

**MY LIFE AS A  
DISSOCIATED  
PERSONALITY**

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My life as a dissociated personality by Morton Prince & B. C. A.

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# My Life as a Dissociated Personality

By B. C. A.

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*With an Introduction by*  
MORTON PRINCE, M.D.



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RICHARD G. BADGER

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## MY LIFE AS A DISSOCIATED PERSONALITY

BY B. C. A.

### PART I

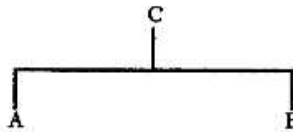
[An account of the various phases of dissociated personality, written by the patient, after recovery and restoration of memory for all the different phases, cannot fail to be of interest. If the writer is endowed with the capacity for accurate introspection and statement, such an account ought to give an insight into the condition of the mind during these dissociated states that is difficult to obtain from objective observation, or, if elicited from a clinical narration of the patient, to accurately transcribe. In that remarkable book, "A Mind that Found Itself," the author, writing after recovery from insanity, has given us an unique insight into the insane mind. Similarly the writer of the following account allows us to see the beginnings of the differentiation of her mind into complexes, the final development of a dissociated or multiple personality, and to understand the moods, points of view, motives, and dominating ideas which characterized each phase. Such an account could only be given by a person who has had the experience, and who has the introspective and literary capacity to describe them.

The writer in publishing, though with some reluctance and at my request, her experiences as a multiple personality, is actuated only, as I can vouch, by a desire to contribute to our knowledge of such conditions. The experiences of her illness — now happily recovered from — have led her to take an active interest in abnormal psychology and to inform herself, so far as is possible by the study of the literature, on many of the problems involved. The training thus acquired has plainly added to the accuracy and value of her introspective observations.

A brief preliminary statement will be necessary in order that the account, as told by the patient, may be fully intelligible.

The subject has been under the observation of the editor for about two years. When first seen the case presented the ordinary picture of so-called neurasthenia, characterized by persistent fatigue and the usual somatic symptoms, and by moral doubts and scruples. This phase was later termed and is described in the following account as state or complex A. Later another state, spoken of as complex B, suddenly developed. Complex A had no memory for complex B, but the latter not only had full knowledge of A, but persisted co-consciously when A was present. B was therefore both an alternating and a co-conscious state. Besides differences in memory, A and B manifested distinct and markedly different characteristics, which included moods, tastes, points of view, habits of thought, and controlling ideas. In place, for instance, of the depression, fatigue, and moral doubts and scruples of A, B manifested rather a condition of exaltation, and complete freedom from neurasthenia and its accompanying obsessional ideas. With the appearance of B it was recognized that both states were phases of a dissociated personality, and neither represented the normal complete personality. After prolonged study, this latter normal state was obtained in hypnosis,

and, on being waked up, a personality was found which possessed the combined memories of A and B and was free from the pathological stigmata which respectively characterized each. This normal person is spoken of as C. The normal C had, therefore, split into two systems of complexes or personalities, A and B. This relationship may be diagrammatically expressed as follows:



This account will be followed in the next number by one written by the dissociated personality B, describing the point of view of the patient in this state and also her subconscious (co-conscious) life (which she claims to remember) in its various relations and functionings. The analysis, however it be interpreted, cannot fail to be a remarkable contribution to the subconscious.— The Editor.]

MY DEAR DR. PRINCE,

You have asked me to give you an account of my illness as it seems to me now that I am myself and well; describing myself in those changes of personality which we have called "A" and "B."

It is always difficult for one to analyze one's self accurately and the conditions have been very complex. I think, however, that I have a clear conception and appreciation of my case. I remember myself perfectly as "A" and as "B." I remember my thoughts, my feelings, and my points of view in each personality and can see where they are the same, and where they depart from my normal self. These points of view will appear as we go on and I feel sure that my memory can be trusted. I recall clearly how in each state I regarded the other state and how in each I regarded myself.

As I have said, I have now, as "C," all the memories of both states (though none of the co-conscious life which, as B, I claimed and believed I had). These memories are clearly differentiated in my mind. It would be impossible to confuse the two as the moods which governed each were so absolutely different, but it is quite another thing to make them distinct on paper. I have, however, been so constantly



under your observation that you can, no doubt, correct any statement I may make which is not borne out by your own knowledge.

I am, perhaps, of a somewhat emotional nature and have never been very strong physically, though nothing of an invalid, and have always been self-controlled and not at all hysterical, as I would use the word. On the contrary, I was, I am sure, considered a very sensible woman by those who know me well, though I am not so sure what they may think of me now. I am, however, very sensitive and responsive to impressions in the sense that I am easily affected by my environment. For instance, at the theatre I lose myself in the play and feel keenly all the emotions portrayed by the actors. These emotions are reflected vividly in my face and manner sometimes to the amusement of those with me and, if the scene is a painful one, it often takes me a long time to recover from the effect of it. The same is true of scenes from actual life.

