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Behind the Scenes with the Mediums

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BEHIND THE SCENES

WITH

THE MEDIUMS

BY

DAVID P. ABBOTT

FOURTH REVISED EDITION

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DEDICATION.

TO THOSE AUTHORS OF MY BEING
WHOSE IMAGES ARE SACREDLY ENSHRINED
WITHIN MY HEART,

MY FATHER AND MY MOTHER;

AND

TO MY SISTER, MRS. ADA ABBOTT HUMPHREY,

WHO HAS GIVEN ME VALUABLE AID IN ITS PREPARATION,
I DEDICATE THIS BOOK.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PAGE

HALF HOURS WITH MEDIUMS.

I. Introduction. 1

II. Washington Irving Bishop's Sealed Letter Reading in a New Dress. 5

III. Test Where a Trick Envelope with a Double Front is used. 14

IV. Test Where the Medium Secretly Filches a Letter from the Pocket of the Sitter. 20

V. The Mystic Oracle of the Swinging Pendulums, or Mind over Matter.—A Rapping Hand.—Light and Heavy Chest. 28

VI. Tests Given in a Large Store Room with Curtains for Partitions, Using Telegraphy, etc. 35

VII. A Billet Test Using a Trick Envelope.—A Spirit Message Written on a Slate, in the Sitter's Presence. 39

VIII. Flower Materialization. 50

IX. The Dark Seance.—A Deceptive Grip.—Mental Tests —Spirit Voices, Taps, and Lights. 53

X. Materialization. — Preparation of Luminous Costumes, Method of Presentation, etc. 70

XI. Tests Given in a Room in a Hotel.—Slate-Writing on Slates Selected, Cleaned, and Held by Sitter. —Test Wherein the Sitter's Own Slates are Used. —Billet Work in Connection Therewith.—The Prepared Table. 76

PAGE

XII. Reading Sealed Billets Before a Company in a Room in which Absolute Darkness Reigns. 82

MEDIUMISTIC READING OF SEALED WRITINGS.

I. Introduction. 87

II. Preparation of the Writings. 91

III. Reading the Writings.—Production of a Spirit Message. 94

IV. The Secrets Explained.—Slate Trick Requiring a Special Chair. 100

SPIRIT SLATE-WRITING AND BILLET TESTS.

I. Introduction. 114

II. Message Produced on One of a Stack of Slates, First Method.—Method Using a Rug or Newspaper. 117

III. Message on One of a Stack of Slates, Second Method.—How to Pass the Slates from One Hand to the Other. 122

IV. Message Produced When but Two Examined Slates are Used.—Some Expert Maneuvering, and the Importance of the "Pass." 125

V. Message Produced on One of Two Slates Selected from a Stack, Third Method, where the "Pass" and Some Expert Maneuvering are Introduced.—Production of a Message Written with a Gold Ring Belonging to the Sitter. 129

VI. To Secretly Read a Question Written on a Slate by a Sitter, when a Stack of Slates is Used.—How to Secretly Obtain a Confession or Question, Written on Paper and Sealed by the Sitter, when a Stack of Slates is Used. 132

VII. Message Produced on a Slate Cleaned and Held under a Table by a Sitter. 138

PAGE

VIII. Slate Trick Requiring Three Slates and a Flap.—The Same Used as a Conjuring Trick.—Preparation of the Slates. 142

IX. Slate Trick Requiring a Double-Hinged Slate and a Flap. 150

X. Independent Paper Writing.—Two Slates and a Silicate Flap Used. 153

XI. Slate Trick with a Single Slate and a Flap, which is Suitable for Platform Production.—Methods of Forcing the Selection of a Certain Word.—Methods of Forcing the Selection of a Sum of Figures.—The Same Trick Where Two Slates are Used.—The Same When Three Slates are Used, and a Spoken Question Answered, with Words in Colored Writing. 156

XII. Methods of Obtaining a Secret Impression of the Writing of a Sitter.—A Store-Room Reading where this is Used.—A Test Using a Prepared Book.—How to "Switch" a Question.—Tricks Depending on this Principle.—Tests Given by Various Chicago Mediums.—Reading a Message by Pressing it on a Skull Cap Worn by Medium. 164

XIII. Tricks where the Sitter Brings his Own Slates.—Various Traps.—Psychometric Tests.—Message on Slates Wrapped in the Original Paper in which they were Purchased.—Other Messages. 178

XIV. Message on a Sitter's Slate Produced by a Rubber Stamp.—Message Produced by an Adroit Exchange of Slates.—Chemical Tricks.—Other Methods.—Means of Securing Information. 188

SOME MODERN SORCERY.

I. Presentation of the Tests. 193

II. Explanation of the Secrets. 200

III. The Same as Adapted to Work in a Double Parlor. 209

IV. The Use of the Card *Servante* and Blackboard.... 211

PAGE

SOME UNUSUAL MEDIUMISTIC PHENOMENA.

Some Strange and Unusual Tests with an Explanation.... 215

MATERIALIZATION.

Additional Information. 235

RELATION OF MEDIUMSHIP TO PALMISTRY, ASTROLOGY, AND FORTUNE-TELLING

Tests in Connection with a Reproduction of the Sitter's Palm. 246

PERFORMANCES OF THE ANNIE EVA FAY TYPE.

Questions Written and Retained by the Spectators answered by a Blindfolded Lady on the Stage. 253

VEST-TURNING.

Method Explained. 260

AN IMPROVED BILLET TEST.

Reading Billets for an Assembled Company. 263

APPENDIX: CORRESPONDENCE WITH INQUIRERS THROUGH "THE OPEN COURT."

Mediumistic Seances. 266
A Puzzling Case. 280
Spirit Portraiture. 294

ADDENDA.

Another Billet Test. 320
The Swinging Pendulums Again. 324
Index. 329

HALF HOURS WITH MEDIUMS.

I.

IT is probably due to the scientific training of the present age that there are those amongst us who can not accept the promise of immortality on faith alone. Such as these require something in the nature of a positive proof for any belief which they may entertain. They seem unconsciously to realize that the chances of any unproven proposition or statement being untrue are vastly in the majority.

Such persons seem to feel that if a race of thinking beings were slowly evolved upon a flying world, the majority of ideas which such beings would evolve in their minds, if unproven, would not correspond with objective facts; that only those which could be proven in some manner would possess a value; that the chances are greatly against the probability of the truth of unproven ideas of things and existence in general; also that minds which could in a superstitious age evolve and believe in such superstitions as witchcraft, sorcery, etc., might in the same age evolve and believe in other superstitions that are unwarranted by the facts, although pleasing to the individual.

Such persons as these would solve the mystery of mysteries by the power of their intellect alone. Such as these would unlock the lips of nature and rob her

of her secret, but to such as these no answer framed in words of hope has ever come.

"We ask, yet nothing seems to know;
We cry in vain—
There is no master of the show,
Who will explain,
Or from the future tear the mask,
And yet we dream and yet we ask.

"Is there beyond the silent night
An endless day,
Is death a door that leads to light?
We cannot say.
The tongueless secret locked in fate
We do not know, we hope and wait."

"If a man die shall he live again?" This question of questions still appeals to the human heart with the same strength that it did in the days of old. Many solutions to this problem of problems have been offered, many times has man answered this question; yet it ever and ever repeats itself in the human heart.

If the structures which are our bodies must dissolve at death, does the innerness of these structures which is spirit vanish utterly? Does death hold for us but the promise of the same unfathomable gulf of blackness out of which we came at birth? Is the eternal future to be to us the same as was the eternal past? Is life but a temporary abode on a peak that is touched by the fingers of light for a day, while all around yawns an infinite, shoreless gulf of impenetrable darkness, from one side of which we appeared and to whose other side we hurry to meet our destiny?

We feel certain that both our material and spiritual parts are actualized by elements eternal and indestructible. But does that something, other than these ele-

ments—that which they actualize, that creation which appears as a result of their combination in a special form, that something else which is ourselves—vanish utterly with the dissolution of the elements which temporarily actualize both our bodies and our spirits?

Not long ago I saw an aged father lying in a coffin, —a pale, waxen figure, silent and cold. Around his bier stood the weeping relatives while the minister recited these lines:

"Some time at eve when the tide is low,
I shall slip my moorings and sail away,
With no response to the friendly hail
Of kindred craft in the busy bay.
In the silent hush of the twilight pale,
When the night stoops down to embrace the day,
And the voices call in the water's flow—
Some time at eve when the tide is low
I shall slip my moorings and sail away.

"Through purple shadows that darkly trail
O'er the ebbing tide of the unknown sea,
I shall fare me away with a dip of sail
And a ripple of waters to tell the tale
Of a lonely voyager, sailing away
To mystic isles, where at anchor lay
The craft of those who have sailed before
O'er the unknown sea to the unseen shore.

"A few who have watched me sail away
Will miss my craft from the busy bay:
Some friendly barks that were anchored near,
Some loving souls that my heart held dear
In silent sorrow will drop a tear.
But I shall have peacefully furled my sail
In moorings sheltered from storm or gale,
And greeted the friends who have sailed before
O'er the unknown sea to the unseen shore."

I thought, as I listened, "Is this true, shall we greet again the friends that have gone before?" The cold facts of science and philosophy are poor consolation in a time like this. Then it is that but one promise can satisfy the longing of the human heart.

When one lays a life-long companion in the tomb; when one looks for the last time on the pityful, pinched little face, and realizes that never, never again will the loved one answer to one's voice; then it is that the darkness of despair settles down on the night of the soul. The desire to again meet the loved one may be but a sentiment to which nature's answer will finally be, if not its gratification, the extinction of the sentiment in annihilation; yet the heart craves but one answer to its longings.

Is it strange that the tired and weary soul, worn with its despair, should at times turn its breaking heart to these mystic priests of occultism for consolation—to these mysterious beings that claim the power to summon from the silent abysses of emptiness, the shades of our beloved ones who have vanished and are but a memory? It is the consolation of feeling beyond a doubt that one's dear one still exists, together with the love of the miraculous which lies in every nature, that makes it possible for these persons to perpetuate their religion. This religion requires a seeming miracle for the proof of its truth, but it is not the first religion in which miracles have played a part.

One gray winter afternoon as the north wind was howling down the streets and swirling clouds of snow against my windows, I thought of some place to spend the evening that would break the loneliness. I noticed in a daily paper an advertisement of one of the high-priests of this strange religion, and I determined with

a friend to visit the realm of the supernatural that evening.

II.

Accordingly, my friend and I, together with some thirty or more other guests, assembled in the medium's parlors at eight o'clock. The Rev. Madame E., "Celebrated Occultist, Trance Medium, Clairvoyant, Possessor of the Sixth Sense, etc., etc.," delivered the opening sermon. This sermon was certainly unique in its entire absence of ideas. I was involuntarily reminded of the passage in Hamlet where Polonius says, "What do you read, my lord?" and Hamlet replies, "Words, words, words."

I will however modify this statement. There was one idea which seemed to impress the spectators favorably, and its logic seemed to entirely satisfy them. It was the statement that "there never was an imitation of anything until after there had existed the genuine thing to be imitated; that accordingly there never was a fraud until after there was something genuine of which the fraud was an imitation; now as there is fraud in mediumship, there must also be the genuine mediumship of which the fraud is an imitation."

This seemed to thoroughly convince the listeners, so the "Occultist" proceeded with her tests, giving every one in the room a test, which performance was really very effective.

I will now describe the tests. Slips of paper were passed around with the request that each sitter write on the slip of paper given him a question which he desired to have answered. The sitters were also instructed to address the questions to a spirit, and to sign their own names to them. After writing they were

requested to fold the slips in halves with the writing inside. This was done.

The manager then collected these questions in a hat and turned them out on the center table. The billets made quite a display in quantity as they lay carelessly on the table, and the medium paid no attention to them whatever. The medium now invited some spectator to blindfold her; and taking a lady's kid glove, she first placed it over her eyes as an additional precaution, and then placing a large handkerchief over the glove she had the spectator tie it tightly behind her head. She then held her face to the audience and asked them if they were satisfied that she was properly blindfolded. As there seemed no doubt on this point the medium proceeded.

She first informed the sitters that she would make no attempt to answer the questions asked, or even to read them, but that she would simply give them the impressions which she should receive from them, no matter how they applied or to what they referred. She also requested that each spectator speak right out and identify his message as soon as he should recognize the same as being for him. She now felt her way to the table, and took a seat at the side opposite the audience, so that she faced the audience with the table and billets between her and the spectators. She next nervously fingered a few of the billets; and opening some of them, she stacked them on the table, smoothing them out.

She now took one of the billets, and smoothing it out, pressed it tightly against the bandage on her forehead and began:

"I get the vibration of a man who passed out very

suddenly. It was entirely unlooked for, and I get the name of Fred."

"That is for me," remarked a spectator.

"Do you recognize him?"

"I do."

"Yes, he was shot—shot right through here," said the medium, placing her hand to her breast. "Do you recognize this as a fact?"

"I do," replied the sitter.

"There was a baby, was there not?" asked the medium.

"There was," replied the sitter.

"Where is this baby?"

"That is what we want to know," the sitter answered.

The medium then said, "I see that she is well and growing. She is in the care of an elderly lady who is kind to her. She is east, for I go east to get the vibration. She was taken by a younger lady and given to this elderly lady. Are you satisfied?"

"I am," replied the spectator.

The medium now took another slip of paper, and pressing it tightly to her bandaged forehead, gave the second test.

"I get the influence of a younger lady. Her name is Mary."

"That is for me," remarked an aged lady among the spectators.

"You recognize her, do you?"

"I do."

"You are her mother, for she comes to me as your daughter."

"That is right," replied the lady.

"You recognize this thoroughly, do you?" asked the medium.

"I do."

"She says, 'Tell mother that nothing could have been done for me,'" said the medium.

"She says that, does she?" asked the lady, as she began crying.

"Yes, she says, 'Mother, nothing could have saved me; you did all that it was possible to do,'" answered the medium.

"Thank God for that," said the lady, with tears rolling down her aged cheeks, and her withered hands trembling violently. "I have worried much about that; I thought that perhaps she might have been saved."

"No, she could not have been," answered the medium.

The medium now took another slip of paper, and pressing it to her forehead, gave the third test.

"I feel the influence of a lady around me, a rather young lady who died of consumption. I get the name of Priscilla."

"That is for me," replied a spectator.

"You recognize her, do you?"

"I do."

"She was your sister?"

"Yes."

"She had high cheek bones and tawny brown hair, did she not?" asked the medium.

"She did."

"Several of your family had consumption, did they not?" asked the medium.

"Yes, there are three dead," replied the spectator.

"All from consumption?"

"Yes."

"There are four of you alive," stated the medium.

"Only three," corrected the sitter.

"I get the vibration of four, or rather seven in your family: I am certain of this," stated the medium.

"There were but six," corrected the gentleman.

"There were seven. There was a little child of whom you do not know," asserted the medium.

It was impossible for me to remember any more of the tests literally; but these three are a fair sample of some thirty or more, all about equally successful. The audience was visibly impressed and affected with this seance. The three tests I have given above are very accurately reported just as they occurred, for I exerted my memory to its utmost to fix them literally in my mind. She made a few errors; but when she discovered she was following the wrong clue, she quickly adopted another course. She explained her error by saying that the vibration was broken or the influence weakened. When asked what good it did her to have written questions if she did not answer or read them, she replied that this helped her to get "concentration," whatever this may mean. Later on she came to my question, and gave me a test, as follows:

"Mr. Abbott, I get for you the name of James. I feel the vibration of an elderly man with short chin whiskers. He is quite portly built, has very bright eyes, and was always sarcastic. Do you recognize him?"

"I do," I replied. (I hope to be forgiven in the hereafter for this statement, but I did not want to throw discouragement on the seance.)

"I see you give something wrapped up to this James, but I can not make out what it is," she said.

"You are correct," I replied.

I was thoroughly convinced that she was reading the questions, and that she was getting her information from the questions asked. I was sure that she took what information she could from each question and added to it from her fertile imagination and from the replies of the sitters; and that thus she produced the effect, which was certainly quite great, with the audience.

Accordingly, after the seance, I sauntered around to the center table, and got an opportunity to read a few of the questions that were written on the slips of paper.

One read: "Fred: Who fired the fatal shot? Where is the baby?" This was signed "George." This was the question from which the first test was given. If the reader will compare the first test given with this question, it will be seen that there is no information contained in the test, that could not be surmised from the question itself by a shrewd person.

One question read, "Mary: Could anything have been done that would have saved you?" This was signed "Mother." This question was the one from which the second test was given. It can be compared with the test with the same results as in the first case.

Another question read, "Priscilla: Are we all to die of consumption?" This was signed "James H—." In this case I feel sure that the medium knew, by the gentleman's voice and position in the room, whom she was addressing. The writer of this question had high cheek bones, and hair of a color that would indicate the description that the medium gave of his dead sister. It is possible that this gentleman had attended her former seances and that she knew him from former

experiences. I feel sure that the medium studied the different characters in her room thoroughly while the company was gathering; and that she remembered the peculiar looks of each, and in some cases, their voices.

In one test she said, "I get the name of Frat or Prat, or something of the kind. I can not quite catch it." A spectator replied, "That is for me. It is Frat."

I found that this question and the name were poorly written so that one could not tell with certainty whether the name began with an "F" or a "P." This proved that her difficulty *was not in hearing the voice of the spirit, but in reading the writing of the mortal.*

As to my own question, I addressed it to the name of a dead friend. The name was "Will J—." I wrote it hurriedly with no support for the paper but my hand, and the last name resembled the name "James," but it was another name entirely. I signed my own name plainly, and the question read, "Did you read what I sent you?" It can thus be seen that the test given me had no bearing. Mr. J— was a young man and wore no whiskers. I know of no "James" answering her description.

And now to explain the method she used in reading the questions. This is an old and well-known trick in a new dress. The trick of which this performance is a variation, is known to the profession as "Washington Irving Bishop's Sealed Letter Reading." I have performed it many times and I recognized it at once. In the first place I noticed that she used a lady's kid glove when being blindfolded. This is precisely the method of blindfolding given in the instructions for the above-mentioned trick. The kid is a little stiff; and it is an easy matter for the blindfolded person to look down upon the table from under the bandage.

There is thus a strip of the table top some six inches wide easily in the view of the medium. It is also easy to shift a bandage of this style slightly upward by a motion of raising the eyebrows.

A close observer would have noticed that the medium first unfolded a couple of papers, smoothed them out and laid them on the table *writing side up;* that these lay between the pile of unread papers and herself; that she next took another paper and pressed it to her forehead, and at the same time placed her right elbow on the table and apparently rested her head in her right hand, which at the same time pressed the paper against her forehead; that when she did this she leaned forward on her hand and thus the part of the table on which lay the opened papers came directly in range of her concealed eyes. When she gave the first test, *she was reading the question on the table under her eyes, and was not getting it from the paper against her forehead.*

As soon as she finished the first test she laid the paper in her hand on top of the opened ones, *writing side up;* and opening and placing another one against her head, she gave the second test. Meanwhile she again leaned her head in her hand so that she could read the writing on the paper she had just laid down. She was thus all the time one billet behind in her reading, and was really reading the one under her eyes, while pretending to draw inspiration from the one pressed against her forehead. A close observer would have noticed that she invariably held the side of the paper on which the writing was, next to her head. The spectators thus never could see the writing and thereby discover the deception. She could tell the

writing side of the papers by feeling, as this side was folded inward in all cases.

A few evenings after this seance, I attended her Sunday night meeting. The hall was packed, and even standing room taken. The tests given were of the same character as those given at her seance; and as she gave them, they met quick responses from persons over the hall. The effect was really fine, and I was surprised that such an old and well-known trick could affect so many persons so seriously. When writing my question, I tore the slip of paper given me into halves, and wrote on half of it. I later saw the medium with half a slip in her hand while giving another test. When she laid down this half slip and took up another, she gave me my test. I thus verified what I already knew in regard to the manner in which she read the questions.

On both occasions, after the meetings, when guests were departing, I noticed the manager gather up the questions and place them carefully in his pocket. I knew that this was in order that next day they might be studied and catalogued.

I might mention that at the Sunday night meeting some tests were given before the medium began her regular tests. She merely said that certain spirits came to her, gave their names and other details, and said that they wished to communicate with some one in the room. The medium asked for whom each test was; and as certain spectators recognized each test, the effect was very fine on the audience. In one case, after a gentleman had identified one of these tests as for him, the medium asked, "Is your name Mr.——?" The spectator replied that it was. "Correct," said the medium, "I see that name written right over your head."

These tests were in the nature of "Blue Book" tests, but I do not think this medium has a book of Omaha. I think that she got her information from questions asked her on slips of paper at the previous meetings, seances, and private readings; also from gossiping with different persons who called during the daytime for private readings. I understood that she frequently visited with such persons after giving them a reading, and that she was accounted a very friendly and sociable person. It is very easy to gain information by keeping all written questions and studying them after the meetings.

That this method is generally used I know from the fact that some time ago a certain medium came to grief in Omaha. The police confiscated his paraphernalia, in which was found a "Blue Book" of Omaha. The public was invited to call and see this book; and believers could go and read their own questions, written in this book, with their own names signed to them. Yet, notwithstanding all this, the persons of that faith are ready to be duped again, so great in the ordinary man is the love of the occult and the desire for positive proof of individual immortality.

III.

I know a lady in a country place who recently received a letter which read as follows:

"Mrs. S. E. J—,
C—, Neb.

Dear Madam: At one of our seances recently the spirit of a young lady made her appearance and gave her name as Mary E. J—. She claims to be your

daughter and strongly expressed a desire to communicate with you. If I can be of any service to you, you may command me.

I remain faithfully yours, ——."

This letter was signed by a professional medium at that time located in Lincoln, Neb., and was written on a letter-head which contained the information that the writer was a famous trance medium, etc., etc.

The lady, on receiving this, was greatly impressed by such a letter from an utter stranger in a city some distance from her. There was no reason why she should be known to this medium in any way, as she had never heard of him. She had a daughter, Mary, who had died of typhoid just before graduating from a certain school; and her heart had been nearly broken over the loss. She had passed a few weary years grieving over her dear one; and after receiving this letter, her mind continually dwelt on its strange contents. Finally she could stand the strain no longer; so she determined to make a visit to the city, and learn what this mysterious person could reveal to her.

Accordingly she made the journey and in due time arrived at the residence of the medium. While waiting her turn at the home of the medium, she fell into conversation with another lady from another place who was waiting for the same reason; and who had received a letter similar to the one described above.

When her turn came she was invited into a private room of the medium, where she was informed that he charged one dollar for his time; that, however, he was at the lady's service; and while he made no promises, he would do the best he could for her.

She paid the medium his fee, and he brought out a

box of envelopes. He first handed the lady a sheet of paper, and directed her to write a letter which he dictated. It read something like this:

"Dear Mary: Tell me if you are happy over there. Can you see me and your brothers, and are there wonderful sights to see in the realms where you are? Did you suffer much when you passed out?

Your mother, S. E. J—."

The medium now took an envelope from the box of stationery, and opening it up, requested the lady to breathe in it so as to magnetize it. This she did, and incidentally noticed that it was empty. The medium now requested her to place her letter in this envelope, which she did. He immediately sealed it before her eyes without removing it from her sight for one instant; and taking one end of it in the tips of the fingers of his right hand, he requested the lady to hold the opposite end in her fingers so as to "establish connection, and the proper conditions."

