

# TEST SITTINGS WITH D. D. HOME AT AMSTERDAM (1858)

By G. ZORAB

---

**ABSTRACT:** When D. D. Home, the famous medium, left the United States in 1855, the public interest in his abilities led him through the British Isles, Western Europe, and even to Russia, and as he went he gave sittings for a great range of people—royalty and the nobility, scientists, renowned authors and poets, and others. Sometimes there were uncritical observers and again, as in the sittings described here, there were groups of utter disbelievers. Most of Home's activities have been extensively reported; recently, however, some new material has come to light. Mr. George Zorab, the recipient of the Perrott-Warrick Studentship of Trinity College, Cambridge, for 1967-69, has been investigating the work of D. D. Home and, in the course of his research, has come upon an almost unknown report of three sessions which Home held in Amsterdam in 1858. The account, which is presented here for its historical interest, describes the phenomena produced at these seances and is followed by Mr. Zorab's discussion of some of the counterhypotheses commonly raised against such reported occurrences—Ed.

---

## INTRODUCTION

My investigations of Daniel Dunglas Home and the physical phenomena alleged to have been produced at his sittings in various countries have, to a great extent, been induced by my rediscovery of the reports of seances given by Home to a group of skeptics in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, at the beginning of February 1858. As I read through these interesting reports (which Home did not mention in his autobiographical books and which apparently were known to only very few people outside the Netherlands in those days) it struck me that the circumstances and conditions prevailing at these Amsterdam sittings were such that practically every objection brought forward against the possible paranormal nature of Home's physical phenomena could be met.

Though from a modern parapsychological point of view generally the sittings at Amsterdam may certainly be qualified as a success, it would appear that Home himself was rather disappointed with the results and the reactions obtained. He had probably expected that the phenomena produced would at once have converted the skeptic

sitters to a belief in the existence of spirits and in the reality of communication taking place between this world and the next. He also complained of the dreary accommodations and the bleakness of the old-fashioned hotel where he had to stay and conduct his seances. What Home also very much disliked, and perhaps had not fully understood when agreeing to come over to Holland for the special purpose of giving these seances, was the fact that all his Amsterdam sitters, from a purely Christian point of view, were hardboiled "infidels" (7, p. 174). The latter circumstance was indeed a grievous thing for a man like Home, always ready to uphold the tenets of the Christian religion and wanting to uphold his reputation of being a true professing Christian and not a man whose phenomena were produced with the help of Satan.

The setting behind the invitation to visit the Netherlands and conduct sittings at Amsterdam is the following:

In 1856 a Society was founded at Amsterdam, and it issued a monthly periodical entitled *De Dageraad* (The Dawn). The latter was also the Society's name. In this periodical, opinions were expressed from the very beginning which some time later would be those of the Dutch Radical School of Modern Protestantism; i.e., the denial of all Biblical miracles, miraculous divine intervention, the reality of a world of spirits, etc., and subjection of all religious ideas and interpretations to a commonsense judgment based on the findings of the natural sciences. The motto of the *Dageraad* was a rather significant one, viz., *Magna est veritas et praevalabit* (The truth is great and it shall prevail), indicating that what the founders of the *Dageraad* were after was the truth and nothing but the truth.

Briefly, the men editing the *Dageraad* were typical die-hard rationalists, and in a certain sense several of them might even be termed materialists and atheists. What the public airing and propagation of such viewpoints meant in the Low Countries of the middle of the last century, when by far the greater part of the intellectuals there were proud of their conservative and fundamentalistic beliefs, can well be imagined. How progressive and daring the editors and collaborators of the *Dageraad* were can perhaps best be illustrated by pointing to the publication, in 1858 (i.e., one year before Charles Darwin brought out his *Origin of Species*), of an article in that

periodical entitled "Is Mankind Descended from the Anthropoid Apes?"

Now, how did it come about that these rationalists, staunch unbelievers in the existence of spirits and such entities, requested Home to come to Holland for the purpose of giving a few sittings so that they could themselves investigate the wonderful phenomena claimed to be produced by spirits of the dead and to prove their survival beyond the grave?

