

"Note on Two Recently Reported Cases of Pathological and Other Pseudo-Presentiments," Proceedings of the American Society for Psychological Research, 1 (March, 1889), pp. 565-567.

NOTE ON TWO RECENTLY REPORTED CASES OF
PATHOLOGICAL AND OTHER PSEUDO-PRESENTI-
MENTS.

WHILE I cannot doubt that readers of my Report and of its Supplement will be already sufficiently weary of my favorite hypothesis for explaining a large number of our narratives, I do not wish to let pass an opportunity for calling attention to two more proofs that pseudo-presentiments are actual mental phenomena, and that my hypothesis suggests, at all events, a *vera causa*. In the *Archiv für Psychiatrie* for the present year I find, just as this number of our Transactions goes to press, a new case reported, in an article by Doctor J. Orschansky, Docent in Charkow, in Russia. (See *Arch. f. Psych.*, Bd. xx, Hft. 2, p. 337.) The case is one of a Russian student, twenty-three years old, with hereditary predisposition to nervous disorders. An early and not precisely happy marriage, occurring while he was still a student, brought him into much trouble. In December, 1887, a student insurrection at the Moscow University led to his expulsion from the city by the police, along with many other students. Meanwhile, his wife bore him a child. After spending a short time in the country with her he returned to his mother's house in Charkow, manifested much disturbance of mind, had delusions of persecution, and finally was brought under Orschansky's care in the Charkow Asylum. His delusions related mostly to the police; hallucinations of sense were, at the time of examination, lacking; his consciousness was, as a whole, deeply depressed, dreamy, confused. In so far as this cloudiness of mind permitted, however, he showed a tendency, even in this early stage of his disease, to fairly systematized delusions, so that the case is diagnosed as paranoia.

On being questioned by the physician, he is cool, smiling, stupid in appearance, passive, unresisting, generally apathetic, but not incoherent. He confesses to a dread about his treatment, as he is sure that criminals are always poisoned with mysterious drugs. "Do you fear me?" the physician in effect asks.—"Yes. Three years ago it was prophesied to me that after three years Doctor Orschansky would treat me with electricity, but without success."—"But how, then, if I don't treat you with electricity?"—"Oh, that, I think, was prophesied me too." In narrating his adventures the patient goes on:

“In the railway car, too, everybody was talking about me. They prophesied everything that is to happen to me; how, for instance, at the station in Kursk, I should see the clerk at the Buffet handing out tea to the passengers; and how this clerk would be nobody else but Aliouschka, the executioner of Moscow. On the way, too, I saw a veiled woman. I think it was my wife. That, too, had been prophesied to me. And here I am being watched by the Princess T. She is disguised as servant-girl. It is the same person always following me about; sometimes she’s blonde, sometimes brunette, sometimes young, and sometimes old. And that, too, they prophesied to me.” — “And have people prophesied anything else to you?” — “Oh, yes; it was said that the doctors in Charkow would declare me mad, and then quarrel over me with the doctors in Moscow, who would declare me sane, and would finally win the day.”

Closely associated with these delusions was a confused feeling of the power, the mysteriousness, or, in cases, the vast age of the patient’s friends and companions. “Are you married?” asks the doctor. — “I think so.” — “But you must surely know that.” — “How can one know?” — “But who is your wife?” — “A midwife.” (This was true.) — “How old is she?” — “I don’t know. She says she’s twenty-five years old; but it’s possible she’s 1,500 years old, or perhaps more; for she’s everlasting” (*denn sie ist ewig*). As for what Orschansky calls “the persuasion of the patient that all his fate has been prophesied to him,” our author directly denies that this has here anything to do with ordinary *Dyppeltdenken*, the “double memory” illusion of daily life. “Probably,” says Orschansky, “this persuasion depends on his feeling of submission to his fate, on the idea of the mysterious power that oppresses his life, an idea not uncommon in cases of primary hypochondriac paranoia.” The connection of the pseudo-presentiments with the patient’s general condition of confused surprise seems to me also noteworthy.

In addition to the foregoing pathological case, I have just received, in consequence of a recent discussion of this topic, the instance reported in the following letter, which speaks for itself, being from one of our most frequent and useful correspondents. The experience, although not a typical pseudo-presentiment, is a near relative of the class.

BOSTON, Feb. 24, 1889.

DEAR MR. HODGSON: —

If I remember right, Professor Royce concluded that most of the cases where persons feel sure, after some striking event, that they had distinctly prophesied it before its occurrence, were cases of honest hallucination, and

where the *feeling* that the event had been clearly foretold was really the product of the mind *after* the event. I will tell you of a *dream* which I had a few nights ago, which possibly may be of interest in connection with these questions. My friend, C. W. B., visited us recently, and spoke with Mrs. A. and me repeatedly about his several trips to Europe, describing especially his experiences in Spain during his last trip.

A few nights later I dreamed of looking over with him a lot of large photographs of scenes in Scotland, which he took when we were in Scotland together, many of the photographs showing me very plainly in various attitudes and with different groups of people. Now, Mr. B. and I were never in Europe together, and I was never in Scotland in my life. Yet as each photograph was shown I felt all the keen delight of recognition of well-remembered scenes, and frequently exclaimed, "How well I remember that!" or "Don't you remember the day we were there," etc. I can still remember the features of several of the pictures, parks, grounds, etc., as they appeared in these photographs, and my keen interest in seeing them *again*, and my memory of many incidents and particulars of our being at these places together at some former time. I then dreamed, with the well-known inconsistency of a dream, that in the case of one place, Mrs. A. had been with me, and I turned and asked her if she didn't remember the day we were there, and what the old lady in charge of the place had said to us.

If I could in this dream have so strong a sense of having been in the photographed places before that each brought up a flood of remembered experiences, all of which were — pictures and remembrances — the coinage of the dream at that moment, is it not likely that this is a power which the mind sometimes exercises in *waking* hours? Yours, C. H. A.

I may add the repeated expression of my hope that some of the alienists of our asylums in this country may find time to make note of any analogous cases that come under their attention. Pseudo-presentiments, once distinguished, might prove to be anomalies worthy of even a more serious consideration.

JOSIAH ROYCE.