The sat in this manner for probably five minutes during which time the medium discoursed on the truths of spiritual science. At the end of this time the medium said, "Let us see if we have anything." Taking the envelope in his left hand, he tore open its end with his right hand, and removed the letter the lady had placed in the envelope, handing the same directly to her. She immediately unfolded it and to her surprise found that her writing had utterly disappeared, and in its place was the following letter:

"Dear mother: I am happy, oh, so happy, over here! I can see you and my brothers at any time, and I visit you every day; but you do not know it. You can not

tell at what moment I am looking at you all with my invisible eyes and listening to your voices. I will be waiting to meet you when you come over, and you will be so happy to see the wonderful sights there are here. My suffering ceased the moment I began to die, and I knew nothing but the greatest joy.

Yours with love forever, Mary E. J—."

The lady said she never could express the joy she felt on reading this communication from her beloved daughter, and that to her dying day she would treasure this missive. The medium immediately handed her the envelope in which it had been sealed, and told her she could keep all in memory of her daughter, which she did.

She remarked that the writing did not seem quite natural to her, and the medium explained that his "guide" did the writing, while her daughter merely dictated the communication. The lady never had been a spiritualist but now is certainly greatly impressed with this religion of wonders.

I will now explain the method used by the medium in this performance. He uses a box of envelopes of the ordinary business size or a trifle smaller. He takes one envelope and with a pair of scissors cuts a small margin off the ends and bottom of it. He now discards the back side of the envelope, and uses only the front side with its flap which is attached to it. This half of an envelope will now slip inside of another envelope, and the two flaps will fit each other very accurately. By moistening the flap of the complete envelope it can be sealed to the flap of the "dummy." This the medium does so neatly that none but the sharpest eye could detect that the envelope has a

double front and that the flap really consists of two flaps stuck together neatly. Before fastening the two flaps together the message is prepared and placed in the compartment between the two fronts.

After all is prepared, the envelope looks like an ordinary one; and if it be taken from a box of envelopes, there is nothing to give an idea of preparation. The medium always sits in such manner that the subject is between him and the light, as otherwise the subject might see the paper in the concealed compartment of this prepared envelope.

The medium now gives the sitter a sheet of paper on which to write the letter he dictates. This sheet of paper is an exact duplicate of the sheet in the prepared envelope, and if the subject were a close observer he would notice that this sheet had been previously folded. The object of this is that the subject may fold it up at the same creases, so that when it is folded it will be the same in appearance as the duplicate. When the medium asks the subject to breathe in the envelope and magnetize it, this is for the purpose of calling to the sitter's attention the fact that the envelope is empty, and at the same time not use words to do so. Should the medium make the statement that the envelope is empty, this statement would suggest trickery, and might cause an investigation that would reveal the secret. If, however, in breathing in the envelope, it be held so that the subject can see the entire interior of the envelope, it will be remembered afterwards and cited as evidence of the impossibility of trickery of any kind.

When the lady places the letter in the envelope the medium is holding it open. He immediately seals it himself and taking it in the tips of the fingers of his

right hand requests the sitter to hold the other end of the envelope. When the medium is ready to produce the message, he tears the end of the envelope off himself; and holding the envelope in his left hand, he reaches in the front compartment with the fingers of his right hand, bringing out the message which he hands directly to the sitter, with the request that it be examined for a communication. The moment the sitter sees the words, the excitement of reading is so great that it is exceedingly easy for the medium, with the left hand which contains the envelope to slip into his left pocket the envelope just used and take therefrom the duplicate. His left side is away from the sitter; and he has ample time to make the exchange and bring out a genuine envelope with the end torn off, which, now as the sitter finishes reading the message, he takes in his right hand and presents to the subject.

After the performance, it is most usual for the sitters to forget that the medium dictated the letters which they have written; and they will almost invariably tell one that they wrote a letter themselves and received one in reply to their own questions. This is a most effective trick, and is the entire stock in trade of this medium. Of course he has a means of getting information in the little towns about certain persons, and to these he sends his circular letters. This can be managed in many ways. The medium can visit the different towns and get information from the files of local papers, graveyards, etc. Or he can have a man who is canvassing for something, to secretly send in the information with the names; and he can pay such person part of the proceeds for his work. Such a person frequently learns much about certain citizens,

by adroit questions addressed to other citizens, in the course of his stay in the towns.

When the medium sends out a circular letter, he immediately prepares an envelope with a suitable message and labels it on a separate slip of paper. He also writes on this slip a note which reminds him of what the letter must consist, which he is to dictate to this subject when she arrives.

All persons do not respond to these circulars; but a goodly number do respond, and when one arrives, she usually introduces herself or else presents to the medium the letter which he wrote to her. As soon as a subject introduces herself and states her business, the medium retires to another room to get his box of stationery and of course selects the properly prepared envelope and places it in the box where he can easily choose it. He also reads his notes and is now prepared to dictate the letter for the subject to write.

I have known other mediums to use this same trick, but not in so effective a manner as this medium uses it.

IV.

A first-class medium is not only expert in the performance of certain particular tricks, but is also very resourceful when occasion demands it, and is particularly expert in the use of language. I can not better illustrate this than by giving a short account of a private reading which a certain medium of considerable renown gave to a gentleman in Omaha some five years ago.

The medium was traveling under the name Dr. Lee H—. He was really very expert, and simply mystified all with whom he came in contact. His tricks, from

what I can learn of them from descriptions given to me by observers, were surely very superior.

My informant, an advertising agent for a daily paper, is a mutual friend of the medium and myself, well versed in trickery and mediumistic work, and the medium kept no secrets from him. This friend of mine was an eye-witness to the scene I am about to describe, and I am indebted to him for the details of the experiment, for he happened to visit the medium when a gentleman called for a reading.

The room was a very large one with a large bedstead standing across one corner, and placed with its head next to the corner. The medium beckoned to my friend to step behind the head of this bed, which he did; and from this point he saw all the details of some of the finest mediumistic work that is ever performed off-hand. The sitter could have seen my friend, had he observed closely, but he failed to do so.

The medium was a very large and powerful man, and wore no beard. I may incidentally remark that, in looking up his history, I am informed that at one time he had been a pugilist. After this he became a minister of the Gospel, finally taking up the profession of a spirit medium, as this was more lucrative for one of his talents and personal appearance.

The gentleman stated to the medium that he had read his advertisement, and that he desired to consult him. The medium requested the gentleman to write down the questions he desired answered, also to write on a slip of paper his own name and the name of some spirit with whom he desired to communicate, and to fold and retain the writing himself.

The sitter refused to do this. He said, "You advertise that you will tell callers their own names, and

that you will answer their questions without them asking the same. Now I am an unbeliever; and if you can do these things, do so, and I will pay you and have a reading. I do not purpose to write anything." He in fact showed that he had considerable intelligence and that he did not intend to assist in any sleight-of-hand trick and be duped.

The medium was a very pompous old fellow; he stood very erect and dignified, and talked very gruffly and rapidly. He wore a smoking jacket; and I may incidentally mention that it had two large outside pockets near the bottom, and two large inside pockets, one on each side with large vertical openings; and with a stiff material around the openings that held them slightly open. Of course, these details could not be seen by the sitter, but my friend had ample opportunity to discover this fact at various times.

The medium when talking, continually ejaculated a kind of noise as if he was slightly clearing his throat; but it was also in the nature of a growl. This noise is hard to describe on paper; but from the imitation which I have heard my friend give of it, I would say that it is such as I have frequently heard large gruff old fellows use when they gaze down at one from over their glasses and give the impression that they are greatly condescending when conversing with one. The medium kept interspersing his rapid remarks on spiritualism with these growls. He kept tapping the sitter on the breast with the extended fingers of his right hand as if emphasizing his remarks. At the same time he held the sitter's right hand with his other hand, and gazed very intently into his eyes. The medium was so strong that he could easily swing the sitter around into almost any position he desired; and while lectur-

ing him, the medium kept emphasizing his remarks with his right fingers in a manner entirely too vigorous for the bodily comfort of the sitter.

The medium appeared to be very angry that the sitter should have the effrontery to call on him for a reading, and at the same time insult him by a suspicion of his honesty in a matter which the medium held so sacred. The medium acted as if he were about to order the gentleman from his rooms; but continued to hold him by the hand, while he kept a stream of excited conversation flowing. He kept tapping the gentleman on the breast, and emphasizing his remarks, while he gazed intently into the sitter's eyes and backed him around the room. He would, occasionally, while tapping, gesticulate wildly; and in all these ways, he continued to distract the sitter's attention and to make him wish he were in more congenial surroundings. At the proper moment my friend saw the medium deftly slip from the breast pocket of the sitter a letter which he had spied. He brought it instantly into his palm, which was a large one, in the manner a magician does when palming a card. He turned his right side from the sitter and with his right hand slipped the letter into his own lower pocket on that side. He never took his eyes from the sitter's during all this; and when he ceased tapping, the sitter seemed evidently relieved.

The medium then said that he would give the gentleman something that would convince him; and he brought from a table a dozen or more slates all alike, and laid them on the bed. He requested the sitter to select a clean slate from among these, which was done. The medium then took the selected slate; and turning, he placed it in a chandelier a few feet distant and left it there for the spirits to write on, which they did in

a few moments. Meanwhile the medium entertained the sitter properly.

What the medium really did when he turned with the slate, was quickly to slip it into his left inside breast pocket, which stood slightly open, and instantly to draw from the other pocket a duplicate slate on which was a message already prepared. He placed this slate containing the message in the chandelier in such a manner that the sitter could not see the writing.

In a few moments the medium took down the slate with the message, and handed it to the sitter. Just at this time the medium seemed to hear some one at his door, which his servant failed to answer; and excusing himself for a moment, he left the room, and could be heard outside storming at the servant for his neglect of duty. Meanwhile the sitter examined the slates and read the message, as he had no desire to attempt to escape through the outside hallway wherein was the raging medium. During this time the medium of course read the stolen letter.

He soon returned, and now came some of the finest work of all. His task was to replace the stolen letter in the gentleman's pocket unobserved. He finally succeeded by following his original tactics, at the same time discussing the message the gentleman had received on the slate. He kept tapping the sitter on the breast, while with his left hand he again grasped the sitter's hand, and continued wildly to discourse and gesticulate. He kept backing the gentleman around the room, and if he did not partially frighten him, at least made him feel rather uncomfortable and long for a more congenial clime. The sitter wore a pair of glasses with a cord attached to the pocket wherein the medium desired to replace the letter. This occasioned

considerable difficulty, as the letter caught on the cord when the medium attempted to slip it from his palm into the sitter's pocket.

For a time, the medium gave up. He slipped the letter into the lower pocket of the sitter, and was evidently going to give the sitter the remainder of the test, but seemed to reconsider his determination. He now renewed his efforts and finally withdrew the letter from the lower pocket of the sitter and eventually succeeded in replacing it in the original pocket. This was very difficult, as he did not dare to take his eyes from the eyes of the sitter during the entire experiment.

It seems incredible that the medium could have taken the letter from the breast pocket of his visitor and replace it unnoticed, but professional pickpockets can do even more extraordinary things, and the medium was well versed in tricks of sleight-of-hand. The main feature of the performance consisted in overawing the skeptical sitter to such an extent that he had not sufficient power of concentration left to observe either the filching of the letter or its replacement. My friend, however, from his hiding-place, could calmly observe the performance, and he saw how in spite of difficulties the medium finally succeeded.

The medium's manner now grew more mild. His excitement seemed to disappear and he was master of the situation. He said that although the sitter came to him an unbeliever, and although he refused to write and thus help to establish the proper conditions which were required for the sake of harmony, etc., that he really believed the sitter was an honest man. He accordingly would suspend his rules, and he would make a great effort and give the gentleman a test. He said, "I have decided that *I will tell you your name.*" The

medium then allowed his person violently to convulse while he conversed with the spirits of the empty air and questioned them. He had great difficulty in hearing their voices, but finally letter by letter spelled out the gentleman's name for him, which was, "John A. Crow."

This startled the sitter greatly and the medium then said, "You are a great skeptic, but I will convince you yet. I will tell you where you live." Then repeating his process of conversing with the shades of the departed, he got the street number of the gentleman's home, which was Twenty-three hundred and something North Twenty-fourth Street, Omaha, Neb.

This put the sitter completely at the mercy of this man of mystery. The medium now said: "I see mines and mining. You are having some trouble there. But it is not about mines; yet there are mines there, for I see them. Yes, you are in some serious trouble, and I keep seeing mines, mines, mines everywhere. I see this trouble, but it is not about mines." Then finally he said, "I get the name of Deadwood. Your trouble is at Deadwood." The sitter acknowledged this to be the case.

Now the facts were that the sitter had just received this letter from an attorney in Deadwood, and it was about a serious personal matter. The medium had of course gained all his information from this letter. The sitter had evidently just received the letter and placed it in his breast pocket. While it was worrying him, he had called on the medium to consult him about the matter uppermost in his mind.

Well, this performance converted the sitter thoroughly. He paid the medium two dollars for the sitting. He also paid the medium twenty dollars more,

as remuneration for his services wherein the medium agreed to exert his spiritual influence in behalf of the sitter in the before-mentioned trouble.

My friend thinks that the gentleman remains a believer until this day, although he is not personally acquainted with him.

The influence of a medium over a subject is very great when once the subject has been convinced. I know the case of a quite fleshy gentleman who consulted Dr. Schlessinger, (a medium described in a later chapter) in regard to reducing his flesh.

Dr. Schlessinger was really one of the most expert mediums I have ever met or of whom I have ever heard. This gentleman was thoroughly converted by the doctor. He consulted him in regard to what treatment he should take for failing health, induced by excessive flesh and other troubles. He was directed to drink no water or other liquid for thirty days. He was allowed to eat fruit, but was to use only a scanty diet of any kind. This gentleman actually followed these instructions. He reduced his flesh some, but I rather think he was weakened somewhat by such heroic treatment. He is a worthy gentleman, a respected citizen, and a man of some influence. He told me personally that when his thirst became unbearable he used a little fruit, and was thus able to endure his thirst.

I know another gentleman, who while I write this, is being treated by a fraudulent medium in this city for granulated eye-lids. He has tried many physicians with no success, so perhaps faith will do for him what medicine has failed to do. However, I know positively that this medium is fraudulent.

V.

Sometimes expert professional mediums originate some good trick and successfully guard its secret from the public for years. As an instance of this I will describe one that was originated by a first-class medium some years ago. This medium had many superior tricks at his command, but unfortunately he left the city too suddenly for my friend, the advertising agent, to get a good description of most of them. The medium had greatly bewildered the public; but about this time a brother in the profession succeeded in getting twelve hundred dollars from a confiding person, and as this was about to be discovered he took his departure. This made such a stir that the medium first referred to also left the city.

This second medium effected this financial *coup de maitre* in the following manner. A lady was in some sort of financial difficulty,—a law-suit over an estate or something of the kind. She had this money and desired the medium's spiritual aid. He consulted the spirits and did as they directed which was as follows: The money was to be sealed up in an envelope in a certain manner, and the lady was to conceal this envelope in a safe place unopened for a period of thirty days, during which time the charm was to work and the lady to win her suit. Of course, the medium exchanged envelopes for the lady, and she concealed one containing some pieces of paper. During the thirty days which the medium intended to remain in Omaha, the lady happened to grow short of finances, and went to the medium to borrow enough to pay her house rent. This medium was a man of considerable intelligence, but he had poor judgment. He refused the

lady this loan, claiming to be short of funds himself. As a result, the lady decided to open the envelope, unknown to the medium, and remove the amount needed. The consequence was that the medium hurriedly left town.

The trick which the first medium originated I will now describe. He called it "The Mystic Oracle of the Swinging Pendulums, or Mind over Matter." Briefly, it consisted in the medium apparently causing any pendulum, which might be selected from a number hanging on a frame or in a number of bottles, to vibrate or swing in response to his will. There was absolutely no mechanical or electrical connection to any of the pendulums whatever. Most of these pendulums consisted of a bullet suspended by a piece of hair wire. On a few of them glass marbles of various sizes were used instead of bullets.

When the pendulums were suspended inside of bottles, the bottles were corked shut and the pendulums were suspended from the center of the corks. The bottles used were of different sizes and shapes, and the pendulums were of various lengths, and were painted various colors. In one bottle was a cross from which hung three pendulums in the same bottle. These bottles were standing upon a center table.

In the center of the top of this small table was fixed an upright brass rod about two feet high. There was a cup on its top which contained one bottle. This rod was made steady by guy wires running from its top to the four corners of the table. There was a cross rod near the top of this vertical rod which was probably eighteen inches long. From it were suspended various pendulums some of which hung inside of wine glasses, or goblets, at their lower ends. Others merely

had glasses stationed on either side of them so that the pendulums would ring them when swinging. He also had two tripods which were erected from three brass rods and from the center of which hung a pendulum inside a glass goblet. These tripods were to stand on the same table with the cross and bottles. All rods were plated and neatly finished.

The trick consisted in the medium, by the mere power of his will, causing any pendulum to swing and strike the sides of the bottle or glass within which it hung, and answer questions by its taps.

When the company called upon him, he brought the tripods and bottles from a corner of the room, and placed them on this center table. This table was an ordinary light center table with a small cover. There were many pendulums thus in view of the spectators who stood around the table. The medium seated himself at the table and placed his hands lightly upon it, as spiritualists do when summoning the departed.

The medium then requested any one to select the pendulum he desired to have answer his quesions. When this was done the medium gazed intently at it, and lo, it slowly began to move! It gained in amplitude at each swing until it struck the sides of the bottle or goblet within which it hung, giving the required number of raps on the glass.

After this pendulum answered the questions asked, another pendulum could be selected by any spectator. This one to the amazement of all would slowly begin to swing and repeat all the maneuvers of the first one, while the first one would gradually cease swinging. This could be tried any number of times and was always successful no matter which pendulum was selected.

My friend assured me that of all the tricks he had ever witnessed, this one mystified him most; and, in fact, he could discover no clue to the secret of the trick. The room was bare of furniture or carpet, and was well lighted. The center table could be moved about, thoroughly inspected, and the apparatus thoroughly examined for concealed wires, threads, etc. The bottles could be removed and inspected at any time, and even the corks taken out and the pendulums examined; yet all absolutely obeyed the medium's will.

This trick, I believe, is unknown to the dealers in secrets for the use of mediums, and to the best of my knowledge has never become known. Accordingly, I will give the secret to the readers of this book, so that any one with just a little practice can operate the trick. I have constructed the apparatus and worked it very successfully, so that I am certain about the matter.

The idea is very simple, being merely a little scientific principle practically applied. Each pendulum is of a length different from all of the others. As a result each one swings in a different time period. We will illustrate this by saying that one swings one time per second, another two times per second, etc. It is now evident that if an impulse be given to the table supporting the apparatus, all of the pendulums will make a slight vibration, but each one will return at a different time. When any pendulum returns it immediately starts in the reverse direction. Now if any particular one receive a second impulse at the particular instant of returning, its second swing will be slightly increased in amplitude. On its return if it again receive another impulse at the proper instant, it will again move a trifle farther in its swing. This can be repeated until the pendulum will be swinging with

a vibration of sufficient amplitude to strike the glass. And now let us take one pendulum swinging say ten times per minute. It must receive just exactly ten impulses per minute in order to increase the amplitude of its swing. It must also receive these impulses at the proper instant. If more than ten impulses are given, or if they are given in an irregular manner, the pendulum will finally stop its motion. It is evident, then, that all the other pendulums vibrating in different intervals such as twenty, twenty-five, etc., times per minute, will not be affected by these impulses in a proper manner to cause their vibration to increase. In fact, the impulses given, being out of tune, or rather out of time, with their motions, will tend to bring them to rest. They will dance about, and move a little in an indefinite manner, while the one selected will appear to have life and intelligence; and it will move in a definite manner, as if accomplishing an object or purpose, which in fact it is doing.

The impulses are given by a slight pressure or vibration applied to the table by the medium's hands. He merely watches the pendulum selected and times his impulses with that one's motions. The impulses are very slight and the operator must not become impatient, but must be content to take his time, for if he uses too much force it can be seen by the spectators. With a proper table and a proper apparatus, the merest pressure is sufficient, if repeated at the proper times, to gradually start any pendulum swinging. This pressure must be so slight as not to be observed, and a cover on the table helps to conceal the slight movements of the hands. The hands should be placed *under the cover* so as to come into contact with the wood of the table and establish "proper conditions," the

cover thus hiding the movements of the hands. Any one trying this with his hands under the cover and in a careful manner, will be surprised at its effect on those who witness it.

All of the pendulums that are not in tune with the medium's impulses will move about slightly in an erratic manner, but the selected one will start right out and exhibit intelligence and design in its movements, from the moment it is selected. It will be found that all of the pendulums are moving a little all the time; as the vibrations of the building, the movements of the persons in the room, and the jar of setting up the apparatus, etc., prevents their coming to absolute rest. Accordingly, when a pendulum is selected, it is already moving somewhat, although possibly in the wrong direction. The operator merely times his impulses with its movements, and it soon changes its direction to the proper one, and its movements assume definite form.* I will state that the longer pendulums require the heavier weights, and bottles of larger diameter.

* * *

Another medium had a model of a lady's hand. The room was bare of furniture excepting chairs. The spectators were seated in a circle, and four of them held a large swinging glass plate by four ribbons attached to its corners. They held this plate so that when it hung down between them, it really formed a level table some six inches above the floor; and it was supported merely by the aforesaid ribbons in the sitter's hands. On this glass table the hand was placed. This hand was evenly balanced so that a slight pres-

* An excellent article on the principle which this trick illustrates is entitled "The Mechanism of Sympathy," and can be found in *The Open Court* for February, 1897.

sure applied on its fingers would cause it to tilt forward and tap the plate. Now if the sitters sat quietly and asked this hand any questions whatever, it would reply correctly by tapping on the plate.

The medium did not have to ask the questions; neither did the questions have to be timed to suit any internal mechanism within the hand. No particular line of "patter" had to be used. One could simply ask any question he might choose and the hand would answer him. There was absolutely no outside connection to the hand in any manner, and no machinery within the hand. All could be thoroughly examined; and the usual thread, that so many performers use, was impossible in this case, owing to the conditions.

The secret is an old one. Many readers of this book will remember the "Light and Heavy Chest" of the old-time conjurors. The performer could lift it from the stage, but no committee of the spectators was strong enough to raise it. It will be remembered by those who know this trick, that the chest contained soft iron; that under the floor where it sat was a powerful electro-magnet, through which the performer's assistant turned a current of electricity, causing the magnetic force to be exerted just as the committee attempted to lift the chest. They were thus unable to move it, so strong was the magnetic force. The principle used in operating this hand was the same. In the fingers was soft iron. Under the floor was a powerful electro-magnet. The medium's assistant, from an adjoining room listened to the questions through a concealed tube; and at the proper time he pressed a button, sending into the magnet the current which was strong enough to draw down the fingers and cause the hand to rap.

VI.

An intelligent and influential gentleman once told me of a most wonderful experience that he had in his home town. A lady medium came to the town and began giving the most wonderful tests. It created much talk and great excitement in the town. He finally decided to call on this lady. She was a stranger in the city, had just arrived, and no one had ever seen her before. When persons called on her, she asked no questions whatever, but at once gave them the most marvelous exhibition of her unheard-of powers.

This gentleman accordingly called on her, and he was certain that she could not have known him in any way. As soon as the sitting began, this lady told the gentleman his name, the number of persons in his family that were living, also the number that were dead. She gave him the names of all of them, described his home to him, and told him many of the principal events of his life without any questions being asked. She then summoned the spirits of his dead and delivered their messages to him.

This gentleman, although very intelligent, was so greatly impressed that he thought to test her powers further. He accordingly sent other members of his family to her, and they met with the same experience. The medium immediately told each of them his name and repeated the first performance. This gentleman then had other friends call on the medium, but the result was always the same. The people were very greatly mystified, and the medium's apartments were continually crowded during her short stay. In a few days she left, going to another city.