In the *Dageraad* a letter to the editor was published (13), written by a man who signed it "A Spiritualist," saying he sent the editor Allan Kardec's book *Le Livre des Esprits* (The Book of the Spirits), giving him at the same time an exposition of spiritualistic beliefs. The letter was dated December 7, 1857, and was sent off from the Chateau de Cerçay,<sup>1</sup> the address of Mr. (Baron) J. N. Tiedeman Martheze. We may be certain that this letter was written by the same man who accompanied Home to the Netherlands. In a note attached to the letter, the editor remarked that the letter was originally written in French but that the author was Dutch by birth; but having lived such a long time in France and other foreign countries, he now could no longer write the Dutch language as correctly as he could French. In his letter, Tiedeman Martheze mentioned the fact that in the course of the previous three years in the States and in France, rappings had been heard on walls and furniture and that even tables, chairs, and other objects had been moved about. As to his own experiences in this field, he assured the reader that he himself had witnessed most of the physical phenomena, with the exception of full-form apparitions. The latter, he said, were very rare and difficult phenomena owing to the atmosphere in his part of the world, but in the States the atmosphere was much more electrified (and presumably therefore the full-form materializations or phantoms were far more common there than in Europe).

In a footnote, the editor remarked that he was not going to

<sup>1</sup>Tiedeman Martheze lived at the Chateau de Cerçay, situated not far from Paris. Apparently he added "Martheze" to his name after 1860. He signed with this full name during a controversy in a German magazine about the question of who paid Home's expenses to the Netherlands. This was the first time his name appeared in print, and taking this to be the correct spelling, authorized by Tiedeman himself, I shall be using it throughout this article. When he accompanied Home to Holland, he was known as J. N. Tiedeman.

pronounce any judgment on the spiritualistic claims until these claims had been proved experimentally (13, p. 376). It should not be lost sight of, the editor continued, that there existed natural forces which science was still unable to explain. The latter, of course, referred to the physical phenomena that were brought forward by the spiritualists as irrefutable evidence for the existence of spirits and their ability to contact the world of the living.

After the receipt of Tiedeman Martheze's letter, published in the *Dageraad*, there apparently developed a vivacious correspondence between Amsterdam and Paris (14, p. 14; 6, p. 11), the *Dageraad* writers thereby expressing their utter unbelief in the claims of spiritualism and Mr. Tiedeman Martheze probably upholding these claims. As the proof of the pudding is in the eating, Tiedeman Martheze decided to travel to the Netherlands, having persuaded Home to accompany him on this trip. We should therefore keep the fact in mind, when judging the evidence of the Amsterdam sittings, that their purpose was only that of investigation so that the skeptical *Dageraad* men could be convinced of the authenticity of spiritualistic phenomena by putting them to the test under their own conditions.

It is, I believe, correct to say that these were the developments that ultimately led to the conducting of the Amsterdam sittings and that it was primarily to win over the unbelieving Dutch intellectuals to the truths of spiritualism and its belief in spirits that Tiedeman Martheze took Home to Holland. (He probably had some claim on Home since the latter had enjoyed Tiedeman Martheze's hospitality for many months.)

According to the Dutch newspapers of the period, Home arrived in Holland on January 31, 1858. The next day, he conducted his first sitting with Queen Sophia of the Netherlands. After he had given two more sittings to her Majesty the Queen and conducted at least two seances at the Hague<sup>2</sup> in the presence of a number of prominent Dutchmen favorably disposed toward spiritualism, it may be presumed that he left the Hague about February 6 and traveled on to Amsterdam in order to conduct the sittings promised to the editors of the *Dageraad*. In Amsterdam, three sittings were

<sup>2</sup> These sittings were held in the house of Major J. Revius (see references 14 and 9).

held with the *Dageraad* men as sitters. These three sittings took place in the course of little more than twenty-four hours; one on the day of arrival (let us keep to the date of February 6) and two the next day (6, p. 12). On the day following, Home left the capital of Holland and returned to The Hague to keep his promise to the Queen and conduct his fourth sitting with her (14, p. 16).

#### THE THREE AMSTERDAM SITTINGS

Home himself, in a short passage devoted to his visit to Amsterdam (7, p. 174), wrote that when the *Dageraad* investigators with whom he was to have sittings presented themselves in the hotel room where the seance was going to be conducted, not a single one of these men was known to him. Seemingly quite undaunted by all those ten pairs of searching and skeptical glances, Home invited the ten "unbelievers" to be seated, and so the first Amsterdam sitting started.