Before this disintegration took place I had borne great responsibility and great sorrow with what I think I am justified in calling fortitude and I do not think the facts of my previous life would warrant the assumption that I was, naturally, nervously unstable. It does not carry great weight, I know, for one to say of one's self,— I am sensible, I am stable, I am not hysterical,— but I believe the statement can be corroborated by the testimony of those who have known me through my years of trial. The point I wish to make is that my case shows that such an illness as I have had is possible to a constitutionally stable person and is not confined to those of an hysterical tendency.

A year previous to this division of personality a long nervous strain, covering a period of four years, had culminated in the death of one very dear to me. I was at that time in good physical health, though nervously worn, but this death occurred in such a way as to cause me a great shock and within the six days following I lost twenty pounds in weight. For nearly three months I went almost entirely without food, seemingly not eating enough to sustain life, and I did not average more than three or four hours' sleep out of the twenty-four, but I felt neither hungry nor faint, and was

extremely busy and active, being absorbed both by home responsibilities and business affairs. The end of the year, however, found me in very poor health physically and I was nervously and mentally exhausted. I was depressed, sad, felt that I had lost all that made life worth living and, indeed, I wished to die. I was very nervous, unable to eat or sleep, easily fatigued, suffered constantly from headache, to which I had always been subject, and was not able to take much exercise. The physician under whose care I was at this time told me, when I asked him to give my condition a name, that I was suffering from "nervous and cerebral exhaustion."

It was at this time that the shock which caused the division of personality occurred. Before describing it I should mention a few of my most pronounced minor traits which, though of no importance in themselves, will enable, through the change that took place in them, the marked alteration of character after the shock to be recognized. Among these characteristics were a great dislike of riding on electric cars, an almost abnormal nervousness about bugs and mosquitoes — I always disliked going into the woods for this reason — an aversion to exercise in summer, and a fear of canoeing. I had never enjoyed sitting out from under cover or on the ground as the glare of the sun was apt to cause headache and I abhorred all crawling things.\* I was reserved with strangers and not given to making my friends quickly; devoted to my family and relatives, fond of my friends, and not in the habit of neglecting them in any way. I felt much responsibility concerning business matters and had given a good deal of time and thought to them. Many more peculiarities might be mentioned. The change which took place in me in these respects will be presently related. But shortly before the complete change took place, to my surprise there were times when I did some of the things above referred to, such as sitting in the woods, etc. I felt a sense of wonder that I should be doing them and a still greater wonder that I found them pleasant. There was also a sense at times of

\*I have put this in the past tense because I have changed in some of these characteristics. I enjoy an out-of-door life more than I used to; am fond of the woods and the water in spite of the insects and the fact that I am afraid of a canoe.

impatience and irritation at being troubled with business matters or responsibility of any kind and an inclination to throw aside all care. I wondered at myself for feeling as I did and rather protested to myself at many of my acts but still kept right on doing them. It seems to me that these ideas and feelings formed a complex by which I was more or less governed and that this complex gradually grew in strength and can be identified with that of the personality (B) which first developed.\*

The shock I received was of an intensely emotional nature. It brought to me, suddenly, the realization that my position in life was entirely changed, that I was quite alone, and with this there came a feeling of helplessness and desolation beyond my powers of description. I felt, too, angry, frightened, insulted. For a few minutes these ideas flashed through my mind and then — all was changed. All the distressing ideas of the preceding moments left me, and I no longer minded what, a moment before, had caused me so much distress. I became the personality which we have since called "B." I do not feel now that the episode was of a character that would have affected a person of a different nature, or even myself had I been in good health. Psychologically speaking, I suppose I was already in a somewhat disintegrated condition and, therefore, more susceptible. At any rate it did affect me. From the moment of that shock I was, literally, a different person. The episode itself became of little or no importance to me and I looked upon it rather as a lark and really enjoyed it, as I did, in this character, succeeding events. With the change to "B" there was no loss of memory as sometimes occurs under such conditions. It seems very curious to me that the effect of this shock was to change me not to the despondent, despairing mood of "A" which came later, but to the happy mood of "B."

In describing the two personalities I shall sometimes have to refer to them by the letters A and B to avoid the constant repetition of "myself as A — myself as B."

As B, I was, apparently, a perfectly normal person, as will be seen from the description which follows, except that I was

\*The gradual growth of the B complex is well described in the account written by B to be published in the next issue of the JOURNAL.