The principle she used I will explain a little further

on. Another medium doing this same work traveled for years in small towns, of from two to three thousand population. The method she pursued was this: She would, on entering town, quietly learn the name of some one of the oldest citizens of the place. She would select one that had always attended all public places and who was thoroughly familiar with every one.

She would then approach this person, explain her business to him and close a contract by which he should have half of the proceeds of the readings; and in return for the same he was to furnish the necessary information, and to guard the secret well.

She always made him sign a written contract which bound him to secrecy, and which would afterwards effectually prevent him from making public his share in the transaction; as his fellow-townsmen would see, if this contract were made public, that he had helped to fleece them.

The medium then engaged suitable rooms, and her assistant was each day concealed at an early hour in the rear part of the apartments. A small hole was made in the wall and concealed by some draperies, through which the assistant could watch and identify those calling for readings. The medium usually excused herself a moment to get a drink of water or to attend to some trifling duty before giving her reading, leaving the caller waiting for a few moments. During this time she would inform herself fully of the history of the caller.

She sometimes used a couch; and when doing so, she lay on it while in her trances, repeating to the sitter the proper subject matter to place such sitter completely at her mercy.

When using this couch she secretly adjusted a small rubber tube to her ear next to the wall. This tube came through the wall, at a small hole near the floor in the base-board; and it had at its farther end, in the other room, a mouthpiece into which her confederate whispered the information. When she received such information, she of course elaborated on it, and produced it in the labored manner common to mediums, with much additonal matter which she could surmise and deduce from the sitter's own conversation.

Her readings were so marvelous and successful that she simply coined money in each town, carrying away several hundred dollars in a few days. Her assistant was so well satisfied with this that he gladly kept her secrets.

* * *

The method pursued by the medium first referred to was a variation of the last trick. She rented a store building with no partitions in it. She stretched curtains, which made very good partitions, so that the rear of the building was hidden from callers, it being in darkness. However, as the front of the building was lighted from the windows, the confederate behind the curtain could see through the curtain and see the subject plainly.

The medium took with her a second assistant who was a telegraph operator. When giving a reading she sat near the cross curtain and allowed her foot to extend from under her skirts to a position under the curtain. This could not be noted by the subject; but the traveling confederate behind the curtain was thus enabled to telegraph on her foot all the information, using the regular "Morse code," while the local confederate wrote it down. She was able to give stran-

gers their names and the most marvelous information in the most startling manner. She worked many towns in western Nebraska most successfully.

Another medium used a similar method in large cities; but being unable to have a local confederate acquainted with those who might call, he adopted the plan of remaining behind a heavy curtain himself, while a confederate sat outside, apparently being a caller waiting his turn for a reading. This confederate would fall into conversation with other callers who were waiting, and would introduce himself in a manner that would call for a like confidence from the caller.

This confederate *would then graciously yield his turn to the subject, as he was in no hurry.* The subject would then be taken behind the curtain to the medium, who retired behind a second curtain for a moment before giving the reading. This second curtain ran lengthwise with the room and met the cross curtain in its center. When the medium was out of sight of the sitter, the confederate passed the information through a slit in the front curtain to the medium in the second rear apartment. The medium had a city directory handy, and thus he could startle the stranger by giving his name, and by giving an address where the sitter then lived, or had previously lived.

Sometimes mediums get information from the hat or coat of a sitter, by having a polite porter receive him and relieve him of his wraps. This porter, as soon as the subject leaves the hall-way, immediately examines the aforesaid articles for a name, letter, etc. The last two methods can not always be relied upon, but succeed often enough to cause much talk and comment

on the marvelous powers of the medium; and thus they bring him many a dollar.

VII.

Not so very long ago I met a friend—a man of wealth, who was a firm believer in spiritualism, and who frequently conversed with his dead wife and daughter. I asked him if he could inform me whether or not there were any good mediums in the city, as I should like to consult one.

He replied that at present there were none in Omaha of any well developed psychic powers; that he was entirely satisfied on the subject and did not require any demonstrations to convince himself of the truths of spiritual science. He informed me that the question was settled beyond all dispute; but that if I were skeptical, there was said to be a medium in Council Bluffs who possessed most wonderful powers.

I accordingly made other inquiries from those who were in a position to know; and I learned that this medium, a celebrated "Doctor of the Occult, Astrologer, Palmist and Spirit Medium," was at that time giving private sittings in Council Bluffs to earnest inquirers only, for the small sum of two dollars.

I was informed that his performances were of the most wonderful nature; that there was no possibility of trickery of any kind; that he told you whatever you desired to know, without your even asking him; that, in addition to this, he had powers over the elements of nature; and, in fact, I was led to believe that he was a true sorcerer of the olden days.

I determined at once to call on this renowned personage, and try to secure a little information from the unseen world. Accordingly, one Sunday afternoon

I took the car that crossed the river, and in due time arrived at the apartments of this wonderful doctor.

I was met at the door by an attendant, who accepted the fee and directed me to enter the rooms of this mysterious person quietly; and if I found him employed, by no means to disturb him, but merely to await his pleasure; that he was frequently conversing with unseen beings, or deep in some astrological computation, and at such times it was not safe to disturb him.

With a beating heart I entered the room where he was to be found. This room was a large one. I did not see him at first. What attracted my attention was a large map or painting on a piece of canvas which hung on a wall space in the room. This painting had a representation of the sun in its center. This could be discovered by the rays which radiated from it in all directions. Around this sun were many stars, and an occasional planet, among which Saturn and its rings were very prominently depicted. There were numerous pictures of animals and men, and of queer monsters, scattered amongst the stars.

Beneath this picture stood a large golden oak table at which sat this delver into the occult, deeply engrossed in a study of this painting; while with a little brush he figured and calculated, in a queer sort of Chinese characters, which he drew on a sheet of paper. He also seemed to be making a strange drawing on the same paper. He was far too deeply engaged to notice my entrance, and continued at his labors for some time, while I stood quietly and watched him. Sitting on one end of this rather large table was a glass globe or vessel, supported by three nickeled rods, something like a tripod. Coming from the wall was a rather large nickeled tube or pipe which curved over

above the glass vessel, and continually allowed drops of water to fall into the globe. From the side of this glass vessel there led a small nickeled pipe which evidently carried away the waste water.

Occasionally a little blue flame would appear on the surface of this water, play about, and disappear. When this happened the body of the medium was always convulsed slightly.

After a time he seemed to finish his calculation, and this seer condescended to leave the realms of the stars wherein dwelt the spirits that rule the universe and the destinies of men, and to descend to earth and for a time direct his gaze towards this humble mortal. He turned around and observed me for the first time. He was a large, portly, fine-looking gentleman of middle age, with very long black hair which gave him a strange appearance. He wore a pair of glasses low down on his nose; and from over these he condescended to direct his gaze at, and to study me for a moment as a naturalist might study some specimen that happened temporarily to attract his notice.

He soon informed me that the stars had told him something of my coming and of the question that was worrying me; and he asked me if I desired to consult the stars as to my destiny, to have him decipher it from the lines of my palm, or whether I should prefer to converse with the dead. The last was my choice.

Not far from a window at one side of the room there was a small table on which were a few articles. He directed me to be seated at this table, and handed me a slip of paper of a size of probably four by five inches. He directed me to write the question I desired answered on this paper, and when through to fold the paper in halves three times with the writing inside.

I did so while he walked to his bowl of water apparently paying no attention to me, and then returned.

When he had returned to a position opposite me at the table, he reached to take my writing out of my hand; seeing which I quickly bent down one corner of the paper and gave it to him. He directed one sharp glance at me as I did this, at the same time picking up an envelope from the table with his other hand. He held this envelope open flap side towards me, and slowly inserted my paper into it. As he did this, looking sharply at me, he remarked, "I am no sleight-of-hand performer. You see your question is actually in the envelope." This was the case; for it was close to me and I could plainly see the top of it against the back of the envelope, the lower portions being inserted; and I could see the little corner folded down, as I had bent it, and I was certain he had not exchanged it. In fact he took occasion to use his hands in such manner that I could see there was nothing concealed about them, that he "palmed" nothing, and that he made no exchange. I was entirely satisfied that all was fair, and that no exchange had been made.

Next, he sealed the envelope, and holding it towards the window, called my attention to the fact that as the envelope was partly transparent I could see my paper within it and that it was actually there. This was really the case. He now took a match, and lighting it applied the flame to this identical envelope without its leaving my sight; and proceeded to burn the last vestige of it and the paper within it, allowing the ashes to drop into a small vessel on the table.

There was no doubt that he did not exchange envelopes and that he burned it before my very eyes. He now took the ashes and emptied them into the bowl

of water on the side table. A little blue flame appeared on the surface of the water after that for a moment, and then disappeared.

He now brought from a drawer a number of slates—about eight or ten small slates with padded edges. They were the smallest size of slates, I should judge; and with them he brought another slate, a trifle larger, probably two inches both longer and wider. He requested me to examine thoroughly or to clean them all to my own satisfaction, and to stack the small ones on the table, one on top of the other; and when all were thus placed, to place the large slate on top of the stack.

While I was doing this he called to his attendant for a drink of water, and incidentally stepped into the hall to receive it, so that his menial would not profane this sanctuary with his presence.

Returning to the table he took a seat opposite me and placed one of my hands and one of his on top of the slates. In due time he took up the slates and we found nothing. He replaced them, and waited for a few moments; then seeming dissatisfied with conditions, he took up the top slate in his left hand and with his right hand began writing a message for me. He did this like mediums do automatic writing, with eyes half closed; and while writing his person was convulsed a few times. He then opened his eyes and read aloud what he had written, asking me if it answered my question. I replied that it did not, as it was entirely foreign to the subject. Then seeming dissatisfied, he moistened his fingers, erased the writing, and replaced the top slate on the stack of slates.

He now placed his hands on this slate again, and after a time examined it; but it was still free from writing. He lifted up some of the other slates; but as

there was no writing, he scattered the slates around on the table and asked me to spread a large cloth over them which he handed to me. This I did, and under his direction placed my arms and hands over this. He walked to the bowl of water on the side table, and gazed into it. I watched him; and I saw a rather large flame appear on the surface of the water, dance about, and disappear.

He immediately informed me that he was certain that I now had a message. He remained at a distance while I examined the slates one by one. Finally, on one of them I found a message, neatly written and covering the entire slate. It read:

"Mrs. Piper is a genuine medium. She possesses powers of a very unusual nature. Her tests given Hyslop and others are genuine. Do not be a skeptic. You are making a mistake, dear friend. It is all plain to me now, and spirit is all there is.—Will."

Now, the question I had written was addressed to a very dear friend who is now dead, and read as follows:

"Will J—: In regard to the medium, Mrs. Piper, of whom we conversed on your last visit, I would ask if she be genuine, and if the tests she gave Professor Hyslop and others were genuine. Give me a test."

This was all nicely done, and I am sure would have greatly impressed nearly every one. Being a performer myself, I could of course follow the performance in minute detail, and I am thus enabled to give to the readers of this paper a detailed account of the method used by the doctor. I will state that since that time I have very successfully operated this same test, minus the bowl of water and flame of fire; and that I

can assure all that it is very practicable and that it is very deceptive.

When the medium picked up the envelope in which to place my paper, there was within it a duplicate piece of paper folded the same, and of the same size (one inch and a quarter by two inches) as the one I had folded. He kept the face of this envelope opposite me so I could not see that side of it. On the face of it was a horizontal slit cut with a knife. This slit was about two inches long and was situated about half way down the face of the envelope. The duplicate folded paper was placed vertically in the envelope at its center, so that its center was located against the slit. This piece of paper was held in position by a touch of paste at a point opposite the slit, which caused it to adhere to the inside of the back of the envelope.

When he picked up this prepared envelope with his left hand, he did so with the slit side or face in his palm next to the fingers of his left hand. This envelope lay slit side down before he picked it up; so that I did not see the face of the envelope at all, and he kept that side of the envelope from me during the entire trick. The paper within the envelope had been placed far enough down so that its top part was not exposed to my view. The envelope thus appeared perfectly natural, as an ordinary one with nothing in it.

He thus held the envelope in his left hand, flap open wide, with the back side of the envelope later to be sealed, facing me. Now he really inserted my paper in this envelope with his right hand as he took it from me; but in fact, he pushed it down just behind the hidden slip of paper within the envelope. I mean that he inserted it between the concealed slip and the

face or slit side of the envelope; and as he did this *he caused the lower end of my slip of paper to pass through the slit in the center of the front of the envelope.* The lower portion of my slip was thus out of the envelope on its rear side, between the front of the envelope and the fingers of his left hand; although I could see nothing of this. He pushed it down so that the top still remained in view with the bent corner exposed, and then sealed the flap over it.

Holding the envelope towards the window, he called to my notice the fact that my paper was within, and that I could see it plainly. I could see the shadow of the two papers, which appeared as one, and thus his statement seemed correct. Of course he did not show me the rear side *or face* of the envelope, with my paper protruding, which was immediately behind the duplicate, so that the shadow of it was also the shadow of the duplicate.

This shadow also hid from my view the shadow of the slit. The envelope was sealed fairly.

Now with his right hand he moved a small vessel on the table towards himself. Then taking the envelope in his right hand, slit side downward, he held it close to this vessel; *at the same time with his left hand he took a match from his pocket and proceeded to burn the envelope.* This move concealed the trick; and it was very deceiving and cleverly done. As he took the envelope from his left hand with his right hand, he, with his left fingers touching the protruding portion of my slip, caused it to remain in his left hand and to be drawn entirely out of the slit. His eyes followed the envelope as his right hand took it; which naturally caused my eyes to follow it, as his attention seemed centered on the envelope and it appeared to

occupy the stage of action. This move was executed in a moment, not requiring any time worth mentioning, although it takes so long to describe it on paper intelligibly. Now while his eyes (and of course mine) followed the envelope, *without pause his left hand went into his left pocket in a natural manner to get the match.* He, of course, left my slip in his pocket with his surplus matches; and when he retired for the drink of water, he read my question.

As to the slate trick, all was fair until he picked up the top slate, wrote an automatic message, apparently read it aloud to me, and then upon my informing him that the message did not answer my question, he seemed dissatisfied, apparently erased the message, and replaced the large slate on top of the stack of slates. What he really did was to pick up the large top slate, bottom side towards himself, *and at the same time to carry with it a small slate pressed tightly against its under side.* He held the large slate with its under side tilted from me, so I could not see this small slate. There being so many small slates in the stack, the temporary absence of one from the stack attracted no notice.

He kept this small slate next to him out of my view, and really wrote the message *on the small slate which was next to him, and which was concealed from my view by the larger slate.* He did not read aloud what he had actually written but merely pretended to do so, repeating something entirely foreign to the subject instead. What he had written really answered my question fully. When he appeared to erase the message, his movements were but a pretense; and he did not erase it at all. When he replaced the large slate

on the stack of slates, he, of course, replaced the small one which was concealed under it, *message side down.*

It must be remembered that the operator, at the beginning of the slate trick, first took up and examined the large slate a time or so for a message; and finding none, seemed disappointed, and finally wrote the automatic message; then on being informed that it did not apply to the case, he seemed dissatisfied and appeared to erase it.

After the message was written and the slates replaced, he examined the top slate a time or so, and even lifted off a few small slates looking for writing, but did not turn them over; then seeing nothing, he scattered the slates around on the table, leaving their same sides downwards; and handing me the cover, he requested me to cover them and place my hands on them.

The trick was now practically done. As the slates had been examined so many times and nothing found on them, *even after the automatic writing,* the majority of persons would testify that there was positively nothing on the slates when the medium left the table. The majority of persons would never remember that he at one time wrote on the large slate and erased it. The message being on a small slate, and these being spread around, few would have known that this message really appeared on the particular small slate that was originally next the top of the stack.

Most people would have certified that they cleaned all of the slates themselves, that the medium never touched any of the small ones, and that he only laid his hands on top of the stack a few times. Some would even forget that the medium handled their writing at all before burning it.

I am sure that the nickeled tube that carried the

dripping water into the space over the glass bowl, had a second tube within it; through which his assistant from the adjoining room either blew, or sent by some mechanism, the chemicals (probably potassium) that would take fire and burn on striking the water.

* * *

When I perform the slate trick described above, after writing the "automatic" message, apparently erasing it, and replacing the slates, I do not scatter the slates around on the table as this medium did. Instead, I proceed as I will now describe.

We place our palms on the stack, and after a time examine the large slate for a message, but find none. I may incidentally remark that this last examination unconsciously verifies in the sitter's mind the fact that I actually erased what I wrote "automatically."

I now look on some of the smaller slates for a message, but find none. When I do this I do not turn these slates over and look on their under sides, but merely take off the top slate to see if there be a message *on the upper surface of the one under it.* I merely remark, "Well, there is nothing on that slate," indicating the second one from the top; and at the same time I drop the top slate (now in my hand) on the table beside the stack. I immediately take off the second slate and repeat this same performance, dropping it on top of the first one. I keep on with this performance until I have removed four or five of the slates, and have them stacked in a second stack beside the first one. Then seeming to grow discouraged, I remark, "I guess there is no message"; and I replace the second stack on the first stack. This places the message slate four or five slates down in the stack;

as the bottom slate of the second stack, being the top slate of the original stack, is now the message slate.

I next up-edge the small slates and place a rubber band around them placing them in the sitter's lap. I, of course, place what was the top of the stack downwards when I do so. As the stack is on the side edges of the slates when I first up-edge them, I next bring them upon the end edges, while I put the band in place. It is now easy to place the stack of slates upon the sitter's lap with the top slate down and to attract no notice to this fact. This is because the position has been changed a time or so in placing the band on; and I then take the stack in my hands by the edges of the slates, and simply place what was the top side of the stack in the beginning, at the bottom.

In due time I tell the subject to make an examination for a message, and of course four or five slates down he finds a message on *the upper surface* of one of the slates.

This seems very miraculous, as the slates have been so repeatedly examined and nothing found. Finding the message on the upper surface of a middle slate, where but a moment before there was nothing, seems to be truly a marvel. The subject having cleaned and stacked these slates himself, and having seen them examined so many times, naturally feels impressed that the message comes by some super-human power.

VIII.

There is a lady medium in Omaha who is the wife of a prominent citizen. She is afflicted, being nearly blind. This lady, in her seances, produces large quantities of cut flowers, which she claims to materialize from their "astral forms." Most persons would think that a lady

of her standing, and afflicted in the manner she is, would not deceive.

The ladies at her seances are allowed to thoroughly examine her clothing, her cabinet and the room; and when nothing suspicious is found she enters her cabinet in full light, and as she materializes the flowers she passes them out over the cabinet top.

I have never witnessed one of her seances myself, but I have talked to several who have done so. They are almost all firm believers. The flowers are nature's own production, and have nature's sap within them. They are composed of cells formed by growth, the same as other plants. All of this can be verified under the microscope. The spirits claim to dematerialize these flowers and bring the "astral forms" of them through space; and then through the occult powers of the medium, they are enabled to materialize them again for the benefit of unbelieving mortals.

I have good reason to believe that her flowers are furnished by a greenhouse in Council Bluffs. Some years ago before the medium was afflicted by failing eyesight, and when she was a widow, mediumship was her profession. She was known as Madam —. and had rooms where she held seances for a livelihood. At that time she did not work from a cabinet in the light, but in a bare, unfurnished room, with lights out.

She would allow her clothing to be examined by the ladies, and would then, after the lights were lowered, walk about within the circle and produce flowers, presenting them to different individuals with a suitable message. My friend, the advertising agent, attended some of these seances. He noticed that the medium, after producing a number of flowers, would invariably return to a certain position in the room;

after which she would produce some more flowers. She always did this in the same manner; so he began to notice who sat in the position to which she always returned.

He found a lady there who was the wife of a certain sleight-of-hand performer of this city. This lady sat between the servant of the medium and the medium's daughter in all cases. He became convinced that these parties were the confederates of the medium and that the flowers were concealed under the skirts of the middle lady.

Accordingly, one time, in conversation with this confederate, he spoke of her "smooth work," just as if he knew it as a matter of course. The confederate then said, "Did Madam — tell you?" and laughed. She confessed that she had a large pocket under her skirt running around like a sack, in which were the flowers. When the confederate entered the room the medium invariably began her seance at once, so as to keep any one from noticing the fulness of the confederate's skirts.

My friend had also noticed that when the spectators were few, flowers were numerous; and that when there were a large number of spectators the flowers were scarce. This first led him to suspect that she had always the same quantity, and that she always exhausted her stock, as the flowers were perishable property.

One day this friend was in the medium's rooms when a messenger boy arrived with a basket of the regulation flowers. They were from Council Bluffs. My friend looked at the medium and smiled. She returned the smile and remarked, "Can you keep a secret?" She was evidently going to confide in him; but

just then there appeared a caller for a private reading, and the opportunity passed. When she rturned to the room, she seemed to have changed her mind, and nothing was said.

I think she uses no confederate in her present home, as she now works in full light; but I feel confident that a trap could be found in the walls or base board behind her cabinet. It is probably constructed something like one I describe in the chapter on materializing. If this be the case and it be well made, it might be difficult to locate the secret latch that opens it.

I may incidentally mention that the son of this lady confederate afterwards became a medium of some renown. He learned under a traveling professional medium, and grew to be very expert. He is out over the world, now following his profession. I know the town wherein he is now wintering, as a clairvoyant and trance medium.

The lady medium described above, operated in Denver, Colorado, for a long time.

IX.

In the spiritualistic part of the realm of trickery, fashion has played a not unimportant rôle. As soon as the first mediums could induce the spirits of the departed to return to this earth and rap on tables and furniture, the fashion rapidly spread and mediums all over the country sprang up with exactly these same powers. The fashion remains to this day; although there is a book on the market, being a confession of one of the founders of this religion, to the effect that her work was fraudulent. As soon as a leading medium spoke of his magnetic powers, all of the mediums in the country had magnetic powers, which, strange

to say, could act on wood, and could also act in ways in which magnetism was never known to act.

As soon as a leading medium started the fashion of having an Indian guide, all of the mediums in the country had Indian guides. Unto this day this fashion is still in vogue. Some mediums now have as many as forty or fifty guides. This is more especially true among the non-professional mediums—those who really can give no tests, as they are not versed in the art of trickery. At some of the materializing seances of a certain medium, as he relates it to me, one of the most amusing features is the frequent disputes and quarrels of this class of persons over certain guides which he materializes, and which each claims as his own.

The next fashion was the dark seance. This always seemed so unreasonable to me, and such evidence of trickery, that I have always been surprised that otherwise intelligent persons could give credence to such performances. I have refrained from describing any of the tricks of this class heretofore, as I did not consider them of sufficient importance to justify any attention. However, a recent occurrence of this kind came under my notice, and I found the effect so great on persons of some education, that I have decided to give my experience of the case to the readers of this book.

One evening, not so very long ago, just as I was about to retire for the night, my door bell rang; and I found some ladies at my door. I knew one of them, and she explained the lateness of the call by saying that a party of friends and herself had been discussing occult phenomena, and that she had mentioned the fact that I possessed a crystal globe for crystal gazing. Immediately all of the ladies were full of enthusiasm,

and she could get no peace until she brought them to me.

I found that these ladies had, a day or so previously, called on a couple of mediums in the neighboring city of Council Bluffs; and that they there had had a most marvelous experience. Each of the ladies had a sitting with the lady medium; and as their experiences were similar, I will relate the experience of one, a Mrs. C—, as related to me.