The *Dageraad* report (6) was written by one of the prominent men of the *Dageraad*, Dr. F. C. Güntz, who was present at all three Amsterdam sittings. The English translation of the complete report follows herewith:

The company that gathered together in Mr. Home's hotel at Amsterdam last February consisted of men who could be considered the most unbelieving of all unbelievers. Mr. Home had consented to come over to Holland, urged to do so by one of our esteemed compatriots.<sup>3</sup> In the course of a vivacious correspondence the members of the above-mentioned company had expressed their utter disbelief in the authenticity of Mr. Home's spiritualistic phenomena. It was this strongly expressed opinion of disbelief that induced Mr. Home to come over to the Netherlands in order to have his phenomena tested.

The company consisted of not less than ten persons, among whom were a Phil. Dr., an M. D., a graduate apothecary well-acquainted with magnetic phenomena, a doctor of Law, and an optician. The other men, too, were persons of high and well-attested principles, all of whom, if it came to conducting a serious and well-deserving investigation, would be ready and would dare to descend even to his Infernal Majesty's special domain.

The investigators present seated themselves around a large round

<sup>3</sup> This gentleman was Mr. Tiedeman Martheze.

mahogany table.<sup>4</sup> Its top rested on a column ending in a kind of pyramid, under which three wooden balls were affixed and upon which the whole table rested. The table top was not screwed onto the column, but was directly and immovably fixed to it. The same applied to the balls at the pyramid end of the column.

Mr. Home, who talked very little himself, urged us, in order to remain in a normal state, to go on talking freely among ourselves. This we did, continuing our conversation now in Dutch and then again in French. He also insisted that we should observe him and all his manipulations as closely as possible. This too we did, Argus-eyed.

On the table were placed four bronze candelabra with wax candles; also some books and periodicals. An ordinary tablecloth was spread over the table top, but when the sittings were started, it was folded up toward the middle of the table, thus leaving a free space, about a foot and a half wide, all around the table top on which to lay our hands. Moreover, this state of affairs made it possible to obtain an undisturbed view of what was happening under the table. In order to acquire a still better view of the floor under the table, two candelabra were placed under the seance table.<sup>5</sup>

And now the hands, or rather the fingertips, were placed on the table top, keeping free of contact with the hands of one's neighbor, i.e., not touching each other's little fingers, as is generally done when forming a chain of hands. The hands were not covered by a thin cloth as is sometimes the rule at seances, so that our hands lay on the table completely uncovered and bare.

Mr. Home informed us that there was absolutely no need to keep one's hands continually on the table or in the same position. One was allowed to take them off the table any time one wished to do so, so as to prevent, for instance, any numbness of the fingers, etc.

<sup>4</sup> On page 21 of this pamphlet (6) it is stated that 14 persons could easily sit around the table and that it had a height of 80 centimeters (32 inches).

<sup>5</sup> The Dutch text does not explicitly mention the fact that the candles in the candelabra were lighted. It simply states that four candelabra with wax candles were placed upon the table, and under the table, two candelabra (presumably also with wax candles). These candelabra must have had their candles lighted, for the sitting was held on an early February evening, say at eight o'clock or later, so that it must have been completely dark outside when the sitting began and the lighting of candles would have been imperative. Surely, there would have been no sense at all in placing unlighted candles in candelabra under the table in order "to acquire a still better view of the floor" there. With great probability it may be presumed that what the author had in mind was "lighted candles under and on top of the table."

We acted upon this advice, and by feeling ourselves all over, we convinced ourselves that our bodies remained in a normal condition. Such manipulations also gave proof of the fact that our minds were working in a normal manner. I will now mention more evidence of the normal working of my mind. During the sitting, I purposely recapitulated in my mind everything, up to the smallest details, that had happened at home that day and let my mind dwell on these events.<sup>6</sup>

The other sitters (among whom were persons who some time previously had failed to be "biologized" by Mr. Koning<sup>7</sup> and upon whom the powers of mesmerists<sup>8</sup> did not exercise the slightest influence) also convinced themselves that they were not getting into an abnormal mental state by applying various methods and devices to gauge their mental health and saneness.

