

***WILLIAM WALKER  
ATKINSON***



***TELEPATHY***



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# **Telepathy**

**The Theory, the Facts & the Proof**

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# CHAPTER I

## WHAT IS TELEPATHY

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The term "telepathy" is of quite recent origin. A few years ago it was not to be found in any of the standard dictionaries, and its use was confined to the small circle of investigators who were pursuing experiments in thought-transference, and who regarded the Society for Psychical Research of England as their centre of influence. At the present time, however, the word has passed into popular usage, is found in the current editions of the dictionaries and heard frequently on the streets. It was derived from the two Greek words, *tele*, meaning "afar," and *pathos* meaning "feeling." The term itself has been severely criticized as conveying a wrong impression, for thought-transference is not the same as "feeling"-transference. Some authorities have preferred the term "Telæsthesia," which, freely translated, means "perception by the senses at a distance." The present writer has sought to introduce the term "Telementation" which, freely translated, means "mental action at a distance" and the said term has met with considerable favor among scientific investigators of the subject. But, in spite of the objections, the public clings to the original term, and "Telepathy" is generally used to designate the phenomena of thought-transference, or as the dictionaries state it: "The action of one mind on another at a distance and without communication by means of the senses."

Thought-transference is not a new thing in the thought of the world, although it may seem to the ordinary reader to be a recent discovery. Its beginning is lost in the haze of the history of the primitive peoples of the race. The ancient

writings of India give us many instances of the effect of one mind upon another at a distance. And the occult legends of other ancient peoples give evidence that the belief in the effect of mind upon mind at a distance was quite common. In many of the old occult writings we find traces of this almost universal belief in thought-transmission and thought-force, and we have every reason to believe that the old alchemists were fully acquainted with the phenomena.

In India, especially, has the belief in thought-transference prevailed from time immemorial. Passing over the legendary tales, and coming down to the time of recent history, we see many instances of the acceptance of this idea by the people of that old land of the strange and mysterious. The English who lived through the great uprising in India in the last century have passed on to us many tales of the strange power of the native Hindus which enabled them to flash from one part of India to another the news of great battles and uprisings. It is recorded by those who passed through this great uprising that the Hindus were noticed to be agitated in a strange way about the time of the actual occurrences in far distant parts of the land, and seemed to be fully informed regarding these occurrences, while the English were compelled to wait for days until their couriers brought them the news in the regular way. In other words, the natives maintained a mental-telegraphic system, while the English were compelled to rely upon couriers, the days of the electric telegraph not having as yet arrived.

But, so far as the subject of modern Telepathy is concerned we may as well assume that Telepathy had its birth into modern scientific thought at the time of the formation of the English Society for Psychical Research in 1882. One of the stated objects of the said Society was "to conduct an examination into the nature and extent of any influence which may be exerted by one mind upon another, apart from any generally recognized mode of perception." While the latter years of the Society's existence has been

devoted principally to an investigation of the phenomena of clairvoyance, spirit-return, trancemediumship, etc., its first decade was almost entirely devoted to the investigation of telepathy, thought-transference, and similar phenomena. The early experiments of the Society have been fully reported, and these reports, which comprise several volumes, have given the world a record of psychic phenomena of the greatest value to science.

The celebrated Sidgwick experiments, conducted under the auspices of the Society for Psychical Research in 1889 and 1890, excited great interest in scientific circles, and placed the subject of Telepathy upon a basis which science could not afford to refuse to perceive. And the result has been that many careful scientists have freely acknowledged that "there may be something to it," some going so far as to openly advocate Telepathy as an established scientific fact, although there are many scientists who still adhere to the opinion that Telepathy remains to be proven scientifically, while some of the ultraconservatives go so far as to insist that Telepathy is scientifically impossible, this latter opinion being calculated to cause a smile to one who remembers how many "scientifically impossible" things have afterward been proven to be not only scientifically possible, or probable, but also actually existent. It is either a very bold man, or else a foolish one, who in these days can positively assert that anything is scientifically impossible. In this connection one is reminded of the learned body of scientists who sitting in conference solemnly decided that it was scientifically impossible for a vessel to cross the ocean by the power of steam. While the decision was being recorded on the minutes, the word was received that a steamship had actually made the voyage across the ocean, and was that moment entering the harbor. One also recalls the story of the eminent English scientist who had for a lifetime positively disputed the possibility of certain facts, and who in his old age, when asked to witness the actual

demonstration of the disputed fact, refused to look into the microscope for the purpose, and left the room, angrily shaking his head and saying, "It is impossible." Yesterday's "impossibilities" are often tomorrow's "proven facts."

In view of what has been said above, the following opinions of certain well-known scientists may prove of interest to the reader as indicating the change in the mental attitude of science toward the phenomena of Telepathy.

Sir William Crookes, in an address delivered several years ago at Bristol, England, before the Royal Society (of which he was president), said:

"Were I now introducing for the first time these inquiries to the world of science, I should choose a starting point different from that of old, where we formerly began. It would be well to begin with Telepathy; with the fundamental law, as I believe it to be, that thoughts and images may be transferred from one mind to another without the agency of the recognized organs of sense—that knowledge may enter the human mind without being communicated in any hitherto known or recognized ways. Although the inquiry has elicited important facts with reference to the mind, it has not yet reached the scientific stage of certainty which would enable it to be usefully brought before one of the sections. I will therefore confine myself to pointing out the direction in which scientific investigation can legitimately advance. If Telepathy take place, we have two physical facts—the physical change in the brain of A. the suggestor, and the analogous physical change in the brain of B. the recipient of the suggestion. Between these two physical events there must exist a train of physical causes. Whenever the connecting sequence of intermediate causes