This lady is a business woman of Omaha, is possessed of considerable means, and moves in high society. They had journeyed to the neighboring town for the purpose of seeing the new mediums of whom they had heard, and they went into the presence of these mediums absolute strangers.

The lady medium took this lady into a small room where absolute darkness reigned, and had a sitting with her under test conditions; that is, the lady placed her toes on the medium's toes, her knees against the medium's knees, and she thought that she held the medium's hands; thus making it impossible for the medium to move without her discovering it.

I should have said that the room was lighted until she and the medium took their positions, after which her friends turned out the lights and retired to an adjoining room where they faithfully guarded the medium's husband.

Now these ladies had heard of tricks being performed, and were consequently on their guard; and they watched all so closely, that there was absolutely no possibility of trickery.

Soon after the lights were put out, the medium passed into a trance state, while the sitter securely held her. Soon the sitter felt a breeze pass over her

face as if an invisible hand had passed in front of it; and then she heard raps on her chair, on an adjoining piece of furniture, and in fact all around her. Next, something touched her on the head and person lightly, and almost frightened her to death. Meanwhile the medium was talking and describing, for the sitter's identification, certain spirits that were present.

Among the things that occurred, there floated into the lap of the sitter a letter C. It was softly luminous, and the medium stated that this was the first letter of the lady's name, which was correct. Numerous soft, hazy lights floated about her; and a tin trumpet that stood close by floated into the air, passing over the sitter's head and giving it a bump, after which voices issued from the trumpet.

One of the most astonishing things the medium did, was to inform the lady of an important secret in her past life, of which no one in this city knew. It was one of those family secrets, such as are in many families, and it was deeply buried from the public gaze. She said she had not thought of this secret for a long time, and that this medium gave it to her in the most marvelous fashion. As I suggested that the medium possibly led her to make remarks from which she divined the knowledge of this secret, she was very certain that the medium had done nothing of the kind.

One of the ladies, a writer for a daily paper here—had become greatly frightened during her sitting, and had felt herself leaving her own body; and she could see her body standing by her, and she became so frightened that she discontinued the seance.

I laughed at these stories, and told them of some of the tricks of mediums; and even showed them a screen covered with luminous paint, which shines beautifully

in the dark. They then confessed that the lights which the medium produced, might have been a trick; and when I told the first lady of the artificial hands sometimes used, she was not so positive as to whether she had held the medium's hands or whether the medium had held hers. She, however, was certain that one of them held her hands on top of the others, and that there was no artificial hand used as the temperature was that of a living person. I explained that this might even be the case, if the hand had been concealed for some time in the lady's clothing. She then confessed that she had noticed a button in the front of the medium's dress, which was unbuttoned when the lights were turned up; and that the medium quickly closed it.

She insisted that the inexplicable part of it all was how the medium had discovered her secret. She said, "It must be spirits, or else it is mind-reading." I said, "I will show you something, myself, if you will step into an adjoining room." I handed her a sheet of paper with six lines drawn across it, and requested her to write a name in each space; all to be names of living persons but one, which was to be the name of a dead person. As soon as she did this, I cut them apart, as described elsewhere in this work, and folded them into billets.

When she placed these in a hollow skull and held them under the table, I directed her to throw them on the table one at a time; and, of course, when she threw the one on which was the name of the dead person, I told her this was the dead one's name, and read it for her without looking at it.

I also had her write down a number of places and diseases, among which was the place of her friend's

death and the disease of which she died. I then told her the correct ones, where and of which, her friend died, this trick being the same as performed by the great medium Schlessinger.

This seemed to dumbfound her; and then I gave her a couple of slates to examine, and proceeded to perform one of several slate tricks with which I am familiar. When she found a message on these slates which had not left her sight at all, and after examining them thoroughly, she concluded that she was not capable of discerning between trickery and genuine phenomena. However, she and her friends insisted that I see this medium when she should later come to Omaha, and still seemed so greatly impressed with her that I readily promised.

A short time after this evening, I received a telephone call from this lady, announcing that this medium and her husband were in town and were not yet located. I accordingly extended them the hospitality of my home over Sunday, and invited the aforesaid ladies with some others to call that evening.

* * *

The mediums arrived at my home in due time, and in looking over my paintings and pictures, ran across a couple of photographs of myself performing a decapitation act. This was their first inkling that I was a performer. Next, they happened to mention the name of a certain dealer in tricks for mediums, but they did not speak of him in this capacity, but in the capacity of a medium instead. I did not know that this gentleman ever traveled as a medium himself, and so stated; but they insisted that he had. Whether they be right or not as to this, I do not know; but I showed my knowledge of him, and the address of his firm, where-

upon the gentleman asked me if I had seen his catalogue. I replied that I had it and that I was a performer of many tricks and could give him some valuable instruction if he desired. This put him entirely at his ease and he seemed to regard me as a member of the profession; and from this time on he talked openly of the work, the various tricks, and the tricks of the many mediums over the country whom he knew quite well. He spoke of the "Camp" in Indiana and of the mediums he had met there, and told many amusing anecdotes.

We put in the afternoon instructing each other, and he showed me a neat billet and slate test that he and his wife used, and also described his materializing work in a laughable manner. He seemed to have a thorough knowledge of the methods by which two of Chicago's most celebrated mediums produce their spirit paintings, etc., etc. He however all along insisted that although he had this knowledge of trickery, (which he could not well avoid, traveling around in this business as he did), that his wife was a genuine medium. He openly acknowledged his materializing was a smooth trick, but said that to make a living in this business, certain tricks were a necessity. He insisted on the marvelous powers of his wife, however, and it was evident that they intended to perform for me and leave me in the dark on this part of the question.

As soon as it was dark I repaired to a dark room and took a seat with the lady. She placed a slate on her lap for me to place my palms on, and asked me to place the two palms closely together allowing my thumbs to contact each other their entire length. She now said, "Mr. Abbott, I will place my hands on yours

in this manner." As she said this she placed a palm on each of my hands, and then she said, "If I should lift either hand you could tell it, could you not?" She illustrated this by alternately lifting either hand. I was sure I could tell if either were removed, and I informed her to that effect.

The lights were now put out and I took my position with the medium's knees between mine, and my palms on the slate. She again placed her palms on the backs of my hands and asked me if I could tell if she removed either one. She illustrated this again by lifting either palm and replacing it. This she did two or three times. I noted this and remembered it. She now replaced her palms, and I was quite sure that she did not use an artificial hand; for I felt the fingers move on the backs of each of my hands in so lifelike a manner as to disprove the idea that either hand was artificial.

She now went into her trance, and first felt the influence of a lady whom she described very accurately. The description fitted my mother very well, and did not fit any other relative that I know who might be dead. However, as my mother is alive, I said nothing and thus did not lead her on. I must confess that my natural impulse was to reply to her statements, *which she gave me with such a rising inflection, as to be really asking me a question*; although the mere words indicated a positive statement on her part instead of a question. I was familiar with this manner of "fishing" and of course I did not respond. I have since learned from my wife that the lady saw my mother's picture during the afternoon, but she was given no information about her.

She soon dropped this spirit and brought up that of

a little child; then she introduced a second child, and said that she took them to be my own. There was another rising inflection in this statement, and this time I decided to break my silence, but to remember what I should say. I therefore informed her that I had never had any children. She immediately said, "Then it is a brother;" and I said, "Yes." This statement was pretty safe on her part, for there are few families in which there is not a dead brother.

Had I not been versed in trickery I can readily see how much information I would have given her, for I had to continually guard my own tongue; as her questions, or more correctly *her statements with a rising inflection*, were worded so adroitly and came so rapidly. While this was going on I felt some light touches on my person, face, head, etc.; and not expecting them, I started suddenly when I felt them. The touches were very short in duration, what a musician would call "staccato." They were also very light. Soon raps appeared on an adjoining bed, and she proceeded to ask the spirits the questions about me, and the raps replied.

The questions were so worded that I could surmise that it was intended that I should answer them also. In fact, it is natural to reply to statements given with a rising inflection, and the uninitiated would have done so.

Sometimes I decided to humor her and I made a reply. When such was the case I found that the raps would answer so quickly, with me, or rather after me, as to appear to be simultaneous with me. However, I saw plainly that they followed my own answers; but so very quickly that to the uninitiated they would have appeared to be simultaneous with, or even ahead of

one's own answers. This effect is due to the way the answers attract the attention so strongly, coming in such a mysterious manner, that I was tempted to forget I had answered the questions. I am sure persons in general would have forgotten this fact, for they would have been so much more impressed with the performance and startled, that they would have been laboring under strong excitement; whereas I was perfectly cool, knowing it was a trick. There is much difference in the effect when one knows such a thing is a trick, and does not think some supernatural agency is at work.

Meanwhile I saw a soft luminous light floating about, and voices came through the trumpet which bumped about the room. Raps came on my chair and *during all this time she never ceased to "pump" for information.*

Now at first I was a trifle startled, for I felt that she had not removed either hand; but my common sense soon told me that she had, and that her left hand, which was a large one, *rested one-half on each of my hands;* that at the last moment, before starting the tests, she had placed her hand in this position, keeping her right hand free. She had *apparently raised a palm from the back of each hand, by merely tilting up,* the side of her left hand which touched one of my hands allowing the other side of it to remain in contact with my other hand, and remarking, "You can feel when I take this one away, can you?" She then tilted up the other side making the same remark.

I knew that she was touching me, and making the raps with her free hand; and that she did the talking in the trumpet; and also that the lights were a piece of gauzy silk dyed with a preparation containing "Bal-

main's Luminous Paint." I was surprised at the illusion to the sense of touch, for it felt precisely as if both her hands rested on mine. If any of my readers will try this on any of their friends in the dark and not explain the secret to them, they will find the illusion is perfect. It only requires boldness. There is no one, to whom this is unknown, who can tell in the dark that two hands do not rest on the backs of his hands. The subject must of course place the two palms very closely together, allowing his thumbs to contact each other their entire length.

Having failed to give me any information of a startling nature, owing to her inability to excite me and cause me to unconsciously lead her on, she now told me to ask for any one I desired and she would see if they would come. I asked for William J—, a friend who had died recently. She said, "He is here but I can not see his face plainly. It seems that he passed out suddenly. It seems as if an accident had happened?" This was given with a rising inflection. As I made no reply she remarked, "Anyway, he passed out suddenly."

My friend had died of typhoid fever, after a week or ten days of great suffering. It is true that the disease struck him with great violence in a sudden manner, but I did not get excited and try to apply her remark to the facts of the case.

She next remarked, "He was not a musician." I do not know what prompted this remark, unless it be that she had discovered that I am a musician, and play several instruments. She made this remark in a manner that seemed to expect an answer, but as I made none, she said, "No, he was no musician."

Now, the facts are, my friend was a musician, play-

ing both cornet and piano well. Among my treasures is a phonograph record of a cornet and clarinet duet which we played together at one time. I however said nothing of this that would help her out; but I then fully realized how natural it would have been for the average investigator to have given her pointers enough to prevent her making this error.

She next said, "Yes, he passed out suddenly, and seems to regret something, as if he left it undone, or unsettled." I made no reply, and she said, "As if he had left something unpaid, you undersand?" I determined to humor her and I said, "Something which he owed me?" I said this as if she had struck a responsive chord, and she said, "Yes, that is it: It was what he owed you. He says this is his one regret."

Now, I will state that I do not believe my friend ever owed any debts; and I am sure that he never owed anything to me, and that he left nothing unpaid. He was a very honorable and upright young man.

I next asked for a young lady, Georgia C—. She seemed to think this was a gentleman; and she spoke of her in the masculine gender and proceeded to call "him" up and remarked on the suddenness of "his" demise. I did not respond and she dropped this spirit. I may mention that the young lady also died of typhoid fever after a long illness.

She next said, "I can see an accident as of a wreck. I see it affects you in some way, and I think others also. It either has happened or is to happen." I made no response and she said, "Were you ever in a wreck?" and as I was slow in replying, she added, "Or anything of the kind?"

I replied, "Yes, I was in something of the kind." In fact I had been in two serious accidents with horses.

At one time while riding a bicycle, I was struck by a runaway horse which ran directly over me; and there is yet a slight injury on my breast from it. At another time I was thown from a buggy in a runaway, and was totally unconscious for half an hour; and then after the return of my reason, was totally without memory for a period of one and one-half hours. I could reason on my condition, but by no effort could I recall my name, or by searching my mind find the least glimpse of memory. My reason was perfectly clear, and I plainly recollect my striving to remember who and where I was. I remember that my first thought on the return of reason was the bearing this experience had on the possibility of a future life, after the death of the body. This incident is of great interest to me yet, but is out of place here, so I will not disgress further.

I have had other accidents, so I could not tell to which one she referred; but I acknowledged an accident resembling a wreck. She said, "You had a narrow escape?" I replied, "Yes." She then said, "You still have a scar or something on your person as a memento of this?" I replied that I did; however, there is no scar, but there is a slight enlargement over a rib where the hoof struck me. I could easily have said a few words, and she would have given me the details; but I only gave her as many pointers as I herein describe. She said, "I believe this was with horses some way," and I replied, "Yes it was." However she could have inferred this from the surprise in my voice when I repeated after her the words, "A wreck?" with a rising inflection when she first mentioned the accident. All persons have had accidents, and it is only for a medium to start the subject and "pump" out of the

sitter the details, after which the usual sitter will think the medium gave the details herself.

I saw how effective her system of "pumping" was; and I saw how most persons would have received much better results than I did, by talking more and by making unguarded exclamations. Systems of "pumping" or "fishing" are an art with mediums, and they grow very expert at it, and do it so naturally that it takes an expert to detect that he himself is giving the medium the information.

Most persons would have regarded this information as most wonderful and would have quickly forgotten the little failures she made. In fact, with most, she would not have carried her failures so far; for they would most naturally have stopped her when wrong, instead of allowing her to mislead herself as I did.

How many of my readers have ever blindfolded themselves and tried to find a hidden article by touching the tips of the fingers of a person who intently thinks of the article and its hiding-place? Those who have done this will remember the swaying motions of the body in the different directions in the endeavor to find the direction by first discovering the "line of least resistance"; how the subjects resist when the operator is wrong; and while they do not lead one, how they quickly encourage him by not resisting when he starts right. This same principle applies to the art of "fishing." The medium mentions many things on many subjects, and the sitter resists or overlooks the ones on the "wrong track"; and while not intending to lead the medium, *shows by encouragement when the medium is on the "right track."*

After the seance I did not at first tell the medium I had discovered her trick, but I did tell her that I

knew how her lights were produced, and this she did not deny. I merely said, "I am puzzled as to how you handled these lights. Mrs. C. tells me that you floated a luminous letter C into her lap, telling her this was the initial of her name." The medium replied, "Did she say that?" I replied that she did. The medium then said, "That shows what a person's imagination will do. I had no luminous letters. I merely moved the luminous cloth so as to describe a letter C, after discovering her name."

She said that when she gave tests to any one, the stories they told afterwards continually grew, and always grew to her advantage. That they grew so that when they came back to her, she could hardly recognize her own work. She said, "It is a fact that believers are so anxious for tests, that they always help one out; and they invariably help out, if they be believers, in the way that the medium desires they should."

I afterwards sat with Mrs. C— and repeated the tests the medium gave her; and she did not discover how I did it, and admitted that I did it just as well and successfully as the medium did. I did not tell her that I had but one hand on her two hands. I have prepared some luminous hands, faces, and forms on silk, which I use in such cases; and I find the effect of these dark seance tricks is on the average just as impressive as are the more difficult feats which I perform in the light.

I may mention that Mrs. C— had a sitting with this medium again on the same evening that I did; and that she insisted to me afterwards, that two hands touched her, one on each side of her face, at the same instant. This shows the average person's lack of memory when describing little details. I asked her if her face were

not first touched on one side, and then quickly afterwards on the other; and she admitted that such might have been the case. I will say that when my wife had a sitting with this medium, there was a very dim light in an adjoining hall; and as my wife faced a transom she could dimly see the medium manipulating her free arm. The medium was unaware of the slight light shining through the transom and of the fact that she was between my wife and the light.

At a later date when better acquainted with this medium, she explained to me the means by which she had obtained the profound secret which she gave to Mrs. C—. Mrs. C—'s most intimate friend accompanied her to the first meeting with this medium and had the first sitting. To her own friends, this lady pretended to be an ardent believer. In fact she was a skeptic, but was very anxious to become a medium herself. She accordingly courted the favor of this medium by revealing to her this secret, in the hope of receiving some instruction in the coveted art in return for her kindness.

I am acquainted with a gentleman who in describing a slate performance which Slade gave him, solemnly tells me that he purchased and took his own slate with him, and that it never left his own hands or the light. Further he states most positively that he saw the message in the process of appearing on the slate letter by letter. This man is a traveling salesman for a large firm, a good business man, and honest. Now neither Slade nor any other person ever gave such a performance; and among all the magicians who saw Slade, no one ever witnessed such a trick.

Truly, not much reliance can be put in miraculous

tales related second-hand of such performances. One can only test such things by seeing the details oneself.

* * *

There is a test that is quite convincing which can be given at the close when working the trick which this lady medium worked. It consists in passing upon the sitter's arm a solid, previously examined steel ring, without removing the palms from the back of the subject's hands.

When I perform this, I allow the steel ring to be examined before the lights are put out. It is eight inches in diameter and is made of quarter-inch wire, nickel-plated.

I then place this ring on the top of my head when I take my seat. Now, after placing my left palm on the sitter's two hands and going through the subsequent maneuvers with trumpets, luminous hands, faces, raps, etc., I quietly reach up on my head and take the ring on my right arm.

I then place my right palm on the back of my left hand and allow the third and fourth fingers of my right hand to rest on the back of the subject's left hand. This seems to him as if I have merely moved two of the fingers of my right hand, which he thinks is resting on his left. I next press tightly on these fingers, and state to the subject that I will now take hold of each of his hands without removing my touch from them and for him to note this fact. I press tightly with the third and fourth fingers of each hand, and do not release this pressure; but with the thumbs of each hand, I quickly reach under each of his palms and grasp his hands. This I have now done without any removal from his touch. I now rise to my feet and call for lights. As I do this the ring on my right

arm settles down upon his left arm; and when the lights are on he finds it there, and thinks it was passed upon his arm by some super-human power, never dreaming that it was first on my own arm. This is a very effective test.

X.

At one time I knew a materializing medium who was one of the best in the country. He did not use confederates and have them enter through a trap, as is often done by some of the best mediums who materialize in their own homes in the larger cities.

I may mention that this latter class very often have the trap in the base board behind the cabinet, as explained elsewhere in this work. Sometimes the trap is in the ceiling and is masked by a heavy border in the paper on the ceiling. In such cases the cabinet curtains extend to the ceiling; and when the singing commences, this trap is opened from the room above and a padded ladder let down into the cabinet. The various "spirits" descend and perform their parts, then return up the ladder, and withdrawing it, close the trap. During this time the medium guards the cabinet; and a few faithful confederates in the front row of spectators see to it that no accidents happen. This is one of the best traps; for the cabinet and walls can be inspected thoroughly, before and after the performance. No one ever suspects the ceiling, which is inaccessible to inspection. A trap through the floor is sometimes used, but this is not so good an idea.

The medium to whom I just referred uses none of these traps, neither does he submit himself to any of the various "rope ties" which are so numerous. He says that doing so only creates suspicion. He trusts entirely

to the loyalty of a few confederates and ardent believers, who are seated in the front row and who see to it that "conditions" are not disturbed.

Strangers and skeptics are seated well back. He uses many elegant costumes, all made of the finest silk; and they can all be contained in a very small space. He has one piece consisting of twenty-one yards of the finest white French bridal veiling, which can be contained in a pint cup. It is two yards wide and very gauzy. Such material can only be obtained in the very largest cities and is difficult to find even there.

This is prepared as follows: The fabric is first washed carefully through seven waters, and while damp worked thoroughly and rapidly through the solution given below. It is then tacked on a large wall space and left there to dry for three days. After this it is washed with naphtha soap until all odor leaves it and until the fabric is perfectly soft and pliable. Only silk will retain the paint through this washing.

The solution for dyeing is made as follows: One jar of "Balmain's Luminous Paint," one-half pint Demar varnish, one pint odorless benzine, fifty drops of lavender oil. All must be mixed together, kept thin, and the work done very rapidly.

This fabric will, after being exposed to the light, shine for a long time in the dark and appear as a soft, luminous vapor. He uses this piece for the hair, which reaches to the floor, when he impersonates Cleopatra and other queens.

The silk for his skirt and waist, is ordinary white silk. It is prepared with a most elaborate and beautiful design of vines, leaves, roses, and so forth, painted on it with the *undiluted* "Balmain" paint. This appears many times more brilliant than the gauze. His

crown, beads, and jewels are also painted with the pure paint. They are very brilliant. All parts not painted are in perfect darkness. His face can not be seen except when he wears a beautiful mask dimly illuminated, or when he places a piece of the luminous gauze over it, allowing the gauze to shape to, and cling to his features.

It was a beautiful sight in the darkness, to see him in this gorgeous appearing costume, while with his finely modulated voice he impersonated the voice of the Egyptian queen in a "spirit whisper" and in her native tongue.

When made up as an old Indian chief, his costume was fantastic to the degree of barbarism. His head-dress, feathers, etc., were painted with the pure paint, and he wore a dimly illuminated Indian face. It looked grotesque to see him in the darkness "doing" a war-dance for ardent believers, while in his deep voice he chanted in the old chief's native tongue. He was a splendid actor and could modulate his voice from the deepest basso to the fine voice of the best female impersonators.

When he was materializing as Queen "Oriana" I could first notice a small, vapory light near the floor, which gradually grew to the size of a human form. Then a few feet from it another appeared gradually. These waved about as vapory, willowy ghosts. They were the gauze fabric which he had gradually uncovered to our view. Then, gradually, his form began appearing between these, and near the floor; and it grew gradually, to full size, while the crown and jewels shone with a weird brilliancy that almost lighted the room dimly. The two gauzy forms now appeared as the shining hair of the queen reaching to the floor.

When he impersonated a child he seemed to be able to contract his size and shrink down so as to appear as a little child. He could imitate a child's voice to perfection.

He recounted many amusing incidents of his materializations, when talking to me, whom he knew to be in the possession of his secret. He said it was laughable sometimes when he was called upon by some of the class of believers who have "soul-mates," and who desire them to be materialized.

Doubtless some of my readers have heard of some such persons who have studied "occult science" and whose "soul-mates" reside on Mars, Jupiter, or some other planet. I used to think that these people knew better; but I have met so many of them, that I have about concluded that they are deluded and actually believe in these "soul-mates." Sometimes these persons have considerable means, and pay the medium a goodly sum to materialize a particular "soul-mate" for them.

One instance which he related to me was of a lady with considerable means whose "soul-mate" was an ancient king. She gave this medium fifty dollars for a materialization in private. The medium sat in his cabinet while his wife sat with the believer in total darkness. At the proper time the ancient king appeared in the gorgeous costume of a barbaric age. The lady began weeping, and with tears in her voice she cried, "Oh, King! King! you make me so happy!" He replied in the lowest and most solemn tones of his beautiful voice, "Do not weep, your Majesty. Remember how happy you will be with me when you sit by my side on my throne, etc., etc." It was certainly amusing to hear him recount this incident and give

the correct imitation of the lady's tearful voice, followed by his own deep melodious tones.

He told me that it was in such cases as this that he frequently made his "best money." He was wearing a beautiful solitaire diamond ring on his little finger. He asked if I would like to hear its history. I said that I would and he gave me the following story.

