-year marriage to May.

"The majority of the forms I saw in the three séances in November materialized inside the cabinet, and returning towards the cabinet, disappeared as they got to the opening of the curtains, but without entering the cabinet," King explained. "A few materialized outside of the cabinet, and several were materialized inside the cabinet, while Jonson sat at one end of the semi-circle of people part of the time, and another part of the time he walked along in front of the line of sitters, drawing magnetism from them to build the forms inside the cabinet, so Grey Feather, his Indian spirit guide, explained through Jonson's vocal organs; and lastly a part of the time was spent on the inside of the cabinet."

One of the 19 spirit manifestations was Dr. Sharp, Etta Wriedt's spirit control, who had told King in his sitting with Wriedt that he was materialize in Toledo. "I am prepared to admit that many phenomena are so strange, and incomprehensible, that they seem unbelievable until they have been appreciated or experienced by physical senses," King offered, mentioning a materialized spirit of one of the other sitters at Jonson's séance walking about the room and then picking up his seven-year-old granddaughter, kissing her, putting her back on the floor, "then melted, so to speak, down into the floor, and disappeared from view, several feet from the cabinet entrance."

King further observed that higher developed intelligences appear to have the power of producing much more light, or else require less darkness to exhibit themselves in materialized

form and perfect detail. Also, music facilitated the appearance of the forms.

Two days later, King returned for two more sittings with Wriedt, the first with a group and the second a private sitting. Again, May communicated and spoke in detail about private matters. King was then in for a surprise, as his first wife, Martha, who had died 37 years earlier, spoke, as did the daughter who died at birth.

In concluding his report on this series of séances with Wriedt and Jonson, King, who had studied hypnotism, ruled that out as a possibility and then asked if there is any trickster clever enough to duplicate the natural voice, facial expressions, and mannerisms of close friends and family relatives while also obtaining intimate personal knowledge. He felt certain he had not been deceived.

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