In the meantime, everyone present talked freely with his neighbors, making all kinds of comments and, laughing mockingly concerning the matter at hand, gave expression to his disbelief, especially in reference to the dogmatic beliefs connected with the phenomena.<sup>9</sup> From time to time, one of the persons present was loudly called upon by one seated at the greatest distance from him across the length of the table and was asked to give his opinion on this or that matter, or to be an arbiter in some discussion the loudly calling gentleman was having with his neighbor.

<sup>6</sup> Here the writer is trying to prove to himself that he had not entered into a hypnotic state or was prone to having hallucinations. Already in those days hypnosis and hallucination were being hypothesized as possible explanations of paranormal physical phenomena. Lord Lindsey, who had sittings with Home at Florence in 1856, was also well aware of the possibilities of coming under the suggestive (mesmeristic) influence of a medium who might induce hallucinations, and he acted accordingly (4, p. 63).

<sup>7</sup> Mr. Koning introduced "electro-biology" to the Dutch public in 1852. Originally the idea started in the States and was then brought over to Europe. It is nothing else but a method for heightening one's suggestibility. By means of it mesmerists selected the persons who were highly suggestible.

<sup>8</sup> In the Netherlands of the middle of the nineteenth century, it was usual to differentiate between "electro-biology" and "mesmerism." It was believed that the latter was the direct influencing of man's spiritual faculties (powers of the soul or spirit) by the "animal magnetic fluid" (Mesmer). It was this fluid that the mesmerist's fingertips, eyes, etc., radiated, influencing the subject and bringing out the higher spiritual faculties, such as the healing of the sick, ESP, and PK. The "electro-biological" influence, on the other hand, was thought to be of a more gross physiological nature.

<sup>9</sup> These beliefs referred to were a spiritualistic explanation of the phenomena produced; i.e., that the spirits of deceased persons bring about the phenomena, thereby making use of Home's mediumistic powers.

And now let us proceed to the phenomena produced. During the first sitting, for we had three seances, two in the evening and one at noon, the table started to make a sliding movement toward the place where Mr. Home was sitting. Those sitting at Mr. Home's side of the table were requested to try to stop this movement; this, however, they could not do. At the other side of the table (i.e., our side) the same maneuver was attempted, but without any more success. When the table had come to a standstill, raps were heard to proceed from all parts of the room. We then asked the table to rap in a certain manner, and as many times as we should indicate. This wish was carried out to the full.

The table now started to rise up on one side, and though I do not want to claim that it was raised so high that the candelabra placed on the table top *necessarily* had to lose their equilibrium and topple off, the fact remains that the table rose so high that all of us were very much afraid that they would fall off.

It was at this time that the rising-up of the table also took place in spite of the fact that some of us tried very hard to prevent the table from going up and that our Phil. Dr. took his hands off it and, with a light in his hand, squatted on his haunches under the table to investigate.<sup>10</sup>

We then ordered the table to become as light as possible so that we should be able to lift it with one finger. And so it came to pass. When the order was reversed (i.e., to increase the table's weight) the table could hardly be lifted at all in spite of our utmost efforts.

The next sitting took place the following day at noon. This seance was conducted with only five persons present, all sitting around a small kitchen table. We had a hotel waiter bring us the kitchen table for the reason that the previous day's table was too large for the number of persons now present. We sat down at this table and observed the same phenomena that had happened the day before, viz., the moving-about and rising-up of the table, the answering of questions by means of raps, etc. One of the sitters (he told us about it later on) put a question merely by thinking of a request that the table give the knocks of the second degree of Free-

<sup>10</sup> Some have raised the question why the Phil. Dr. squatted under the table with a light in his hand to investigate, when there were already lighted candelabra standing there on the floor (see p. 52). The answer might well be that he did not take a lighted candelabrum from the table, but took one standing on the floor so that he could shine the light in all directions and make sure that Home was not employing any "normal" means in raising the table.



masonry.<sup>11</sup> We all heard the knocks without a request having been voiced, and so we were somewhat surprised to hear the raps. The gentleman concerned with the knockings told us during the course of the sitting that the raps were an answer to a question he had formulated in his mind and that the answer was the correct one. We further requested the table to rap out various numbers with a certain rapidity, and all this too was correctly done.