A certain judge of the Supreme Court of an Eastern state, had a fiancee who was killed in a railroad wreck. This sad accident had occurred just after the judge had purchased this ring for her, and before he had an opportunity of presenting it. This judge was nearly distracted over his loss and visited various spirit mediums. A certain one, a very prominent lady minister of a noted spiritualist church in that state, learned of all this, but was unable to secure the ring from the judge.

She met this medium and in his own language gave him "the dope for this judge." She told him the judge still had the ring and as she could not "work him" for it, she would turn him over to the tender mercies of this medium.

When the judge came one afternoon for a reading this medium called from the "other side" the judge's sweetheart. During the conversation the "spirit" adroitly brought up the subject of this ring; and then said that if the judge would return that evening, she would appear to him, and that he could present this ring to her. She said that she would dematerialize it and take its "astral" form with her into the "realms of spirit."

The medium then worked very hard securing proper make-up material for the evening. At the proper time the "spirit" of the lady appeared dressed in a most

gorgeous bridal costume of the greatest beauty. Her face was in darkness and she spoke only in whispers. She held the most beautiful lilies-of-the-valley in her hands, and her costume was covered with orange blossoms. Some of the flowers were luminous. The sight was so beautiful that the judge was deeply affected and shed tears. The "spirit" walked towards him and held out her little finger, on which the judge slipped the diamond, which the medium now wears.

I asked this medium if he had ever seen a medium who could perform any trick which he could not fathom. He said that he had, and related to me that a certain medium, a lady now in the West somewhere, had a secret for materializations that was very fine. Her husband had been a chemist; and she possessed some kind of a capsule that she could moisten in her mouth and roll towards the spectators in the darkness, when it would rise into a luminous vapor the size of a human form and move about. There was no odor and nothing could be seen if the lights were raised; but on turning them out, it again appeared. He said none of the mediums could get the secret of this trick. The medium at one time offered to sell some of the capsules at one dollar each. One medium bought twenty-five of them; but when she tried to use them they would not work; and she almost tore her hair in anguish to think that she, who had duped so many, should herself be duped.

This medium showed me, in his paraphernalia, a half-dozen books of "dope" which were for persons in various cities he intended visiting. He had secured the information which they contained in various ways, but most frequently from other mediums who had been in these places.

XI

At one time an acquaintance told me of a wonderful experience that he had with a certain medium. He had called at the hotel where the medium was stopping, and asked for a private reading. The medium, a very dignified gentleman, received him, and proceeded to give him a very interesting verbal reading. He told my acquaintance of many occurrences in his past life, of things that were worrying him, etc. Finally he brought out a number of slates and gave them to the sitter with the request that he select two of them and lay the remainder on the bed. The sitter also cleaned and thoroughly examined the slates, and under the direction of the medium held them on his own head. The medium merely touched the edges of the frames of the slates with the tips of his fingers, which the sitter particularly noticed contained absolutely nothing. In a few moments the sitter took the slates from his head, and separating them, found on the inside of one a lengthy message addressed to him by name, and signed by the name of his dead mother. The message was devoted to subjects which were at that time affecting the sitter's life, and which the medium could not previously have known as the sitter was a stranger to the medium.

This acquaintance of mine regarded this performance as entirely beyond the possibilities of trickery, and as positive proof of communion with the soul of his departed mother.

There was another told me of the same medium, and he stated to me that he had bought two slates and took them with him to the medium's parlors. That

these slates positively never left his hands, and yet he received a similar message.

Yet another told me of his marvelous experience with this same medium. When he entered the medium's parlor, he took his seat at a kind of large table or desk, and wrote on a slip of paper the question he wanted answered, and folded the same and placed it within his own pocket. As he did this the medium was engaged with a book at the opposite side of a large room. When he had finished, the medium began to give him a reading verbally. Finally he had the sitter select two slates and hold them on his own head; and in a few moments he received a message on the inside of one of the slates answering the question he had written, and giving additional information, and this was addressed to his name. This sitter paid five dollars for this reading.

Now, fortunately, I was personally acquainted with this marvelous medium and knew the exact means he employed in these tricks. The principle in each of the slate tests was the same. Had the spectator been a close observer he would have noticed that a large folding bed stood across the corner of the room, also that one side of the head of this bed did not reach the wall by two feet. Had he looked behind this bed he would have seen an assistant seated on a chair in his stocking feet, with a table, several slates, and some crayon pencils. He would also have noticed that the room was heavily carpeted.

During the time that the medium was giving the first sitter the verbal reading, the concealed assistant was writing the message on subjects which the medium adroitly hit upon in his conversation, and which he cunningly caused the sitter to admit and discuss with

him. Naturally the sitter said many things which he forgot immediately; and the operator being very expert in this mental work, even secured his name in the conversation, by properly exciting the sitter in a certain description of an important event then in the process of occurring in his life. Of course the assistant, hearing all this information, was able to elaborate a message in which all this information was used to very telling advantage.

In his conversation, the operator, at the proper time, spoke certain words, which were a secret cue to the assistant to close the message and be ready.

Now when the sitter selected and cleaned the two slates and placed them together, the operator had him take a seat in a large, strong chair with the back towards the head of the folding bed. The operator now asked to touch the slate edges, during the trial for a message, with the tips of his fingers. When he did so, however, he really first grasped the edges of the ends of the slates holding them together; and he told the sitter to let loose and bring his palms up under and beyond these slates, and to place his two palms against the surface of the slate which was nearest the medium.

The medium, it must be understood, was directly in front of the sitter with his arms extending forward towards the sitter, and his fingers grasping the ends of the slates by their frames. The sitter's arms were extended towards the medium, passing under the lower edge of the slates *which were held edgewise in a vertical position,* and his palms were pressed against the surface of the slate next to the medium. The sitter's palms thus faced himself, and the slates were held vertically in a position between his palms and his own

face. They were supported at the ends by pressure from the medium's fingers on their edges. It is very important that the reader form a good mental picture of this, if he desires to understand the trick thoroughly.

Now while the sitter was releasing his hold on the slates and changing the position of his hands, the operator deftly slipped the slate that was next to the sitter up about one-half inch higher than the slate which the sitter's palms touched.

The operator now held the slates without grasping the edges, by merely pressing on the edges with his fingers, or squeezing his fingers against the edges of the slates. He now moved the slates upwards until above the sitter's head, then backwards until the edge of the forward slate rested on the sitter's head. The sitter's hands followed the slates with his palms remaining in contact with the front slate. The sitter naturally supposed that the slates both rested on his head; but really his head, and his hands also, *only touched the forward slate.*

The medium now began a very interesting talk to the sitter; and as his assistant quietly slipped out from behind the bed with the prepared slate, the medium's conversation became very animated and almost violent. He also applied most of the pressure of his fingres to the forward slate; and relaxing the pressure on the *upper side* of the edge of the *rear slate,* he allowed it to tilt back an inch at the top. The assistant took hold of it *from behind the sitter,* lifted it out and substituted the prepared slate in its place, immediately retiring behind the bed with the discarded slate. The medium now grew more calm; and bringing the slates forward from the head of the sitter into the sitter's lap, he placed his own palms on them for a time and then

asked the sitter to examine them for a message. When the sitter remarked that he did not believe the writing was his mother's, the medium stated that his guide did the writing at the dictation of the sitter's mother.

In the second case I described, wherein the sitter purchased and brought his own slates with him, the same tactics were followed except that the assistant could not prepare the message in advance of the writing experiment. He, of course, gathered the information and had a rather short message mentally prepared. It took considerably more time to perform the trick, but the operator made it so interesting for the sitter that this was not noticed. The assistant had to slip out at the proper time, take the rear slate, retire and write the message, bring it back and replace it, and then again retire.

The sitter was positive that his own slates never left his touch; but the fact was that the rear one on his head did, and he overlooked the fact that he was for a time merely touching one slate. Of course he never dreamed of a third person in the room.

In the last case I described, the only additional thing was the means by which the assistant secured a copy of the question which the sitter wrote and concealed. This large desk or table the medium carried with him. One leg was hollow, and it stood over a hole in the floor. As the table was very heavy, no one ever moved it. The top was prepared by first covering it with a very thin piece of white silk, placing a carbon sheet on this; and then some thin, slick, black cloth was placed over all and this cloth was tacked in place.

Paper and pencils lay on the table. The medium directed the sitter to go to the table and write his question and sign his own name to it. As soon as he did

so, the medium told him to place it in his pocket, and then called him to the center of the room and began the reading. Now a strong cord which ran under the floor from the assistant, and passed up the hollow leg of the table, was securely attached to the corner of the white silk on the table under the carbon sheet. Of course, at the proper time, the assistant drew in this piece of silk and read the carbon impression of the question the sitter had written. In this trick the sheet of carbon should be slightly larger than the silk and should be tacked to the table on the side opposite the hollow leg.

* * *

Another medium performed this slate trick in a slightly different but very effective manner. He usually did it as I shall now describe, when the sitter came with his own slates.

He gave the sitter a slip of paper on which to write his question and requested him after writing to retain it in his pocket. He next gave the sitter a large rubber band to fasten the two slates together. When this was done, he took the slates in the tips of the fingers of his right hand, and placed them on the sitter's left shoulder just back of his range of vision; while with his left hand he grasped the sitter's two hands and looked into his eyes. He now gave the sitter an interesting verbal reading, after which he brought the slates into view and gave them to the sitter to unfasten and examine. When this was done, the sitter, greatly to his own mystification, found on the slates a lengthy message covering the two sides of the slates that were together, answering the question, and signed by the spirit to whom it had been addressed.

The secret was very simple. The slip of paper which the medium handed to the sitter had been previously

rubbed on both sides with white spermaceti wax. This was done while the paper rested on a smooth surface. Some pressure was applied, and the paper well rubbed, until it was coated with the wax. This could not be detected by one inexperienced. The medium saw to it that the sitter placed this slip on his (the sitter's) own slate while writing. This left the question transferred to the slate with a slight coat of wax. This was hardly noticeable. Now the rubber band was put around the slates, and the medium placed them in the position described above. While he entertained the sitter properly with the verbal reading, his confederate slipped out and took the slates, leaving two others in their stead which the medium now allowed to rest on the sitter's shoulder.

The confederate took the slates behind the bed, opened them, dusted common talcum, or toilet powder on the slates, shook it around, and as the powder adhered to the wax, he read the question and name. He now cleaned the slates, wrote the message with soft crayon, closed the slates, slipped out behind the sitter and made the second exchange. A good powder to use in this experiment is dry white lead.

XII.

I will describe in this number a very novel seance which I attended recently. It was a dark seance; but the most unusual part was that the work was really billet work, and it was performed in the most complete darkness.

This trick is but little known at present and the effect is simply beyond description. We called at the medium's parlors, and were each given a small white card and an envelope. We were instructed to write

on the cards the questions we desired answered, to address them to our spirit friends, and to sign our own names, as is usual in such cases. We were also advised to let no one know what we had written, and to seal the cards in the envelopes. Wax was furnished, so that those who desired could seal their envelopes in this manner as an extra precaution. A number of the guests took advantage of this offer.

As soon as the questions were sealed, the medium entered the room and the lights were put out. The most complete darkness reigned. We sat around the room holding each other's hands, and the medium felt her way around in the darkness and collected our sealed missives in her hand.

She next took her seat opposite us in the room, and gave each person the most marvelous test. She did not read the questions word for word, which would have detracted from the effect, but gave the tests after this manner: "I feel the influence of cold, chilly water, and I hear the splashing of the waves of the sea. I see a great storm raging, and I get the influence of one who was a brother. He speaks the name of Harry and says, 'Ella, do not worry about me. I am very happy now and know neither sorrow nor pain. All is brightness and joy over here.' Miss Smith, your brother is in the realm of bliss over there."

The question from which this test was given read as follows:

"Brother Harry: Did you suffer much agony when you were washed overboard and drowned?

—Ella Smith."

These tests were all given in the most complete darkness; after which the medium requested that some

committee come to her and receive the unopened envelopes in the darkness, before the lights were lighted. This was done.

After this the room was lighted; and each guest selected his envelope by a slight mark which each had been requested to place on it, and received the same unopened and unaltered from the hands of the committee.

The effect of this seance can well be imagined. The guests did not write on any object that could receive any impression of their writing. The medium could not use odorless alcohol in the darkness; and in fact no one could read any question, even were it not sealed, in such darkness.

The secret is a simple one. If a person take a thin, white card and write on it, this can be sealed; yet the writing can be read easily in the darkness, if a small electric pocket-flash-light be held behind the envelope. It could not be done in a lighted room, but in the darkness the writing appears very plain and legible. The small pocket-light can be concealed in the pocket of the medium; and the medium also has a large hood or sack made of rubber cloth or some cloth impervious to light, which is long enough to cover the upper portion of the person, including the head and hands. This sack is secreted in the pocket of the medium. After the envelopes are collected, the medium takes her seat near two confederates who prevent accidents; and in the darkness she withdraws the sack from the pocket, placing it secretly over the upper portion of her person.

She now takes the flash-light out of her pocket and proceeds under cover of the sack to read the questions and give the tests. The room being in total darkness,

the subjects never know what the medium has done or is doing, but consider that she is in a partial trance.

After the tests are given, she takes off the sack, replaces it and the light in her pocket, and calls for the committee to receive the envelopes before the room is relighted.

The credit for the invention of this fine trick belongs not to a medium, as might be supposed, but to a magician,—Mr. Henry Hardin (E. A. Parsons) of New Haven, Conn. This gentleman is the originator of many subtle tricks used by both mediums and magicians. Many of his secrets are catalogued and sold by the dealers; and a number of the effects published in Professor Hoffman's *Later Magic* are of his invention, although the credit is given to certain dealers. This can be verified by referring to the old files of the magician's journal, *Mahatma,* wherein he first gave their secrets to the world. The trick just explained was advertised in *Mahatma* some years ago under the title of "The Trance Vision."

A medium once told me that the public never know half of the money that is gathered by the mediums. He said that they are continually "playing for big stakes" as this is where the "big money" is secured.

He also said that it is not the common people who are the best patrons of mediums, but doctors, lawyers, merchants, teachers, and the more intelligent class of persons. He said that scientific persons make the best of subjects, because they are in earnest and give the best attention; which fact is of the greatest importance for the success of any trick.

He said that really mediums do not care for performing for spiritualists so much, as they expect so much for their money; and if given a fine piece of

work, they accept it as a matter of course. Mystery, he said, has become commonplace to such people. It is the more intelligent class, who call themselves "investigators," that are willing and able to pay "good money" for a medium's services.

He told me that he had known many other mediums and that the foundation of nearly all of their work is some variation of the principles of reading a billet written by a sitter, or some form of a slate or paper-writing experiment.

He said that he had never met a medium or other performer in all his experience, except an Indian magician, but who would talk openly of his tricks the moment he made himself known and gave the performer to understand that he was "posted" and that he had no interest in exposing him.

He said that usually mediums can perform only one or two tricks; but that they perform these so often, and become so very expert, that their tricks are almost indetectable.

Indian conjurors are, as a rule, of this class, and simply excel in just one or two tricks which they know to perfection. Like the mediums, they claim that their tricks are a genuine performance; and this lends the charm of mystery to their work, which more than doubles its effect.

MEDIUMISTIC READING OF SEALED WRITINGS.

I.

I HAVE decided to give to my readers (in so far as I am at liberty to do so) the methods I generally use, when reading sealed writings for a company assembled in double parlors.

For a long time I had intended to guard these secrets carefully and keep them entirely for my own use, as is done by many performers.

While magicians frequently publish or allow to be published many valuable secrets, yet the secrets of their very latest and best work are jealously guarded from the public. The reason for this is because if the secrets become too generally known, it lessens the value of the experiments for purposes of entertainment, by rendering them common. Consequently, from the magician's point of view, it is regarded as out of place to allow such secrets to become public property through publication.

In some instances secrets of this class are sold by certain dealers to performers, and to professional mediums, at prices that might astonish an outsider. If the secrets are regarded as exceptionally good and a high price placed upon them by the vendor, so few will buy them that the performance of the experiments

will be very rare, and the performer can well afford to pay the high price asked. When such sale is made, it is generally accompanied by a request that the purchaser faithfully guard the secret from the public.

The fundamental principles of these experiments are not new, but the details make them useful for practical purposes. I purchased them from dealers who place considerable value on them; as they are catalogued at prices which, for the four I am about to describe, make an aggregate of some seventy dollars.

As received by me from the vendors, I found some of them impracticable until I had added certain improvements to the ideas. In the improved form I assure my readers that they are thoroughly practicable, as I have performed them some hundreds of times with such success as would astonish one who has not seen them. I have never yet made a failure in performing them; nor have I found even one person, among the many who have witnessed their performance, who could even remotely guess at the methods employed. There are many methods of reading such writings, but the ones I am about to describe are the very best of which I have ever even heard.

Still, my readers must not expect me to explain a miracle. Miracles are never performed. The experiments are pure trickery; but if properly performed, have the appearance of being produced by some occult or psychic power. However, all that is necessary is a few simple articles, and *their proper manipulation.* When one reads the explanation of a trick before seeing it performed, the value of the trick is seldom realized. It would be much better, were it possible to do so, to see it performed first and then read the explanation afterwards. However, as this is impossible in

this instance, I will first give the effect, or appearance of the experiments as I perform them, and follow this with an explanation of the methods employed. Performers who may read this, will notice that most of the articles employed have been previously used in such experiments; and they may not at first sight attach the importance to these experiments which they deserve, owing to the fact that as used heretofore such tricks were by no means a decided success. The ideas have gradually been improved upon, and the perfected tricks are the result of a process of evolution. A few little improvements will frequently make a poor trick one of the best and most difficult of detection.

Each of the four is performed on a different principle, and is fine when performed singly. They should first be practiced in this manner; but as I produce them, I work them as one experiment, or rather as a combination trick. I have performed two of them singly from the stage with the greatest success; but worked in combination, I generally give them in a double parlor. Here the effect is so great, especially on the more intelligent class of persons, (owing to the fact of all being done under the very eyes of the spectators,) that I prefer this method; and I shall describe the experiments as I perform them in my double parlors.

I would suggest that those who desire to easily grasp the explanations should pay close attention to the following description, as it is given with a view to making the explanations intelligible. Each little detail should be remembered; for all is for a purpose, and must be just so.

I have the audience seated in the front parlor, and facing the back parlor which opens into other apart-

ments, through a folding door. I have a writing desk in the rear parlor in which there is a drawer containing the articles I use; and to which I frequently go to get new articles, sometimes getting rid of others at the same time. There is also in the center of this back parlor an ordinary table, on which I place a porcelain skull open at the top.

Briefly stated, when I perform this combination experiment, I first prepare the three sealed writings that I am to read; and I then proceed to read first the one prepared last. I next read the one prepared first; and then, after a slight wait, give a slate writing experiment, producing a message signed by the name of the person which the second writer has written on her sheet of paper, sealed, and kept in her own possession. After this I read the writing of the second writer, and answer the question asked therein.

There is some little time taken up in the preparation of the different writings; so in order that the spectators may not grow restless, and also to give them some food for thought during the wait, (and incidentally to render my task more easy to accomplish,) I first perform Yost's "Spiritualistic Slate and Dictionary" test.

This is a very fine spirit slate trick in which three slates, a flap, some other articles and some excellent manipulation each play a part. Its effect upon the more intelligent class is very marked. This experiment convinces the spectators that the performer can "do things" and that they are not wasting their time in what is to follow. It thus does not allow the interest to lag during the little time required in the preparation of the writings. It also occupies the minds of the spectators to such an extent that what is to

follow is much more easily accomplished. Further on in this work I will describe and explain the trick referred to here.

II.

I now proceed to prepare the first writing. This, however, I shall read second. I request some lady to be seated in a chair in one of the front corners of the front parlor. This places her rather in the rear of the spectators. I state that this is to prevent the others from seeing what she writes.

I now step to the writing desk and bring forward some envelopes and slips of paper. I hand an envelope and a slip of paper to the lady, asking her to write plainly on the slip of paper some question about her future which she would like to have answered. I ask her to hold the paper in her left hand, in such a manner while writing that neither the audience nor myself can in any manner see what she is writing. As she thus holds the back of her hand which contains the paper towards us, it effectually conceals her writing. I pay no attention to her while writing, except an occasional glance to see that she complies with my request.

As soon as she finishes writing, I request her to fold the paper in half. This she does. I now request her to fold it in half the other way and when she does so, I ask her to place the same in the envelope herself and to seal it herself. When she has all ready, I direct her to place it in her own pocket and keep it there until after I have read it. I in no way touch it.

When I desire more questions to be written, I pass to other ladies with the remaining envelopes and slips of paper, and have others prepared. I always do this

when performing from a stage; or have my assistants pass to four or five persons each, thus preparing some eight or ten questions for me to read mentally. I, however, rarely prepare more than one question when performing in parlors, as the time taken up delays the experiment.

I now proceed to prepare the second writing which, however, I read last when I have begun the reading.

I ask the lady, whom I shall call Lady Number One, to exchange seats with some other lady; and this lady I shall call Lady Number Two.

I next bring Lady Number Two an ordinary writing tablet, and ask her to write on it some question about her future which she would like to have answered; and also to write below this question the name of some person who is now dead, from whom she would like to receive a message. I also request her to hold the tablet while writing in such a manner that no one can see the writing, and to use care that no one in any way may know what she writes. I ask her to leave a margin around the sheet free from writing, to be used for folding purposes; and when she is through with the writing, to tear off the sheet, fold it several times, then seal it in a small envelope which I have previously given her, place the same immediately in her own pocket and keep it there until I have read it. When she has all prepared, I direct her to lay the tablet on a table that is convenient, and there it remains throughout the evening in full view. When she lays it on the table I do not go near it or pay any attention to it; and it can be examined thoroughly, as there is no carbon paper or any similar thing about it. I do not especially call attention to this fact, as the suggestion of any possible trickery weakens the

effect. However, on several occasions I have noticed certain wise persons examining it quietly. This is all the preparation for Lady Number Two's writing; and I now proceed to prepare the third writing, which when prepared I read as the first reading.

I now bring from my drawer a small card about one-thirty-second of an inch in thickness, red on one side and white on the other. These are cut from ordinary cardboard, obtainable in any printing office. I ask some gentleman whom I regard as particularly intelligent, or as hard to deceive, to kindly take his seat in the center of the rear end of the front parlor.

I ask him to write across the card the name of some great man, statesman, or politician, any one of whom he can think, living or dead; only I ask him to write the name plainly in a bold hand, and to be very careful that no one sees what he writes. I also give him some article, it makes no difference what, (usually one of the slates used in the "Spirit Dictionary" trick,) on which to place the card while writing. I ask him when through to turn the card over face downward on the slate, turning it over *towards himself* and not towards the audience, as otherwise they might see the writing. This he does. While he is preparing this card I return to the rear parlor to the drawer to get some other articles, and pay no attention to him until the card is written and turned over, and until he informs me of that fact.

I now come forward with an envelope into which the card will fit nicely; and presenting it to him open, flap side toward him and face downward, I ask him to insert the card himself, keeping the writing downward while so doing. I merely ask the privilege of touch-

ing the card with the tip of my finger as he is passing it into the envelope.

I next request him to seal the envelope himself, to place it on the slate sealed side upward, and to make certain marks across the sealed parts so that he can tell if I should tamper with the same. I now bring forward a seal and some sealing wax. I give him the seal previously moistened, and proceed to melt the wax, allowing it to drop on the center of the envelope. At the same time I request him to seal the envelope doubly, and to examine the seals so thoroughly that there can be no possibility of substitution. When all is prepared I am ready to begin the readings.

III.

