Blanche Writes a Note The Survival Files — Case 55 — ESS = 244

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It was a very simple message containing neither confirmable fact nor profound insight – just a few lines speaking of a soul's sorrow for not having led a more spiritual life. Altogether forgettable and not worth mentioning. So, Mr. Stainton Moses never mentioned it and apparently forgot it. Yet, when the highly respected psychic researcher, F.W.H Myers, included it in his magnum opus, *Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*,¹ he called it "in some ways, the most remarkable of all."

Blanche Abercromby² was a wealthy and fairly well-known lady in British society when she died on a Sunday afternoon in 1877. Although she was in residence at her country house some 200 miles outside of London, the news was telegraphed to the *Times*, which published it the next day. Long before that newspaper hit the streets, however, within hours of the lady's passing, Moses received a brief message purporting to come from her and announcing her transition.

Moses was an ordained Minister of the Church of England but ill health had forced him to give up his clerical duties. At first contemptuous of spiritualism, he changed his views after several evidential experiences and eventually became a widely known medium himself. For a period of 11 years, his hand seemed controlled by spirits as it wrote deep and often enlightening commentaries that ultimately filled 24 notebooks. It was during one such automatic-writing session that his controls first informed him of the arrival in their midst, that afternoon, of Abercromby's spirit.

Moses vaguely recalled meeting Abercromby once, when they had both attended the seance of another medium. Upon asking why she should come to him, Moses was told that it was only chance that she had noticed the possibility of getting a message to him.

The fact that Moses knew of Abercromby's demise when the information could not have reached him through physical means (there was no link between them that would have prompted a telegram) is most evidential. Naysayers might claim, however, that he was somehow reading the minds of those who witnessed her passing. The message that was so "remarkable" came a few days later.

Again, Moses was in the midst of an automatic-writing session when he was informed that the following text would come directly from Abercromby and would be <u>in her own</u> <u>handwriting</u>. What followed were a few personal statements that included an insistence that Abercromby not be publicly identified as their author. The statements meant nothing to Moses but, being a man of high integrity, he honored the lady's wish for anonymity by folding over the page in his journal, gluing the edge down, and marking it "private matter." As for the script , it was noticeably different from that used for other messages, but he had no idea what Abercromby's handwriting looked like, and so thought no more about it.

Stainton Moses passed on in 1892. The executors of his will gave his journals to Myers for examination. It so happens that Myers had been a friend of Abercromby many years before,

¹ Pages 378-379.

² A pseudonym created by Myers.

so he was surprised to find a note from her among the documents. Although he reports that the message contained "no definite facts," he states that it "was entirely characteristic of the Blanche Abercromby whom I had known." Myers had corresponded with the lady, but had not kept any of her letters. Fortunately, he knew one of her sons well enough to ask for and receive a letter so that he could compare the handwriting. "The strong resemblance," Myers writes, "was at once obvious, but the 'A' of the surname was made in the letter in a way quite different from that adopted in the automatic script." This particular letter, however, was written by Abercromby early in life. When other letters, written nearer the time of her death, were examined, it was evident that "during the last year of her life she had taken to writing the 'A' in the way in which it was written in the automatic script."

Although both Myers and the son felt the resemblance was incontestable, they submitted the journal and two letters to Dr. Richard Hodgson, a researcher with some experience detecting fraud via handwriting analysis. Hodgson concluded: "I have no doubt whatever that the person who wrote the notebook writing intended to reproduce the writing of Blanche Abercromby."

Analysis

This case is so simple that it is easy not to give it the attention it deserves. The person whose hand wrote the message (Moses) had never seen an example of Abercromby's handwriting. And even if he were in close telepathic communication with someone familiar with her script, being familiar with the appearance of something is quite a different thing from being familiar with how to reproduce it. (I could gaze upon the Mona Lisa from now 'til doomsday without gaining any ability to paint an exact copy.) Learning to reproduce someone's handwriting probably is not as difficult as learning to play chess like a grand master (see Case 24); nevertheless, there is no evidence that one can learn any skill telepathically. Furthermore, it is beyond ludicrous to think that the Reverend Stainton Moses achieved such a unique feat (including the ability to shape the letter 'A' in the recently adopted way) only to write a few irrelevant lines and then hide them away.

Clearly, something was done that could not have been done without the involvement of the spirit of a deceased person.

END CASE 55

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