As we did not for a moment think or believe that the phenomena we heard and saw were produced by spirits of deceased persons, and since we also felt that it must indeed be a very odd kind of spirits that would consent to bring about the phenomena we were witnessing at Mr. Home's seances, we refrained from putting questions that could only be answered if such a world of spirits really did exist, a possibility we refused to believe in.

In the evening of the same day, we again came together in order to conduct another sitting. At this sitting seven persons were present, one of whom was a lady.

Hardly had we seated ourselves—within ten seconds—than we heard soft rappings that soon changed into loud knocks. These raps were heard to come from all sides of the large room.<sup>12</sup> They were accompanied by a complete rocking movement of the ceiling which became so violent that, together with the chairs on which we were seated, we felt ourselves going up and down as if on a rocking-horse. We experienced the same sensation and movement as when sitting in a carriage on springs while driving along the highroad.

The table behaved more or less in the same manner observed in the former two sittings, i.e., rising high and then descending smoothly to the floor without any abrupt movements.

And now phenomena were produced that would make those who

<sup>11</sup> In view of the unspoken request with regard to rapping out the distinctive knocking of the masonic second degree by one of the sitters present, it seems quite probable that all five sitters of the second Amsterdam seance were Freemasons and members of the Amsterdam Lodge "Post Nubila Lux." These sitters, therefore, with a great deal of probability, may have been Polak, d'Ablaing van Giessenburg, Günst, Westerman, and Rensen, who were members of the *Dageraad* Council and of the above-named Lodge.

It would have been of interest to know whether the question was formulated in Dutch or in French and if Home possessed some knowledge of masonic ritual. If the unspoken question was put in Dutch, it could have the significance that a telepathic (ESP) transference is not subject to language barriers but that the idea, not the mentally formulated words, is transmitted.

<sup>12</sup> Presumably the room in the hotel where the first seance was held and also the second seance when a small kitchen table was used.

possessed weaker nerves than we had believe that there indeed existed a world of spirits. Here are the facts. One of us suddenly asked his neighbor if *he* had touched him, a question the latter answered in the negative. The gentleman who had been touched declared that he felt something touching his cheek. The unbelievers loudly laughed at him, and all these men wanted also to be touched. Their desire was at once gratified. The one was touched on his arm, another felt something touching his knee, a third one was contacted on his cheek, etc. This went on to such an extent that one only needed to think of a limb or of some other part of one's body to be touched and at the very same moment this wish would be fulfilled. In the case of one of us, this touching and contacting went on continuously during twenty minutes and the touching took place on various parts of his body. Another man was so violently clutched at all of a sudden that he jumped from his chair.

Then one of us took out his handkerchief and threw it onto the floor in front of himself. He then requested that it be put into the hand of the man sitting opposite to him. The gentleman indicated laid his opened hand upon his knee, while the sitter next to him kept his eye constantly upon it. After a few moments the handkerchief flew into the hand on the knee; but as the owner of the hand did not close his fingers quickly enough, it dropped again onto the floor, and in the next instant it returned to the spot from where it had departed, viz., at the feet of the gentleman who had made the request. This gentleman then picked up the handkerchief and wound it around his little finger. Thereupon he placed his hand on the table and asked that the handkerchief be taken away from him. Immediately a force started to tug at the handkerchief, continuing to do so all the time until the handkerchief was slipped off the gentleman's little finger. All of us—some of us looking on above the table while others were watching under the table—saw all this happening. Other persons were keeping a constant eye on Mr. Home in order to see if he was exercising some influence on the phenomena.

I myself then pulled out my handkerchief, wound it around the whole of my right hand, and requested that it be taken away from me. Within a few seconds I had the sensation as if an invisible hand was trying to wrench the handkerchief off my hand. But I was holding on so firmly to the handkerchief that, after some repeated unsuccessful attempts lasting several minutes, the force could not succeed in getting the handkerchief off. I then took hold of the handkerchief between my

thumb and one of my fingers; and at my request, it was immediately pulled away from my fingers.