I now take the gentleman's envelope in the tips of my fingers; and, stepping to the center table of the second parlor, I lean it against the skull previously mentioned, so that the wax seal faces the audience, while all is in the brightest light.

I instantly return to the front parlor; and, seating myself facing the spectators, I pay no attention to the sealed envelope resting against the skull in the back parlor. This requires not over two seconds of time, there being no pause whatever in my movements.

I proceed to make passes over my own face in a manner similar to those which the early mesmerists made over their subjects. I simulate considerable nervousness, allow my shoulders to be convulsed a time or two, gaze toward the ceiling as if looking into infinity, and begin my attempt to read. I first request the writer not to answer any questions I may ask, except those I may ask him directly. This prevents him

from answering the first questions I ask and which I am directing to some unseen being.

I hold my hand to my ear, *à la* Schlessinger. Allowing it to tremble violently, I ask the unseen spirits if the name written on the card is the name of a person living or dead. I apparently hear an answer which the spectators do not hear, for I turn to the writer and with great solemnity inform him that he has written the name of one who is now dead. This of course is supposing that he did write the name of a dead person. If the person should happen to be living, I with the same solemnity announce that fact to him.

Let us now suppose that the name written is that of Aaron Burr. I again turn to the spirits and ask if the person whose name is written died more than one thousand years ago. When they answer me I turn to the writer informing him that the person whose name he has written died less than one thousand years ago. I then ask the spirits if this man died in the last five hundred years and get the answer that he died in the last century. This I also give in a dramatic manner. I then say, while gazing into emptiness, "I see before me a man who is 'small in stature and slight in figure but with a face finely cut and almost classic in its mold.' He wears no beard, his hair is brushed back from over a wide forehead, and he regards me with a pair of beautiful eyes. There is a look of ineffable sadness on his face, as if there were something he would have undone. He wears a coat of black velvet, with black velvet knee breeches, black silk stockings and shoes with silver buckles. I see behind him a beautiful lady who regards him with a look of infinite tenderness and pity. She appears to be a daughter."

The effect of this is very fine, as the writer corroborates my statements, or else states that he himself is not familiar with the personal appearance of the one whose name he has written.

I now attempt to read the writing. I begin by looking into space and repeating the letters of the alphabet. I finally get the letter A. I repeat the process. When about to get the second letter a, and while making great efforts to get it and seeming rather uncertain, I request the writer to be so kind as to step to the table and bring his envelope and hold it on the top of my head. This he does while I close my eyes, and proceed with slight effort to read the complete name.

I offer him a knife and ask him to open the envelope and see if his card is still within untouched, which of course it is. I also ask him to examine the seal and the envelope, and to hold the same close to the light and see if it is possible to read the writing through the envelope. This he and the spectators do, and of course find everything as it should be and the writing perfectly invisible. When he returns the envelope to me I offer it to him to keep as a souvenir, which generally is accepted gladly by him.

I am now ready to read the writing of Lady Number One and answer the question she has written. I ask her if she still has concealed about her the writing which she sealed and retained herself. She replies in the affirmative. I then ask her if any one in the world knows what she has written. Upon her informing me that no one knows, and of the impossibility of such a thing being the case, I ask her what she will think if I now succeed in reading her question without going near her, while she retains the same in her own

pocket. The spectators generally express their incredulity as to the possibility of such a proceeding, upon which I inform them that I will make the effort.

I ask the lady, in order to remove the idea of mind-reading or telepathy, to keep her mind entirely off what she has written. I then make the second effort, assuming an air of great earnestness. I slowly read her question letter by letter, and give a full and minute description of the writing, the style of letters used and any peculiarities of any of the letters. The effect of this can well be imagined.

I now ask her to open her envelope, to examine it carefully and see if I am correct, and to exhibit the same to the spectators. This she does, while I stand at a distance repeating the peculiarities of the strokes of the letters, etc., for their verification. I never look at the writing at all even after reading it. I simply pay no attention to it, as my mysterious power of vision is now superior to the sight of mortal eyes.

I now tell Lady Number Two to continue to keep her writing concealed, and that I will use it shortly; whereupon I freqently have a selection of music; or if not, I allow the spectators a minute or two of time in which to consider and talk over what they have just seen.

* * *

I am now ready to produce a spirit message for Lady Number Two, signed by the name which is written below her question on her concealed paper; and to read and answer her question.

I arrange a table just inside the back parlor, sidewise to the spectators, placing a chair on each side of the table and two slates on the table. I ask Lady Number Two to come forward, take the chair next

the audience and to clean the slates. As she does this I seat myself at the opposite side of the table.

As soon as she cleans them, we place the slates under the table; and I ask her to hold them while I place my hands on the table top. In a few moments, under my instructions, she brings from under the table the slates, on which is a fine spirit message of philosophical import, to which is signed the dead person's name which she has written on the sheet of paper and which she still retains sealed. The effect of this upon her, and upon her friends who may have known this person, is very great; especially as it is some one of whom I have never heard. I have very frequently known some of the spectators, who happened to be acquainted with the person whose name is signed to the message, to identify the writing and sometimes to identify the language as that of the dead person.

I next, with some little effort, proceed mentally to read her question, minutely describing the writing, etc. I then ask her to bring out the envelope, exhibit the writing and verify my statements, which she does. I now proceed to answer her question; and if I have not previously done so, to answer the question of Lady Number One. Let us suppose the question asked is, "Will I ever be wealthy?" I first consult the "Mystic Oracle of the Crystal Spheres." I place on the table a highly polished crystal globe three inches in diameter, such as is used for experiments in "Crystal Gazing." This globe is supported by a bronze griffon. I have the lady gaze into the globe while I intently look into it from the opposite side. I then with solemnity inform her that she will never be wealthy but that she will be "well-to-do."

I assure my readers that the effect of this all is just

as great as if I really performed by some occult power that which in reality I have but performed by trickery of the simplest kind. I would have no trouble in passing it off on the majority of my spectators as the work entirely of spirits. The experiments are so superior to those usually employed by mediums, that the audience is simply confounded. Also, there is abundant opportunity after reading the dead statesman's name, to call him up in the manner so common with mediums and give the audience an elaborate message from him, which will have much weight with them, owing to the manner in which his spirit has been summoned from the land of shadows. However, I will say that while I use these things in the manner outlined, after all is over I assure my audience that it is not spirit power which I use; but I do not tell them it is trickery, as that would detract from the effect. I simply let them speculate and think what they please; and I not infrequently find them determined, notwithstanding my statement to the contrary, to believe that it is the work of spirits, or else some occult power which I possess. I have had intelligent and wealthy business men of Omaha and other places question me, afterwards, about the apparently marvelous power which they seem to think I possess.

At one time I gave to the sisters of a Catholic school, or convent, one of my entertainments. I had the Mother Superior write and seal the great man's name. The name she wrote was "Hannibal," which of course I read for them very successfully. I was some time afterwards informed, privately, that one of the sisters ever after insisted that I was in league with His Satanic Majesty. This was notwithstanding the fact that in this particular instance I had assured them that it

was nothing but trickery. I knew the teachings of the Roman Church in regard to anything like sorcery, or necromancy, or even modern spiritualism; and not desiring to give offense, I stated in advance that I was merely illustrating what might be done by trickery and how good people might be imposed upon by impostors. I stated that such things were never done by spirit power; and the Mother Superior remarked that she was sure, if spirits did such things, they were only "evil spirits." In this case I only gave the single reading of the statesman's name as described above. I do not know what would have been the result, had I performed the complete combination experiment, with all the dramatic play I usually employ.

The description given above is the exact appearance of the experiments as seen by the audience. This is exactly what the spectators see or think they see; and it is all that any of them do see. However, things are not always just what they appear to be.

IV.

And now to tear down the structure I have erected —to shatter the idols, and return from the romantic land of mystery to the commonplace things of earth.

I will proceed to explain the principles and the methods I really employ in reading these writings. The readers of this work who desire to fully grasp the explanations I am about to give should either memorize the description of the experiments, or else refer to each one separately when reading the explanation of that particular one.

I will give the explanation of the different tricks as far as I am at liberty to do so, and in the order in which I read them. I will explain each one separately

beginning with the reading of the statesman's name, which was the third writing in the preparation.

The reader will remember that after this envelope is properly sealed with wax, I take it in my fingers and carry it to the table in the back parlor, and lean it against the skull. The principle used consists in this instance in rendering the envelope temporarily transparent, and instantly reading the writing in it unseen by the spectators, while on my way to the table.

I use, for this, "Colonial Spirits," which is an odorless wood alcohol manufactured in this country. If a sponge saturated with this be rubbed across any piece of paper, it is rendered instantly transparent, as soon as moistened; and any writing under it can be easily read. In a few moments the alcohol evaporates, and the transparent condition of the paper disappears. This principle has been known for some time in the world of magic, but not in the particular way in which I use it; and therefore it has not usually been worked so successfully.

I accomplish my object in the following manner. I have in the drawer with my paraphernalia a half ounce round tin box such as druggists use for vaseline and similar articles. I have crowded into this box a small silk sponge which fills it a little above the edges like an envelope moistener. I have soldered to the bottom of this box on the outside, a circular disk of tin for the purpose of "palming." This box I prepare in advance just before the experiment by saturating the sponge in it with colonial spirits. I leave the lid on the box to prevent evaporation until I am ready for it.

When I have the envelope sealed with wax, I return the sealing wax and the seal to the drawer in the writing desk; and this gives me the opportunity to

palm and go forward with the box containing the saturated sponge. I allow my right hand, which contains it, to hang carelessly against my right side. This effectually conceals it, and I avoid looking toward my right hand in any manner. I advance leisurely to the writer and ask him if he is sure he can be certain of the identity of the wax seal, and if he could tell if the same should be broken. I now take the envelope from him with my left hand, and turn around carrying it to the table. On the way, as soon as the envelope is out of the angle of view of the spectators, I raise my right hand, and, passing the sponge over the face of the envelope a couple of times, quickly read the name under the bright light of a gasoline pressure lamp with which for such occasions I have my parlor lighted.

Having the writer choose the name of a statesman or some great man, greatly facilitates the reading; as the names written are usually so familiar that the merest glance is sufficient to read them. I then, as soon as I reach the table, turn half around so that my left side faces the audience; and with my left hand still holding the envelope with the seal towards the spectators, I stand it on the table against the skull, asking the spectators if they can plainly see the seal from there.

The envelope has only been out of the view of the spectators a fraction over a second; yet I now know the name on the card. Meanwhile, with the right hand I secretly drop the moistener into my right coat pocket, or preferably into a small bag at the back of the table behind the skull. If I use the bag at the back of the table, I have it suspended open from a pivoted wire, so that I can quickly swing it under the table out of view with the fingers of my right hand. This I do,

after dropping the moistener into it; and *at the same time* with the left hand I place the envelope against the skull, and direct the attention of the spectators to the seal by my discourse, and by my looks. I in no way look toward my right hand. Swinging the cloth bag under the table, makes it safe for the writer of the name to go to the table and get the envelope when I request him to do so. I make all of my movements leisurely, throughout the entire experiment; as by so doing I can have a little more time when walking to the table with the envelope, and yet not attract the attention of the spectators to this fact.

For the dramatic play, it is necessary to have a previous knowledge of the personal appearance and history of the great men of the country whose names are most liable to be written. The time required in the dramatic play before the reading allows the alcohol to thoroughly dry; so that there is no trace of it when the writer of the name goes to the table after it. By using colonial spirits there is no odor noticeable. It is safe to say that in a few seconds after the sponge is passed over it, the moistened side of the envelope could be turned towards the audience; and nothing would be detected, as the alcohol evaporates so quickly. I use a small envelope of *wove* paper of sufficient thickness to effectually conceal the writing in the strongest light. I found it necessary to use a card, the white side of which is not glazed and which has a slightly dirty color; as otherwise the writing would be slightly visible through the envelope, and thus mar the effect of the experiment. If a thicker envelope is used, a whiter card may be used also; but a thick envelope is not rendered so transparent as a thinner one. I use two styles of envelopes,—a thin one where the

lights are not strong, and a thicker one if the lights are strong. I like to use stationery that can afterwards be inspected by daylight; so, therefore, at my home I use a gasoline pressure lamp on such occasions, as a strong light in the room permits the use of an envelope of sufficient thickness. I also select a style of envelope that does not expand or pucker from the effects of the alcohol, and thus arouse suspicion.

When I have the writer turn the card over on the slate *towards himself* and not towards the spectators, this is in reality to insure having the writing right side up when I afterwards pass the moistener over the envelope. I present the envelope to him open, flap side towards himself, face downward, and hold it until he has started the card into it. When I ask permission to merely touch the card on its way into the envelope with the tip of my finger, I do this to insure the card going into the envelope with writing towards the front side. When I afterwards pick up the envelope I notice which is the flap he has just sealed, and I have this flap uppermost. This brings the writing right side up in my hand, and saves the time necessary to turn the envelope when reading it.

I furnish the writer with a large-leaded soft pencil, not too sharp, to write with, though any pencil will do. However, a pencil of above description makes the writing plainer and in a larger hand, which is of considerable assistance in reading the writing so quickly. The reader will remember, that I also request the writer to write the name in a bold hand plainly.

Should one reach the table before succeeding in reading the name, it were better to make a slight pause than to fail with the trick. However, after a few trials this will never happen.

Immediately after leaning the envelope against the skull, I return to the front parlor and proceed with the readings as given in the description of the appearance of the experiments.

While considerable time is required to read this chapter, much less time is required in giving the readings. Only fifteen or twenty minutes is required for the entire combination experiment.

The principle of using odorless alcohol on a sponge has been published before, but as heretofore described I have never found the trick practicable. As furnished by the vendor, the instructions are for the performer to have several of these envelopes prepared by himself or his assistant; and to have them placed flat on a table, at which the performer seats himself. He now partly closes his eyes; but in reality he can see the envelopes all the time. Then he slowly passes the hand with the sponge over the different envelopes, reading aloud the writing therein. It is intended to convey the idea to spectators that by passing the hand over the envelopes the performer gets *en rapport* with them. This method is obviously for the stage only, as in a parlor the spectators could see the effect of the alcohol. I have never found this method very practicable; and I assure my readers that in the method I have described, less time is taken up and a much finer effect obtained. It is also much more certain of success, and leaves the spectators absolutely in the dark as to the method employed.

I have frequently performed these readings in audiences where are persons who have seen me perform them before; and in such cases they invariably inform me that they are more mystified than they were in the first place.

The secrets of the remaining experiments, so far as I know, have never been given to the public. The principle that is used in the production of each of them is entirely different; therefore, if a spectator should ever surmise the principle used in one of them, the moment he should try to explain the others by it, he would see that it would not work; and he would conclude that he was entirely wrong.

* * *

And now in regard to the principle which I use in reading the writing of Lady Number One, I am sorry to say I must here disappoint my reader. I am under a promise to the dealer not to reveal this secret and can not do so. Those who desire to use it, however, can obtain it from George L. Williams & Co., 7145 Champlain Ave., Chicago, Ill. I regard this as one of the best tricks extant, and regret my inability to give its secret to my readers.

After the preparation of the writing for Lady Number One, I immediately go ahead with the preparation of the writing for Lady Number Two. I will now give the secret of this reading as completely as my promise permits me to do.

In this experiment the secret lies in getting an impression of the writing, but *not* a carbon impression. This impression can not be seen by the eye at all, but has to be "developed" afterwards. This is really a very fine idea and was originally intended for professional mediums to use in tests with their subjects at private sittings. The tablet is apparently unprepared and would stand the most thorough inspection, yet there is a preparation.

I will first describe the preparation of the tablet, and

then I will describe how I obtain possession of it and how I develop the writing.

I use for this experiment a finely finished and highly glazed paper. I take one sheet of it and prepare one side of it by rubbing it over thoroughly with a material common enough to be within every one's reach; but the vendor of tricks might deem it a violation of my promise if I were to give its name, although the secret to this part of the trick has been well known for some time, and has even been published. It leaves a perfectly smooth surface. Only one in the secret could discover that there is a preparation. Even I am frequently puzzled to tell which is the prepared side, and can only do so by holding it so that the light strikes it at the proper angle.

This sheet is now to be placed on the tablet, prepared side down; but, before doing so, I first touch the two corners of the two top sheets of paper on the tablet with library paste. I do this so that they will adhere to each other a trifle, as this prevents the lady from tearing off by accident the sheet which bears the record, when afterwards she tears off the prepared sheet bearing her question.

I now place the prepared sheet in position, prepared side down, and paste the top in position with white library paste. However, I allow this sheet to protrude at the bottom about one-thirty-second of an inch. This is to make it so easy for the lady to get hold of it, that she will be in no danger of tearing off more than the one. Of course, when she writes, the writing is transferred to the second sheet, *but it is entirely invisible.*

After she has written, I direct her to lay the tablet on a table which is convenient; and it apparently lies

there throughout the evening. This is the point where I begin the preparation of the writing of the statesman's name, immediately thereafter giving the first two readings. I only *after the first two readings* obtain possession of this tablet and develop the writing.

I do it in this manner. I bring forward two slates, which I shall soon use in the slate writing experiment, and leave them on the center table in the front parlor. Under one is a duplicate tablet, which I also leave on the table, unnoticed by the spectators. I remove the slates used in the dictionary trick, carrying away under one of them the original tablet. Meanwhile, the spectators are deeply engaged in a discussion of the two readings I have just given them; and I inform Lady Number Two that I will read her question a little later, and for her to keep it in her possession until I have done so.

I now go to other apartments for a few moments to develop the record. I use for a holder for the sheet of paper while working with it, the frame of a slate of proper size with the slate portion removed. I fasten the sheet in position on this frame with a couple of pins, using care to keep the side with the record on it upwards; because if it gets turned over, I can in no way discover the fact until it is too late.

The writing may be developed in several ways; the best way and the one I generally use, I can not reveal on account of my promise of secrecy to the firm before referred to. I will, however, give a method which is well known to many mediums, and which has been used by them for a number of years.

I merely dust a little powdered plumbago, or a little lampblack on to the sheet of paper, shake it around and then turn it over a vessel and dust it off by strik-

ing the paper very lightly with my finger nail. The writing will appear on the sheet plainly and may be read. The method furnished by the above named firm, however, is much superior to this method.

I quickly memorize the question; and on a slate close at hand, where I have a message already prepared, I sign the name of the dead person. This slate is an exact duplicate in appearance, of the two slates which were left on the table in the front parlor.

I now proceed to prepare the Spirit Slate experiment, and give the final reading; but before describing this, which is one of the finest slate tricks of which I know, I will give a little additional information relating to the last reading experiment.

I was told to use a tablet with every sheet prepared, but I first prepared only every alternate sheet and left the rest unprepared. This worked nicely; but as soon as the tablet was used a few times, I found that all the questions that had previously been written on the tablet were copied for several sheets down. This caused so many words to appear, that I was compelled to discard all prepared sheets, excepting one, as I have above described. A tablet could be prepared with two prepared sheets on top and an unprepared sheet between them. There would then be two impressions on unprepared sheets in the tablet, but it would be necessary to discard all these top sheets after each reading.

This trick, however, was originally intended for the use of professional mediums at private sittings with a single person. In such cases, after the sitter has written and sealed his question, he is directed to proceed to the mantel and clean and examine some slates. While he is doing so, the medium takes the tablet from

the table and places the same quickly in a large pocket on the inside of his coat, taking therefrom and leaving on the table a duplicate. He then advances to the sitter and begins a lecture, when his doorbell rings. As his servant fails to answer the bell the medium excuses himself for a moment, and attends to the matter himself, engaging in a discussion with the servant while out, for not properly attending to the door. This he does within hearing of the sitter. Meanwhile he is rapidly developing and reading the record.

This method I never liked, as it requires the assistance of another person. I much prefer the method I have outlined.

* * *

And now for the Spirit Slate Message. I use three slates, but the spectators never see more than two of them at one time. I make an exchange of one of the slates, unknown to the sitter or spectators. The table is an ordinary one, and I do not conceal the prepared slate on the person. The secret lies in the chair I sit on. The slate is concealed under the seat on a shelf. Just above this shelf is another shelf onto which I slip the unprepared slate when I make the exchange. These shelves can not be seen as the chair is one of the variety known as "box seat." One of the sides, the right one, can be raised up to admit the hand to the shelves. This side is hung on hinges at the top, but they can not be seen.

I prepare the chair as follows: I get a nicely finished, box seat, oak, dining chair. I remove the cane seat and replace it with a beautiful leather cobbler seat. This renders what is underneath invisible. I now, with a fine-tooth saw, neatly saw the ends of

the box strip underneath the right side of the seat, where they enter the legs of the chair. I remove this strip, which is some two inches wide. It is too thick; so with a saw I split the piece lengthwise, from end to end, so as to leave it only about one-half inch thick. It remains, of course, full two inches wide, and I am careful not to mar the finish.

I hinge it back in place with three small hinges, at its top, so that I can raise and lower it like a trap door while sitting on the chair. By screwing the hinges on a mere trifle out of line, the strip will move stiffly, and will remain in any position in which it may be left. I now place two, thin padded shelves under the seat, one above the other. These are concealed when the side piece is down, but when it is up they are of course visible and the right hand can easily reach them. As the strip is now so thin it offers no obstruction when up, to getting at the shelves and making the exchange of slates.

I have this chair in the room adjoining the back parlor. As soon as I have developed and read Lady Number Two's writing, I sign the message as stated before, and slip this prepared slate onto the bottom shelf of the chair, message side up. I lower the side piece and all is ready.

I next place an ordinary table sidewise to the spectators, but just inside the back parlor. There is a cover on this table which hangs down some six inches on the side next to the audience, and somewhat less on my side. I place the prepared chair with its right side towards the table, at the side of the table away from the spectators. I have in the front parlor another chair just like mine, except it is unprepared. I place this chair for the lady with its left side towards the

table, and at the side of the table which faces the spectators.

I place on this table the two slates which I have previously placed on the table in the front parlor. I ask Lady Number Two to be seated at this table. This effectually conceals from her view and from the spectators, the portion of my person and the prepared chair that are below the table top. We thus both sit sidewise to the table, and face the same direction. I ask her to clean the slates; and just as she is finishing the second slate, I take the first one in my right hand and apparently place it under the table.

Now I have just raised the trap of the chair while she was cleaning the first slate; so, as I bring this slate below the table top, I slip it on the top shelf of the chair silently, quickly drawing out the prepared slate in its place, and lowering the side piece of the chair. I immediately bring the prepared slate up under the table, requesting her at the same time to place her slate under the table with her right hand. Upon her doing so, I immediately ask her to take her other hand and hold my slate also. I instantly withdraw my right hand. This all requires but a moment and she has soon forgotten that I placed one of the slates under the table.

Sometimes I take a small slate pencil and quickly place it on the slates, instantly withdrawing my hand. I now place my hands on the table top, and gradually turn, facing the table. I call on the spectators to come forward and watch the experiment, and the trick is practically done.

At the proper time I direct the lady to bring out the slates, which she does, producing the message. After the effect of this is over, I mentally read her question

on the slip of concealed paper; then I direct her to produce the envelope, open it and verify all. After this I bring forward the crystal globe and answer the questions as before described.

After all is completed, I take the cover off the table and turn it over to the view of the spectators, that they may see that there is no trickery, but that the table is an ordinary one. I also offer my person for examination that they may be convinced that nothing is concealed about me. I have never yet had any one suspect the innocent looking chair.

I have performed many experiments in magic and sleight-of-hand, and I have seen the best work of this class in the country; and I can conscientiously assure the readers of this work that I have never seen one experiment of this class, the effect of which could in any way begin to compare with the effect of the experiments I have just described. This is especially true among the more intelligent class of persons, who may regard the very best work in magic as but the result of practice; but who insist on regarding this as something else; as something at least bordering on the occult, and as something very rare.