After this, many experiments were conducted, observed, and tested with the greatest coolness. But all was in vain. We saw the phenomena happening but could not explain them. And nothing could be observed that could give rise to even the slightest suspicion that Mr. Home was acting in a fraudulent manner.

#### DISCUSSION OF EXPLANATORY HYPOTHESES

The hypotheses that, in the course of many years, have been advanced to explain Home's phenomena as the result of "normal" occurrences are all based on the principle of illusionism, sleight-of-hand, heightening the sitter's suggestibility, creating and making use of certain favorable circumstances, etc. As a final means of avoiding the acceptance of a paranormal explanation of Home's physical phenomena, the hypothesis of collective hallucinations was advanced—hallucinations induced by what was assumed to be Home's extraordinary mesmeristic powers.

Let us see to what extent one or more of these hypotheses fit the picture given us by the seance report of the Amsterdam *Dageraad*.

##### *The Illusionistic Hypothesis*

The hypothesis that Home obtained his effects through "illusionism" is very difficult to uphold in view of the fact that the Amsterdam seance room was well illuminated all the time the sittings lasted. Furthermore, the skeptical observers were crowded around Home (the performer) and not restricted in any movement or observation they desired to make. Finally, the nature of the phenomena, e.g., the levitation of the table, the rocking movement of the ceiling and of the chairs on which the sitters were seated (this is a typical Home phenomenon, known in his time as the "earthquake-effect"), the table becoming very much lighter or very much heavier according to the sitters' wishes—all argue against the application of a conjurer's tricks. All such phenomena could only be produced in a "normal" manner by the use of heavy and cumbersome apparatus (pulleys, etc.), difficult to install quickly in a strange hotel room without speedy detection.

The seance table (seating fourteen persons!) in the hotel room seems to have been a very heavy one, for the reporter of the Amsterdam sittings, in refuting (6, p. 21) the suggestions<sup>18</sup> of an anonymous writer of the pamphlet *Nog een woord*, etc. (3) that Home's phenomena could well be explained by unconscious movements (later to be known as the Faraday effect, motor automatism, etc.), remarked that he would bet him (the anonymous writer) any money he liked that he would not be able, even exerting all his strength, to tip the table up and down—apparently because the table possessed a heavy central column. This same table was raised up from the floor to the height of 12 inches.

The "touchings" of the sitters' bodies, too, can hardly be explained by a conjurer's deftness and quickness. If the light in the seance room had been bad and persons had been touched on limbs under the table, the illusionistic hypothesis would obviously have been the most fitting. But in Amsterdam the illumination was good, the sitters were touched on spots of the body indicated in advance by themselves, so that they could concentrate all their attention on the places requested and thus watch out for where and how the touches occurred. Thus there is no question of Home's surreptitiously poking or touching this or that man without the latter or other persons present perceiving it. Some requests to be touched were even made mentally, and still these were correctly complied with. Finally, there was one sitter who was touched continuously during twenty minutes. Even the cleverest conjurer could not perform such a feat in the circumstances and get away with it!

The telekinetic handkerchief phenomenon that took place while every one of Home's actions above and under the table was being watched cannot, I feel, be explained by a clever sleight-of-hand trick or by the functioning of some device. And that the sitters watched, Argus-eyed, can be inferred from what the reporter wrote about the sitters' attitude: that "the only thing the persons who . . . perceived the phenomena produced by Home desired and thus also wanted to occur was that nothing would happen at the sittings, and this only because we then should be able to print an official denial about Home's powers" (6, p. 20). This sentence was also written

<sup>18</sup> As described in Revius' paper (9).

to show how little the *Dageraad* men were impressed by or cared for Home's spiritualistic claims.

### *The Elimination Hypothesis*

By refusing to sit with those he considered too critical or skeptical and sending such persons away out of the seance room, Home is said to have systematically gathered together only those sitters to whom, by their believing and uncritical nature, he could easily suggest all kinds of things, or who would become easy victims to his illusionistic talents (5, p. 371; 10, p. 272).

This hypothesis can be ruled out with reference to the Amsterdam sittings. The *Dageraad* men selected the sitters, not Home. Home did not know any of the sitters before the first seance started but did not say a word against any one of them being present. They were all skeptical minded, so there would have been no sense in turning some out of the room and allowing others to remain. What is more, so far as we know, Home left it to the *Dageraad* committee to fix their own conditions, Home passively abiding by them.