SPIRIT SLATE-WRITING AND BILLET TESTS.

I.

I HAVE decided to give to my readers a description and explanation of a few of the best slate-writing feats and billest tests that are being performed by mediums and conjurors of the present day. I will make no attempt at explaining a complete list of the many tricks of the kind, for should I do so it would require a large volume to contain it all.

There are certain dealers who supply secrets of this kind to mediums and others desiring them, at what may be considered by some as a very high price. There are also books on the subject describing many such feats; but those that are really the best, have been pretty generally kept out of the books on the subject. Some can only be secured from the dealers, while some have been guarded by certain mediums so closely that I do not think the dealers have obtained the secrets yet.

The tricks to which I shall devote the most attention are the ones used by such mediums, and certain ones supplied by dealers, these being the ones I regard as the best and most deceptive of the kind.

The reader must understand that the most essential part of any trick is the psychological part. This con-

sists in the operator absolutely controlling the subject's attention. This is termed, in the parlance of the profession, " misdirection." A thorough master of the art of misdirection has his subject entirely at his mercy. The subject sees only what the operator desires him to see, even though much of that which is hidden is performed before his very eyes.

I do not mean to convey the idea that the operator employs a power anything like hypnotism, but merely that he is an actor; that he directs the attention of the subject entirely by skilfully directing his own eyes, his own gestures, and his own attention, to the point where he desires the attention of his subject to be directed. Wherever the operator looks and points, there will the subject most certainly look if he be interested. It is possible then for the performer to execute with the other hand any maneuver he desires, entirely unseen by the subject; but he must in no way look at such action himself, or he will be instantly discovered.

A magician once remarked to me, "If I can only get your attention intently, an elephant can pass behind me and you will not see it." This may have been a little strong, but not so much so as one who is not himself a perfomer might suppose. The attention is like the field of vision,—it can only be concentrated on one thing at a time.

If any one reports a slate-writing, where he took his own slates, did not let them go out of his hands, and allowed no one to touch them in any manner, he is surely mistaken if truthful. There has been something which occurred, and which he does not relate, for the simple fact that it escaped his attention at the time—something that to him seemed a mere incident,

a little thing, an accident, or that he did not perceive at all; but that was really the vital point, as it concealed the trick. This is the verdict of all the reliable conjurers who have ever investigated the subject.

Conjurers are always looking for things of this kind; and if they hear of such a trick, immediately manage to see it if possible. They always see it with different eyes, than do other persons. This is simply because they are fitted by education to detect a trick. A conjurer is a specialist who is fitted to detect trickery.

We hear many tales of marvelous slate tricks, but can never find them. They are something like the wonderful stories we hear about "Indian Magic." We receive the latter at second or third hand, and far from the scenes where they occurred. When one of our magicians makes a journey to that country to see these things, he can not find them. He can only find a number of tricks that are really inferior to the tricks of our own performers at home. There is one little difference, however, and that is the setting given these tricks by the pretenses of the performer. In our country, the performer, unless he be a professional medium, claims only that it is trickery; while in that country, as a rule, the spectators are allowed to believe the prformance genuine. This greatly enhances the effect of any trick.

Slate tricks, where the performer appears not to touch the slates, are by no means the best or most certain of success; but a good performer must be able to perform all kinds and to adjust himself to the conditions with which he is confronted.

I personally perform most of the tricks I am going to describe, and I assure the reader that the explana-

tions are given very accurately; so that the reader can, if he so desire, reproduce the experiments. All the tricks given are thoroughly practicable, and can be successfully performed with a little practice.

In justice to myself I wish to state that I have always used these experiments for purposes of entertainment or instruction, and that I have never imposed on the credulity of any of my spectators. I have never laid any claims to mediumistic powers, but have always acknowledged that the experiments were pure trickery.

The reader must remember that when a trick is explained it immediately becomes commonplace, and that it is only the mystery of good tricks that lends a charm to them. To properly appreciate a good trick, one should by all means see it performed before reading the explanation, if it be possible to do so. When the explanation is read without seeing the trick performed, it is rarely held at its true value in the reader's estimation. I assure the reader that the tricks which follow appear very mysterious, and that they are the best of their kind in existence. The reader has only to give a few of them a careful trial to be convinced of this statement.

I would advise any one who desires to thoroughly understand these tricks, to read the explanation carefully, and to form a good mental picture of all the details of the performance.

II.

I will first describe a very excellent slate trick wnich is being worked most successfully by a few professional mediums of the present day. This is performed with a number, usually eight, bound slates, of the size

five by seven, and one large slate, size eight by eleven inches inside measure. This trick is very easy to perform and very deceptive. Any reader of this article can perform it successfully with a very few trials.

I generally have the subject take a seat near a small table, and I remain standing at his left side while I perform the trick. I first step to an adjoining room as soon as the spectator is seated and get the slates. I come forward with the slates arranged as follows: in my left hand and partly resting on my wrist and arm is the large slate with the small ones on top of it.

I present the top small slate to the subject for inspection and cleaning, if he so desire. When he is through with it, I take it in my right hand and place it on the table directly in front of him. I repeat this with each of the remaining small slates, placing each one inspected on top of the others, thus forming a stack. I do not even up the edges of the slates, but leave the stack in a rough and unsymmetrical form. When the last small slate is in position, I bring the large slate in front of the subject, and giving him a pencil, request him to *write on the large slate his name and the date of his birth.* If he desires to examine the large slate before writing this, I allow him to do so. As soon as he has done the writing, I place the large slate in his lap and request him to hold it by the ends. I then take a large rubber band and snap it around the stack of small slates, after evening up the edges. I now place this stack of small slates in his lap on the large slate, and request him to place his palms on it.

After sufficient time has elapsed, I request him to examine the slates for a message. When he does so he finds a long "spirit" message written on one of the small slates, completely covering one side of it. The

message is written with a soapstone pencil, and appears bright, and heavily written. It is addressed to him by name, and is frequently signed by the name of some departed friend whom I do not know.

This effect is secured by a very simple means. I use nine small slates instead of eight. I prepare the message in advance and sign it. The slate containing this message is *underneath the large slate* when I come forward with the slates. As I take my position at the left side of the spectator, and tilt the slates slightly towards him, the message slate can not be seen.

The subject naturally supposes that all of the small slates are on top of the large one; and when he has examined all of the small slates in view, and I have stacked them in front of him, he never dreams that under the large slate in my left hand is another small slate which he can not see.

I now bring this large slate into position right over the stack for an instant, with its front edge tilted downward and resting on the stack. I allow the small bound slate under the large one silently to drop upon the stack, and *at the same time I take his attention* by giving him a pencil with my right hand and requesting him to write on the large slate. I say, "Write your name, etc., right there," pointing with my right fingers to the center of the large slate. This takes his attention so that he does not notice the fact that the large slate pauses over the stack of small slates for a moment. In fact this is done in a natural manner, as if I were merely holding the large slate in that position to show him where to write, and he thinks nothing of it.

When the large slate is removed and placed in his lap, he does not notice that there is now one more

slate in the stack, for the reason that where so many slates are used the addition of an extra one can not be noticed unless the subject first count the slates. Of course counting is never mentioned. The small slate with the message on it has the message side downwards, so that the message can not be seen after it is dropped on the stack.

I always keep the slates in my left hand until they are inspected and stacked on the table, for the reason that if the slates be laid on the table the small one under the large one will make its presence known by preventing the large slate from touching the table. I allow the slates partly to rest on my arm until the weight is reduced so I can hold them in the hand, at which time I hold those which remain, in the left hand only. This enables me to press the concealed slate tightly against the lower side of the large slate.

As soon as the large slate is placed on the sitter's lap, I up-edge the stack of small slates so as to even them up. I take from the table a large rubber band and snap it around the stack. As the stack is on the side edges of the slates when I first up-edge them, I next bring them upon the end edges, while I put the band in place. It is now easy to place the stack of slates upon the large slate *message slate down,* and to attract no notice to this fact. This is because the position has been changed a time or so in placing the band on; and I then take the stack in my hands by the edges of the slates, and simply place what was the top side of the stack in the beginning, at the bottom. This way the spectator never suspects that the stack has been turned over; and when he does find his message, he finds it on the bottom slate, and on *its upper surface,* which greatly heightens the effect. His memory is

especially good about cleaning the bottom slate, and also about the upper surfaces of the slates being free from writing; as he could see them all on the upper surface as the stack was formed. The message thus appears as if it had come by magic, or some superhuman power.

The secret of success with this trick is perfect self-assurance. The operator must not act timid, but must perform the experiment *himself* and *direct the sitter* what to do. He thus makes his own conditions and must never act in any way backward or embarrassed, but perfectly at home in the performance of the experiment.

The means by which I obtain the name of the deceased friend of the spectator may be one of several, some of which I will describe further on.

There are a number of tricks performed where a stack of slates is used and an extra slate adroitly added to it, or else one of them exchanged for another.

There is also an improved form of this trick which I use. It is very superior and I will give it a little later. It requires a little more skill at one point, and also requires a knowledge of certain moves which I give in the trick described in Number IV of this chapter. In Number V, I will again refer to this trick, and give the improved method; as the reader will then have mastered the moves required for its production.

* * *

There is also another trick with a stack of slates which is very effective. In this trick no large slate is used. The message is prepared in advance on a small slate, and this slate is concealed on the floor under the end of a small rug behind the table. As the spectator cleans each slate, the operator takes it and places it

on the rug directly over the concealed slate. When all of the slates are cleaned, the operator picks up the stack from the floor; and secretly inserting his fingers under the concealed slate beneath the rug, he draws it out and picks it up with the other slates.

The move is made so that it appears as if the operator merely picks up the slates on top of the rug, and the subject never suspects that a concealed one is drawn at the same time from under the rug. This concealed slate has the message side upwards, and the stack of slates are now evened up and laid on the chair; where, after holding the palms on them for a time, the subject examines them and finds the message.

Sometimes when I perform this trick I have the message slate on a table under a newspaper. When we take our seats at the table I remove the newspaper out of my way and lay it on the floor, a chair, or another table. I then lay the slates on the table to be cleaned. Of course I secretly remove the concealed slate under the newspaper when I remove it, and lay both on the floor, chair, or table.

As the spectator cleans the slates I stack them on this newspaper, and when I pick up the cleaned slates, I draw out the message slate as in the preceding trick.

III.

One other variation of the last trick is being worked at the present time by a very noted medium. The slates are placed in a stack on a small table directly in front of the sitter. He is requested to clean them one at a time. As he does so the operator, who stands at his left, takes the slates in his left hand, and stacks them on the left corner of the table.

There is a mantel just back of the operator and his subject, on which lies concealed behind some object a duplicate slate with a message on its under side. As soon as the fourth or fifth slate is cleaned and in place on the stack, the performer, who stands somewhat behind the subject, secretly takes the slate from the mantel with his right hand. Just as the sitter finishes cleaning the next slate the performer takes it from him with his left hand; but just before placing it on the stack he makes a pass, leaving this slate in his right hand and carrying away from his right hand the message slate. This pass can be executed instantly and is immediately followed by placing the message slate on the stack, message side down, with the left hand; while at the same instant the right hand returns the slate the sitter has just cleaned to the position on the mantel.

As soon as the stack is formed the medium up-edges the slates, evens them up, and slips a rubber band around them giving them into the sitter's lap to be held. The stack is turned as in the preceding tricks, and the effect on finding the message is just as great.

In regard to making the pass with the slates, the operator should partly face towards the sitter's chair and stand at the left side of the sitter, so that his right hand is far enough back to be out of the angle of vision of the sitter. The slates should be taken with the left hand and placed on the stack at the left. When the exchange is made, the left hand, on taking the slate from the subject, should move for the merest instant back of the range of his vision, meeting the right hand and making the exchange. It should do this and *without pause* place the message slate on the stack. The whole move should take but a fraction of a second,

using about the same length of time that is used in placing the other slates in position. Some remark about the next slate to be cleaned, just at this instant, helps to divert the sitter's attention and make the exchange more indetectable.

* * *

I will now describe how to make the "switch" as well as I can without drawings, and any reader wishing to try these tricks should master this move thoroughly. It is used in the next trick which I am going to describe, and which is one of the very best of slate tricks.

The move is made in this manner: The slate in the left hand is taken between the thumb and index finger, and rests in a *horizontal position* on the side of the finger facing the thumb. The remaining fingers of the left hand do not touch the slate, but are below the index finger; so that they as well as the hand, form a right angle with the surface of the slate. The middle finger is spread apart from the index finger, thus forming with it an opening into which the slate from the right hand is to be slipped. The slate taken in the right hand is also taken in a similar position; but just the instant before making the pass, I always bring the index finger on top of the slate and hold the slate pressed between the index finger and the middle or large finger. I keep the right thumb elevated, or separated from the index finger, and bring the two hands together, passing the slate in the right hand below the slate in the left hand until the latter is directly over the former. The slate from the right hand enters between the index and second fingers of the left hand, which should immediately grasp it tightly; and the

fingers of the right hand holding it should at the same time release their grasp on it.

The index finger of the right hand passes below the slate in the left hand when the above maneuver is made, and the right thumb passes over this slate. These should instantly grasp the left-hand slate while the left thumb and index finger release it. The hands should be instantly separated, the right now carrying away the slate held before in the left hand, and the left hand carrying away the slate held in the right hand. This move does not require over a tenth of a second and is very simple and easy to execute, if one will but try it. Without figures it requires some little description, but it is very simple nevertheless.

If any reader of this work will take two small padded slates and try this move for five minutes, constantly passing the slates from one hand to the other and back again, the "switch" can be made many times a minute; and in five minutes' practice the hands will do the work almost by reflex action, without looking at them at all, and the reader will then be able to execute the next trick which I will now describe.

IV.

This trick depends upon the "switch" of slates described above. I tell my subject to take a seat near a small table, and meanwhile I have two slates in my hands as above described. The message is already prepared on the under side of the slate held in the left hand.

The message is written in such a manner that the left index finger does not erase it while holding the slate. I carelessly hand the spectator the slate in my right hand, with the request that he "examine this

slate on both sides." I do not tell him what I intend doing in any manner; and although I hold the other slate in my left hand, I say nothing about intending to use it. I merely say to him, "Examine this slate, will you please?" Just at the instant that he is through with it, I take it from him with my right hand; and at that very instant I remark, "I must use a chair in this experiment." At the same time I direct my gaze to a chair on my right that is slightly out of reach, and say, "I will use that." The subject can not help glancing at the chair as I say this, and at that very instant the "switch" is made. I instantly hand him the slate in my left hand before getting the chair, saying, "examine that slate also." As I say this I lay the slate in my right hand on the table in front of but some distance away from him. This slate was the one before held by my left hand and the message is on its under surface. The slate the subject is examining is the same one he examined in the first place.

I quickly get the chair, keeping my eye on the subject to see that he gives his attention to the slate in his hands; and instantly taking my seat opposite him, I quickly take the slate from him, saying, "I will now place this slate on top of this one." As I say this I lower his slate over the one on the table, and place my palms on my end of them requesting him to do the same at his end of them. All of this, which takes so long to describe, does not require a half minute to execute.

After a time I lift off the top slate and look for a message between them. I do not turn the top slate over, although there is nothing on its lower side; but I merely look on the upper surface of the lower slate. As I do this I have the top slate in my right hand by

its right edge, and I have picked up the other by its left edge with my left hand, and raised it about an inch from the table. As I remark, "There is nothing on that slate," I bring the two slates again together. But this time I bring the slate in my right hand *under the one in my left hand.*

It is merely passed under it as I bring the hands together and this fact is not noticed by the spectator. In fact in the first place as I lift off the top slate with my right hand, my left grasps the lower slate so soon after the right hand grasps the top slate that the top slate is not more than an inch removed to the right, before the left hand has the lower slate and the two are separated; that is, the left hand moves to the left as much as the right hand does to the right, and neither hand is lifted more than an inch or two from the table.

I remark, "There is nothing on that slate," instantly passing the right slate under and the left slate over, bringing the hands together. If the move be made as just described, the subject will never notice that the slate that was the top one in the first place, is now the bottom one, and *vice versa.*

We replace the palms and wait a few moments, when again I separate the slates exactly as I did in the first place. The message is now on the under side of the upper slate, and can not be seen as I do not turn this slate over. I make the remark, "No message yet," as if surprised and dissatisfied; and I bring the two hands together again as in the first instance, except that this time *I leave the message slate on top.*

I do not place the slates on the table flat; but upedge them instead, and pinch them tightly together with my left fingers; while with my right hand I take

from my right vest pocket a small piece of slate pencil. I remark, "Perhaps if we had a pencil we would get something; and separating the slates the slightest bit at the top with my left hand, I drop the piece of pencil between them with my right hand, quickly closing the slight opening.

I now lay the slates flat on the table; but this time *I lay them so that they are turned over, or so that the message slate is now underneath with the message on its upper surface.* We instantly replace our palms on the upper slate. *Now all of this maneuvering has been for the purpose of bringing the message slate to the bottom, message side upwards;* and also *for showing the sitter the upper surface of the lower slate repeatedly, and always free from writing.* This greatly enhances the after effect of the trick. I, of course, do not tell him why I am thus maneuvering; in fact, he does not know I am maneuvering, and afterwards merely remembers my separating the slates and looking on the upper surface of the lower one repeatedly, but finding nothing. As a result, when next we look at the slates, he is deeply impressed on finding a message where but an instant before there was none. I do not separate the slates this time myself, but merely remove my palms and ask him to examine them.

A subject's memory is so poor at recalling little details, that all he can remember afterwards is that he examined both of the slates, that they never left his sight, and that he repeatedly looked at them and saw no message; that finally, on separating them, he found a message where but an instant before there was none.

The reader at first sight might not give to all this maneuvering the proper importance, and might consider the trick performed when the slates are first

examined and placed on the table; but I will say that this subsequent maneuvering is what makes this trick the superb effect which it is, and makes it really one of the best slate tricks for a single spectator.

The reader will please remember the moves just described which I execute after the exchange of the slates, and after I lay the slates on the table one on top of the other. These moves are the closing part of the trick which I will next describe, and which I made mention of in Number II of this chapter.

V.

I will now refer the reader to the trick described in Number II wherein one large and nine small slates are used. In this trick I use the same slates but the *modus operandi* is somewhat changed.

I do not enter with the eight small slates on top of the large slate as in the trick described in Number II; but I have the slates arranged after the following manner: The nine small slates are stacked one on the other, with the message slate on top, message side down. On top of this stack is the large slate.

I enter with these and place them on the table directly in front of the sitter. I stand at his left and with my left hand I remove the large slate from the stack, carrying under it secretly the top small slate. This small slate bears the message; so I tilt the top surface of the large slate towards the spectator so as to prevent his seeing the concealed slate, which my left fingers press tightly against the far side of the large slate. With my right hand I now give the sitter the stack of eight small slates, telling him to place them in his lap, clean them one at a time, and stack them on the table in front of himself.

As I thus direct him, my left hand still holds the large slate a few inches above the table top and a few inches farther from the subject than the position where I first placed the slates. I now state that while he cleans his slates, I will write on the large slate any mental impression which I may receive. I allow the lower edge of the large slate to rest on the table, and taking a pencil in my right hand I proceed to write some name. I try to write one that the sitter will recognize; but if unable to do so, it makes no difference. Meanwhile, I see to it that, while I am writing, the sitter continues to clean and stack the slates in front of himself.

I time my writing so as to finish the name just as he cleans and stacks the fourth slate. At this instant I bring the large slate directly in front of him (and right over the stack he is forming), and pointing to the name I have written I say: "Do you recognize that name?" This takes his attention; and at that instant I allow the concealed message slate behind the large one to secretly drop upon the stack from under the large slate. The large slate is resting with its forward edge on the front edge of the stack, and its rear edge elevated some thirty degrees, when I execute this maneuver.

The subject proceeds to read the name; and if he happens to recognize it, I give him a verbal reading while he continues to clean and stack the remaining slates. If he does not recognize the name, I instruct him to go ahead; as my "impressions do not seem to come readily, owing to improper conditions."

Just as he stacks the last slate, I take the stack in my hands like a pack of cards and spread them out quickly, fan-wise, just as a person playing cards does

the cards which he holds. I, however, keep them in a horizontal position near the table.

Now, if the message slate be the fifth one down from the top, I allow the fourth one to remain on top of it in such position that the edges of the two slates coincide. All of the slates are spread except these two, which accidentally(?) remain as if fastened together. I now with my fingers secretly push these two forward a good inch in advance of the other slates, and direct the sitter to "take two of these slates." As he starts to obey, I push these two right into his hands; and just as he draws them out, I remark, "Any two that you wish." I really "force" these two slates, just as a magician "forces" the selection of a desired card.

As the subject draws the two slates, I instantly tell him to lay them on the table, which he does. The message is on the under side of the lower slate, and I see to it that they are not turned over. I now close the trick *with the same maneuvers I use in closing the foregoing trick which I described in the last number.* The effect is beyond description; as the sitter thinks he has just cleaned all of the small slates, and that he of his own free will chooses two of them at random; that of these two, we repeatedly look on the upper surface of the lower one for a message, finding none; and then, suddenly, without these slates leaving his sight, he finds a message on the upper surface of the lower slate.

I know a medium who produces a message in this manner, which appears to be written with a gold ring worn by the sitter. The message is prepared in advance by rubbing a sheet of paper with spermaceti wax or paraffin. When the sheet is coated thoroughly, it is laid on a slate, prepared side down. The

message is now written on this sheet of paper. The pencil passing over the paper causes the message to be transferred to the slate in wax writing. The medium now dusts bronze powder over the slate, shakes it around and dusts it off. The powder adheres to the wax, and the remainder of the slate is cleaned carefully of all loose powder.

With the slate thus prepared, the performer proceeds with the trick as described in this number; except instead of dropping a piece of pencil between the two slates, he asks for the plain gold ring of the sitter, and drops it between them. The message appears rather dimly, written in gold, as if it had been traced by the ring. This trick always makes a great impression on a subject.

VI.

I will here describe a means of secretly reading a question written on a slate by a sitter. The performer uses a stack of nine small slates with one large one on top of them as in the preceding slate trick. The slates are brought in and placed on a low table in front of the sitter, and the operator takes his seat opposite him at the table.

The operator now takes up the large slate from the stack and secretly takes a small slate underneath it, as in the slate-writing trick. He keeps the small slate on the side of the large one next to himself. There is no message on any of the slates and they are all perfectly clean. The operator begins figuring in small figures, or hieroglyphics, on the upper portion of the large slate. This is a mere excuse for taking up the large slate.

As he does this he requests the sitter to take a small

slate and write thereon such questions as he may desire answered and to sign his own name thereto. This the sitter does; and as he faces the operator and holds the slate in front of his face, vertically, the operator can not see his writing. While the subject writes his questions, the operator takes the stack of small slates with his right hand and places them in his lap. As he does this he retains the large slate in his other hand with the concealed small slate behind it.

When the subject has finished his writing, the operator directs him to place his slate *face downward* on the table. This he does. The operator now asks, "What was your birth month, please?" or some similar question, and appears to make some kind of a mark on his large slate. He then, with his other hand, takes the slate on the table which contains the questions on its lower side, and places it face downward on the stack in his lap *without in any way looking at it.* He now places the large slate on the stack, and places his palms on it for a moment while he gives a few verbal impressions to the sitter.