### *The Neglected-Foot-Control Hypothesis*

It was assumed (12, pp. 251-54) that in general little or no attention was paid to Home's "footwork" under the seance table and that he therefore could have produced quite a number of his phenomena by pushing, pressing, or touching with his feet bare, covered, or shod in some light manner. (For the "exposure" of how Home allegedly touched the sitters with his bare toes, see 11, p. 281 and 12, pp. 247-49.) There is little doubt that when Home was performing in a circle of believing and doting spiritualists no foot control was practiced. In such cases, and especially whenever the sitting was held in very little light (many sittings conducted by Home were dark seances!), it would indeed be quite easy to move or levitate the table, bells, etc., with the feet, while touches, too, could be distributed by means of the feet. Whether Home ever did so, is another question.

The Amsterdam sittings, however, do not give the slightest support to this hypothesis. By throwing back the tablecloth and illuminating the space under the table, the sitters brought Home's

feet well under control. The same applied to the moment when the telekinetic handkerchief phenomenon occurred.

*The Hypothesis of Defective Observation in Drawing-rooms, etc.*

This hypothesis suggests that sitters were withheld from testing procedures during the seances because the sittings were generally held in the houses of personages of rank or of those who were highly placed socially and were friends of Home, so that it would have been rude and impolite to the host if attempts had been made to expose Home. Hence, according to this hypothesis, those present only looked on without paying too much attention to possible trickery, and real experimentation therefore was usually out of the question (2, p. 39).

This hypothesis is illustrated with some humor by the poet of *Punch* (August 18, 1860) in verses dedicated to "Home, Great Home!" (quoted from 15, p. 106) :

Spring-blinds will fly up or run down at his word  
 (If a wire has been previously fixed to the cord)  
 He can make tables dance, and bid chairs stand on end  
 (But, of course, it must be in the house of a friend).

With regard to the Amsterdam sittings this hypothesis is entirely irrelevant. The seances were conducted in a hotel where Home had never been before and where he arrived only a few hours before the commencement of the first sitting.

*Hypothesis of Deficient Memory*

This hypothesis is advanced especially in connection with reports of observations of Home's phenomena written or published a long time (three to twenty years) after their occurrence.

It was F. Podmore (8, p. 245) who advanced this hypothesis in an attempt to find a loophole to escape accepting the paranormal nature of at least some of Home's physical phenomena witnessed by Hamilton Aidë during a sitting held at Nice in the 1860s (1). Aidë reported his experiences at Nice more than twenty years after their occurrence; and although he stated that his report was based on notes written out at the time, he was unable to recall the exact year

the sitting was conducted. This, of course, made it easy for Podmore to doubt Aidé's memory with regard to the phenomena he observed (which were very much like those reported to have happened at Amsterdam).

This hypothesis can be rejected with reference to the Amsterdam sittings. Without going into details here, it may be stated that sound evidence exists to prove that the Amsterdam report was published about April 15, 1858, i.e., about two months after the seances, a short enough time to justify the conclusion that the reporter's memory would still be sound enough to describe the observed phenomena accurately.

### *The Hallucination Hypothesis*

The hallucination hypothesis is based on the assumption that Home was an accomplished mesmerist and that by inducing collective hallucinations he made the sitters see and hear whatever he wanted them to perceive. The phenomena, then, would not be considered fraudulent in the ordinary sense, for they were not produced objectively; they existed only in the minds of the sitters (10).

This hypothesis, which should be regarded as the last trench in defense of what we now should term the normal, the natural, as against the supernatural (spirit intervention, etc.) seems to possess a far less sound basis in present times, now that our insight into the possibilities of hypnotism and other suggestive procedures is a great deal more advanced than in the days of Home's mediumship.

From a modern point of view, there is little doubt that the Amsterdam sittings give very little support to the hallucination hypothesis. First there is the fact that the sitters, being aware of the possibility, took precautions against it. They took various measures to control their minds and saw to it that the latter retained their normal working order. It is also stated that most of them had submitted themselves to be mesmerized, but without success. In this connection, the reporter rightly pointed out (6, p. 22) that experience had made it clear that only ten percent of the people were considered susceptible to being "biologized." Furthermore, there is nothing in the report indicating that Home made the slightest attempt to mesmerize (e.g., by making passes) one or more of the

sitters. On the contrary, the atmosphere existing in that large hotel room where the sittings were conducted was very far removed from one favorable to inducing collective hallucinations by Home. The sitters talked loudly among themselves and laughed and joked about the seance; and not one of them stood in awe of Home or of his reputation.

Discussing the phenomena, the reporter of the Amsterdam sittings comes to the conclusion that what those present saw and experienced could certainly not be ascribed to hallucinatory effects induced by the medium: "But an answer to the question, What, then, had brought about the unbelievable phenomena they had witnessed? was not forthcoming either. There was simply no explanation! They were absolutely baffled!" "But what was certain," the writer went on—"and on this point all sitters agreed—was that no fraud had been detected and that hallucinations were out of the question" (6, p. 22).

Stated in modern parapsychological terms the above would mean: probably the phenomena were paranormally produced.

#### REFERENCES

1. AIDÉ, H. Was I hypnotized? *Nineteenth Century*, 44 (April, 1890), 576-81.
2. AMADOU, R. *Les Grands Médiums* [The Great Mediums]. Paris: Editions Denoël, 1957.
3. Anonymous. "Nog een Woord over de Klopgeesten en hunne Manifestatiën" [Once More a Word about the Rapping Spirits and their Manifestations]. 's Gravenhage: W. P. van Stockum, 1858.
4. DINGWALL, E. J. Psychological problems arising from a report on telekinesis. *Brit. J. Psychol.*, 1953, 44, 61-66.
5. FIGUIER, L. *L'Histoire du Merveilleux dans les Temps Modernes* [The History of the Marvelous in Modern Times]. Vol. IV (2nd ed.). Paris: Hachette, 1861.
6. [GÜNST, F. C.?] "Ook Iets over de zoogenaamde Klopgeesten en hunne Manifestatiën, door een volbloed Dageradiaan. Open Brief aan den Schrijver van 'Nog een Woord over de Klopgeesten en hunne Manifestatiën'" [Also Something about the So-called Rapping Spirits and Their Manifestations, by a



- Purebred Dageraad Man. An Open Letter Addressed to the Author of "Once More a Word about the Rapping Spirits and Their Manifestations"]. Amsterdam: F. Günst, 1858.
7. HOME, D. D. *Révélation sur ma Vie Surnaturelle* [Revelations concerning my Supernatural Life]. Paris: Didier, 1864.
  8. Podmore, F. *Modern Spiritualism*. Vol. II. London: Methuen, 1902.
  9. [REVIUS, J.] "Bericht van Manifestatiën door Daniel Douglas [sic] Home en Anderen te 's Gravenhage Teweeg Gebracht en aan de Geestenwereld Toegeschreven, door een Ooggetuige" [Report on the Manifestations Produced by Daniel Douglas (sic) Home and other Persons at the Hague and claimed to be caused by the World of Spirits"]. 's Gravenhage: J. A. de Vieter, 1858.
  10. SOLOVOVO, COUNT PEROVSKY-PETROVO. The hallucination theory as applied to certain cases of physical phenomena. *J. Soc. psych. Res.*, 1908, 13, 266-74.
  11. SOLOVOVO, COUNT PEROVSKY-PETROVO. On the alleged exposure of D. D. Home in France. *J. Soc. psych. Res.*, 1911-12, 15, 274-88.
  12. SOLOVOVO, COUNT PEROVSKY-PETROVO. Some thoughts on D. D. Home. *Proc. Soc. psych. Res.*, 1930-31, 39, 247-65.
  13. [TIEDEMAN MARTHEZE, J. N.] Letter to the editor. *De Dageraad*, 5, 1858, 376-79.
  14. [VAN HEUSDEN, C. J.] "Iets over Geesten, door een Geloovige" [Something about Spirits, by a Believer]. Amsterdam: F. Günst, 1858.
  15. WYNDHAM, H. *Mr. Sludge, the Medium*. London: G. Bles, 1937.

Verdiestraat, 32  
The Hague, Holland