He now takes up the large top slate in one hand, *but does not this time carry up a concealed slate behind it.* The subject naturally supposes that the top slate of the small ones is the one bearing the questions; but it is not, for the reason that when the operator placed the large slate on the stack just after placing the question slate on it, he of course placed the concealed small slate on the stack at the same time. The question slate is therefore the second slate from the top instead of the top one.

The operator now lifts off the top small slate *face downwards* with the other hand, and places it on the table without looking at its under surface. The sub-

ject supposes that his questions are on its under surface, but they are instead on the under surface of the top small slate left on the stack.

The operator now places over the slate on the table a newspaper which is at hand, at the same time laying down on the stack in his lap the large slate in his other hand. He now requests the sitter to place his hand on top of the newspaper which rests on the slate that he supposes bears his questions. The operator requests him to close his hand tightly and allow his fist to rest on the paper as "this makes the magnetism better." This prevents the subject from lifting up the slate and examining it, which sometimes happens if such precautions be not taken.

The operator now takes up the large slate again from the stack in his lap and appears to again figure in its top corner. He, of course, secretly carries up behind it the slate with the subject's questions on it. While appearing to figure, he quickly reads and memorizes these questions and names. He now asks the subject to remove his hand, and he quickly takes the small slate under the paper on the table and replaces it on the stack, at the same time placing the large slate in his other hand on top of it. This secretly places the question slate on top of all the small slates, just as it should be, and as the subject has supposed it to be all of the time.

The operator now asks some other question of the sitter, as, "What star were you born under?" or something of the kind and makes a few hieroglyphics on the large slate; and then he places the entire stack on the table, requesting the sitter to clean the slates. The sitter does so, and of course finds his questions on the under surface of the upper small slate as it should be.

The operator requests the subject not to let him see the writing, and now proceeds with the reading. He can give a fine verbal reading with the information he now possesses, or he can produce a message as I have before described wherein a stack of slates is used and the message written in the subject's presence.

It is thus easy for an expert performer to sit down to a table and have the subject write his questions in the operator's presence, to write the answers in the sitter's presence, to do all before his very eyes and yet not be detected in any of it as the secret is so subtle. Such performer must, however, be an actor and a master of the art of "misdirection."

* * *

There is another means of secretly securing knowledge of a subject's questions, or, as is sometimes done by mediums, of a confession of some secret thing which such subject has done, or in which he desires help, and yet is anxious to keep secret. Here a stack of small slates, with one large one, is again used.

In the latter case the medium informs the subject that he does not care to know what the subject may confess; but that it is necessary for him to write out a full confession, giving all names, etc., if he desire spiritual aid. That, however, he is at perfect liberty to keep the confession entirely secret.

The subject is then given a slip of paper, or he may use his own; and he is directed to write out his confession, or questions, as the case may be, and to seal the same in an envelope lying on the table. While he is doing this the medium is sitting and writing on the large slate, as if busy with some matter of his own. He sits side-wise to the subject and does not appear to watch him.

When the subject has written as he is directed, the medium instructs him to seal his paper in the envelope and to lay it on top of the stack of small slates which are on the table in front of him. When he has done so, the medium places the large slate on top of the stack of small slates, and asks the sitter to write on this large slate the name of some dead relative. When this is done, the medium lifts the large slate off the stack, secretly carrying under it the top small slate. At the same time he asks the sitter if the name on the large slate be that of a dead relative.

Now, on the second small slate from the top, the medium has previously secretly placed a duplicate envelope with a sheet of paper in it; so that when the top slate is carried away secretly, under the large slate, and bearing on its upper surface between it and the large slate the envelope containing the writing of the sitter, this duplicate envelope on top of the remaining slates will appear to be the one the sitter has just sealed and placed there.

The operator usually has some paper and other loose objects on one end of the table, so that he can lay down the large slate with the concealed one under it; and so that the concealed slate will not make its presence known by preventing the large slate from touching the table, as would be the case were it laid flat on the table.

The operator now asks the subject to lay "his" envelope on the table to one side, and to select two of the slates. This he does, (really laying the duplicate to one side), and the medium now has the subject place his palms on these selected slates and try for a slate writing. He remarks that he does not feel quite right just now, and fears that he can not succeed, as conditions do not seem favorable. After a short trial

and failure, he generally tells the subject that he will have to give up at present; but for him to return to-morrow or later in the day, and he will make a second effort, when conditions will doubtless be more favorable. He says, "Remember your questions (or confession)"; and reaching, he takes up the duplicate envelope which the subject thinks contains his writing, and says, "I will let you take this with you—no, I will not, either; as that would not be right. I will just burn it up." Suiting the action to the word, he takes a match and burns the duplicate envelope and paper entirely to ashes, allowing the latter to fall on one of the slates. He now dismisses the subject, after making an appointment for a second trial.

As soon as the subject has departed, the medium lifts the large slate; and taking up the original envelope on top of the concealed small slate, he opens and reads the confession, or questions, as the case may be. He thoroughly memorizes all, and prepares a fine message, answering everything; so that when the subject returns, he will have all of his writing answered very completely.

The medium with whom I am acquainted, and who works this fine trick very frequently, generally has the subject depart and make a second visit as herein described; but if he prefer, he can, after failing to produce a message, and after burning the duplicate envelope, conduct his guest to some other apartment for some other experiment, and return later for a second trial for a message. In this case an assistant enters the room, reads the writing, and prepares the message during the absence of the medium and his guest.

If the medium have a dark chamber, he can have taken the subject into it for some dark sitting mani-

festations; as the absence of light-waves is very conducive to success with the "spirits," and is very helpful in "establishing favorable conditions and harmony." After some experiments here they return and again try for a slate writing; and this time the subject is thoroughly satisfied and convinced.

* * *

If when a sitter receive a slate writing from a dear one who is dead, he receive in addition thereto a token of love in the shape of a flower, a handkerchief of soft silk, or some other object, the performance has a very emotional effect on him; and such token is usually preserved throughout life. Now, in working any of these tricks using a stack of slates, if a larger number of small slates be used, such as twelve or more, *two* slates can be added or removed under the large slate instead of one, and will attract no notice if removed or added when a sufficient number are in the stack. These two may contain between them, in addition to the message, such flower or token as the medium may desire.

If the performer be able deftly to hold the token against the lower side of the concealed small slate, and adroitly to insert it, he need not have more than one small slate under the large one.

VII.

There is a trick wherein but two slates are used that is very effective. I will give the explanation and effect together in this case.

I have the message prepared on one of the slates, and I use a small center table such as has a shelf attached to the legs about a foot above the floor. I lean the prepared slate on the floor against this shelf, and

out of view on the side of the table opposite where the subject is to sit. I have a chair near the same side of the table where I will later take my seat.

On the center of the table a number of newspapers lie carelessly. I place a chair near the side of the table where I desire the spectator to sit. I now seat him on this chair and stepping to a drawer, I bring him a small slate with bound edges; one that looks just like the one containing the message. I ask him to thoroughly examine or clean it; and as he does so I seat myself at the opposite side of the table. I now request him to place his slate flat on the table, and to place his palms on it. I then request him to rest his face on his hands while they lie on the slate for a half minute, and to close his eyes and make his mind passive while so doing.

While he does this I secretly reach to the floor, lift the message slate and lay it flat on my knees under the table, message side up. I now place my palms on the table and in a few moments ask the subject to examine his slate for a message. He, of course, finds none; and I seem disappointed at this, but request him to hold it for a time on the table and try again. This all lends an air of great honesty to the performance and tends to throw the subject off his guard. On examining the slate again he finds nothing, so I take the slate from his hands and examine it to see if there actually be no sign of writing. Finding nothing, I place the slate under the table near the center, with my right hand, in a rather hurried manner; and I request him to reach his right hand under the table and grasp the slate and to press it to the table above it. I tell him to leave his left palm on the table; and I take his attention sufficiently in telling him how to place

his left palm on the table, that it prevents him from looking under the table in any manner. I immediately bring out my right hand, leaving him holding the slate with his one hand.

I suppose that it is hardly necessary to state that as I lower my right hand with the examined slate below the table, I leave this slate on my lap and instantly, without pause, carry up under the table the prepared slate which is on my knees.

Now, that the subject is holding the message slate in proper position with his other palm on top of the table, I make a move as if to place my right hand on the center of the table. Meanwhile my left hand has dropped out of sight, apparently, by my side. I seem annoyed by the newspapers in the center of the table, and remark, "I will clear these out of the way." As I say this I take a number of them in my right hand and pass them to my left hand, which comes up near the height of the table top to meet my right; but it secretly contains the slate which was left on my lap. The papers in my right hand are moved towards my left hand so as to conceal this slate, and my left hand grasps them on top of the slate which it contains. The left hand should not be high enough for the back edge of the slate to be in view of the sitter, until after the papers are passed over it and grasped on top of the slate. As I make this move I am rising form the chair; and with my right hand I pick up the remaining papers and pass them also to my left hand, *but this time I pass them underneath the others*; so that the slate is now between the papers in my left hand. At the same time I take hold of my chair with my right hand and set it back out of my way.

I now quickly place the papers on a table just

through a folding door and secretly place the discarded slate in a concealed position. I do this very quickly and return; *but meanwhile I am instructing the sitter how to press his right palm to the table with the fingers spread apart, but with thumb contacting the first finger, etc.* I keep my eyes on him except for a moment and take his attention so that there is no danger of his examining the slate the mere instant I am out of view. I return at once to the table, standing, this time, and placing my palms on each side of his. In due time he brings out his slate and finds the message.

Should he examine the table nothing can be found, neither can anything be found on my person. This trick is very effective; and the sitter usually forgets that I placed the slate under the table for him, and states afterwards that the slate never left his hands after he cleaned it.

When I place the slate under the table in the first place, I remark, "May be if the slate is under the table we will get something;" at the same instant placing it under in a natural manner, and requesting him to pass his right hand under the table and grasp it. I make no pause in changing the slates on my lap, and the use of slates with bound edges prevents all noise.

This trick may seem difficult to the reader, but I assure him that it is very simple. It only requires that the details be well fixed in the mind of the operator, and that he have ample courage to try it and direct all operations himself. He must be perfectly at home and not in the lesat embarrassed, and must act with perfect self-confidence.

VIII.

I will next describe a slate trick sold by certain dealers. It is a very excellent trick and is used by many of the very best performers of the present day. I know a professional medium who uses it very successfully. I happened to meet him; and in the course of certain discussions over trickery resorted to by certain mediums, I made mention of this trick, and even performed it for him, afterwards explaining it to him. I soon heard of his performing a slate test which answers the description of this one, and with which he was so successful that he received almost a column notice in the *Progressive Thinker* of May 26, 1906.

I may incidentally mention that prior to my discussion of the subject with him, he gave no slate-writing tests. In fact, when I first met him, he made no claims to mediumistic powers, but merely acted as manager for his wife who was a medium. I also happened to explain the billet test to him, wherein the spectators write questions on thin cards addressing them to spirits and then seal them in envelopes. They are taken to the operator, who with them, is placed under a large cloth cover and enveloped in perfect darkness. The operator reads them by holding a small electric flash light behind the envelopes in the darkness. The envelopes are rendered transparent in this manner, and the writing can be easily read.

I soon thereafter heard of his working this trick in a public hall, going into a trance, lying on a table, being covered with a large drape and in absolute darkness. The billets were placed under the cover with him, and he gave the tests, handing out each envelope unopened as he answered the question it contained.

The audience was greatly impressed with this seance. I will now describe the slate trick.

The performer enters with three slates. The subject is seated in a chair but the operator or medium remains standing. The operator now lays the three slates on a table close at hand. He picks up the top slate, which is free of all writing, and washes and dries it on both sides; then holding it to the eyes of the subject, asks him if the slate is perfectly clean, exhibiting both sides to his view. It is a fact so evident that the subject thinks everything honest, and, in fact, does not look for trickery.

The operator now asks the subject to take this slate in his right hand and hold it. This the subject does, and is of course at liberty to thoroughly examine the slate, which for that reason he seldom does. If he should do so there is no harm done, for the slate is without preparation.

The operator then takes the next slate from the table, cleans and exhibits it in the same manner, and finally requests the subject to hold this slate in his left hand. This the subject does. The operator now takes up the remaining slate and thoroughly cleans and exhibits both sides of it to the spectator. Then taking two of the slates, he places two sides of them together right under the eyes of the sitter, calling his attention to the fact that no writing is on either.

The operator now ties the two slates together and gives them to the subject to hold in his lap, and asks the subject to place his handkerchief on them. Next the operator takes a silk foulard or ordinary muffler, and asks the subject to wrap the remaining slate in this, to place it on top of the other two slates, and to place his hands on the same. This is done and the

operator takes care thereafter in no way to go near or touch the slates. Meanwhile he talks on the proper subject for a time, and then directs the spectator to open and examine the slates. When he does so he finds a long spirit message completely covering one side of one of the slates.

If in any manner it has been possible for the operator to have previously become acquainted with any of the history of the sitter, this message may be from a departed friend or relative, in which case the effect on him is very great.

What was it that happened without the knowledge of the sitter? In what way has the operator accomplished this illusion? First there are certain moves that escape the notice of the subject, and are forgotten simply because they are accomplished in a perfectly natural manner. Also there is a secret about one of the slates. It is of the style known as a "flap slate." Such a slate is an ordinary one, except that there is a loose piece of slate called a "flap" which fits neatly into the frame of the slate. When the flap is in position the slate appears to the sight as an ordinary slate, and any message written on the surface of the slate proper under this flap, can not be seen. The flap fits loosely enough so that if the slate be turned over it will fall out and expose the concealed message. There are many trick slates, but the "flap slate" is the best and the one most generally used. It can be used in a number of different ways.

This slate, with the message prepared upon it and signed, and the flap in position over it, is situated at the bottom of the three slates. The performer places these three slates on a small table or chair when he enters as stated at first. He cleans and exhibits the

first two slates and gives them to the subject to hold as already described. Now he next cleans and exhibits the third slate, using care to grasp it with his fingers so that the flap does not drop out. He turns both sides of it to the subject for inspection, who, after having so thoroughly examined the others, is by this time tired of the repetition of such close examination where nothing can be discovered, and is therefore more ready to look and be satisfied.

The performer now takes from the subject's hand one of the other slates and places it on top of the slate in his own hand. It must be remembered that the slate in the operator's hand is flap side up and in a horizontal position. He places the side edge of the unprepared slate on the side edge of the flap slate, one being at a right angle to the other, and then he calls attention to the fact that there is no writing between the two slates. He next closes the slates.

Now here comes the natural move that escapes the subject and is forgotten afterwards. The operator appears to be examining the edges of the two slates to see if they fit neatly; and in doing so he looks toward the window or other light, and holds the two slates to this light edgewise as if he were peering between them to see if they fit. As he brings up the slates to look through them he merely turns the forward end over towards his eyes and peers through.

This move attracts less attention, if the operator first tilt the right edge of the slates downward, and apparently inspects the left edge of them as if looking to see if they fit neatly. He should then immediately bring them to a horizontal position, tilt up the end furthest from himself, inspect it an instant, and then elevate the lower end towards a window or light and peer

through. In this manner the moves seem natural, and if executed rapidly attract no notice.

This turn, of course, brings the flap slate to the top and the flap falls from it quietly into the unprepared slate. As the performer looks through these slates he remarks that they do not seem to fit properly; and suiting his action to the word he lowers his hands with the slates to the table, leaving the lower or unprepared slate, now containing the flap, on the table. Remarking, "Let me try that one," he takes the remaining slate from the subject, quickly placing his slate on top of it. As he does all this he of course does not expose the lower side of the slate in his hands to the view of the subject, because it contains the message. He holds this slate slightly tilted so that the message side is away from the subject.

As he takes this second slate from the subject, he places his slate on top of it and peers through between them quickly, remarking that they fit better; and then taking a long piece of tape he quickly ties and binds these two slates. He now places them on the sitter's lap. Taking a small piece of chalk or slate pencil which he has apparently forgotten, he slips the top slate at one corner slightly to one side, and drops the chalk into the lower slate, slipping the top one back into position. He now asks the subject to place his handkerchief over the slates and his hands on the same. This employs him and keeps his attention from the third slate on the table which now contains the discarded flap. This slate appears to the eyes as merely an ordinary one, although it contains this flap.

The operator now picks up this third slate, and apparently looking for something, asks the subject, "Where did I place the silk muffler?" As there

was no silk muffler brought out, this surprises the subject and takes his attention; the operator then remarks, "I guess I forgot it," and steps through the folding doors to get it. *He of course carries the third slate with the flap in it, with him.* When out of sight *he drops the flap into a drawer,* and quickly returning with the slik muffler and third slate, starts to wrap up this slate; but changing his mind he requests the subject to wrap it up, place it on top of the others, and then to place his palms on the same. This gives the subject ample opportunity to examine this third slate, and he soon forgets that the operator carried it out of the room for an instant. Of course the message will be found on the top slate of the two that were tied together, and the others never have anything on them.

By this time the subject has forgotten the little move where the operator laid down one slate on the table, and took the other from him, tying them together.

* * *

As I perform this trick, I usually perform it for a company as a conjuring trick. I cause a selected word and its definition in a dictionary held by a spectator, to appear on the slate in chalk writing. I force the selection of the word after the slates are tied together, and while they are held by a spectator.

The manner in which I do this is as follows: I first bring from a table in the adjoining parlor a pack of cards which resemble playing cards on their backs, but they have only different printed numbers on the face. I exhibit these and return them to the table.

As I do this I of course exchange them for another pack made up of cards bearing only two numbers; that is, half of the cards bear one number, and half

of them another number. Let us suppose these numbers are 38 and 42. I arrange the pack previous to the trick with these two numbers alternately, so that if the pack be cut or separated at any point, the next two cards will be cards bearing the numbers 38 and 42. I leave this pack in view on the table, and the spectators think it the pack they have just examined.

I now return with a velvet bag on the end of a stick or long handle, and ask some one to take from this bag a number of small wooden discs, and to read and call off the numbers printed on each, and then to return them to the bag. This is done, and each is seen to bear a different number. Now reaching this bag to some one else, I request him to draw a single disc from this bag and retain the same, but not to look at it. This is done and he of course draws one with the number on it that I desire, for the reason that the bag on the end of the stick is double; that is, it has a partition in it forming two compartments.

The stick or handle is of tin japanned, and is hollow, containing a piston operated by a spring from a window curtain roller. This piston is a wire, and it extends beyond the handle, through a seam in the top of the cloth partition in the bag; and this part is bent in a half circle, the same as the sides of the upper edge of the bag.

When I bring the bag in, I have the partition to one side, so that the compartment containing the discs made up of different numbers, is open. After a spectator examines a handful of discs and returns them, I release the pressure I am exerting on the rear end of the handle, allowing the piston to revolve; and it thus opens the compartment wherein all the discs are of a single number, and at the same time closes the

other compartment. The person drawing the disc can only draw the number desired, as all the discs in this compartment bear the same number.

This number indicates the number of the correct word on the page. I next bring forward the pack of substituted number cards, and asking some spectator to cut them, I next ask him to select the two left on top. I return the others to a drawer, and ask him to add up the two numbers on the selected cards and give the result. This sum indicates which page in the dictionary the third spectator, who holds it, shall select. This the third spectator does, and he then counts to the selected word indicated by the selected disc, and reads it aloud. I move my hand mysteriously over the slates for a moment and appear to listen intently, after which I direct the spectator holding the slates to examine them. The effect is very startling. The paraphernalia for this trick can be obtained from any of the conjuring depots.

I will here describe how to prepare the slates for this experiment. I go to a store with a good supply of slates, take a piece of stiff pastepoard and cut it to fit nicely into the bevel of the frame of some good slate which I wish to use. I then try this pasteboard flap in other slates until I find one in which this flap fits nicely on either side of the slate. I lay this one aside for my purpose and select another, making three that have frames which are uniform in size on both sides, and which are all the same in size, measuring within the bevel of the frames. These frames should also be perfectly square at the corners inside the bevel. As the slates in stock vary in size, this careful selection is necessary. I use slates seven by nine inches inside the

bevel for this trick, which is the most suitable size. I also select slates *with true or level surfaces.*

I next select a slate with a true surface, but as thin as possible. I use the slate in this to make the loose slate flap. I mark the slate portion around next the frame with a knife, then saw away the frame. I next take a saw such as is used in sawing metal, and saw away the edges of the flap at the marks I have made. I now try this flap in one of the slates; and if it be too tight, I remedy by use of a file. I also bevel the edges of this flap for a half inch, so that when it is placed in the frame of one of the slates, the slate will appear nearly natural by showing some of the bevel of the frame on that side.

It is quite necessary to select slates with as deep a bevel to the frames as possible; and if the flap be too thick, it is necessary to grind it thinner with a stone, and then smooth up with a smooth stone or a block and some fine powder.

I prefer padded slates, but select those on which the cloth binding is not too wide; as I desire the slates to rest closely together when I turn them, so that the flap will not have to fall far; and so it will be more certain to fall within the frame of the lower slate.

IX.

I will here describe another trick, where only a double or hinged slate is used. I will give the explanation and effect both together. I select for this a double or hinged slate size five by seven, and prepare a flap to fit in one side of one of the slates. It makes no difference whether it fit any of the other sides or not. I bevel this flap on one side only, as but one side of it ever shows. I paste a sheet of newspaper on the

side that is not beveled. This must be trimmed off very accurately and well glued to the flap with library paste.

I prepare the message with a soapstone pencil or a piece of chalk, and cover it with this flap. The slate now appears perfectly natural. I seat my subject at a table on which are scattered some newspapers. The table should be large enough for these papers to be in two piles. One of the piles usually has only one paper in it which is opened out on the table. This is farthest from the sitter. The other papers are directly in front of him.

The message is on the outside of one of the slates of the double slate, with the flap over it, so that it appears as an ordinary slate. I grasp this slate in my left hand with my fingers on the flap side, and my thumb on the opposite side. The hinged edge of the slates is the edge that is in my hand. I hold the back of my left hand facing the sitter, who is at my right hand, seated at the table.

I exhibit this flap side of the slate to him, calling his attention to the fact that it is free from writing. I also rub a dry handkerchief over it as if making this fact doubly sure. I instantly turn my hand exhibiting the other side to his view, and likewise calling his attention to the fact of its freedom from writing. I now lay the slate flat on the newspaper under my left hand flap side down, just as I am holding it. As I do this I slightly pull up my sleeves as if they annoy me, and as if this were why I have just laid the slate down. Of course, when the slate is laid down in this position, the flap drops instantly on the newspaper; and afterwards, when the slate is lifted up, it remains on the paper. It will not be noticed at all, having the

sheet of newspaper pasted to its upper surface, if the attention of the subject is not directed to this paper, but is kept instead on the slate as it is being handled.

I instantly remark, "Of course, you desire to see the inside of these slates also"; and suiting the action to the word, I carelessly lift the upper slate with my left hand, grasping it by the edge nearest the spectator. This is the edge opposite the cloth hinge; so as I lift this edge up, the slates assume a vertical position, opening out and hanging suspended below my hand. The insides of the two slates are thus exposed to the view of the subject, and are seen to be free from writing. I take my right hand and quickly grasp the lower slate, closing it up under the upper one, which at the same time I lower to a horizontal positon.

This folds the two slates together or closes them, by folding in the direction away from the sitter; so that what were before the inside surfaces of the slates are now the outside, and the hinged edge now faces the subject. The message is now inside the slates on the upper surface of the lower one.

I now grasp both slates with my left hand, and I take a rubber band from my pocket with my right hand and quickly snap it around them. I give the slates to the spectator and say, "Place them on the table with your palms on them. I will remove these papers which are in the way." As I say this I lift the pile of papers from in front of him; and as he places the slate on the table, I place these papers on top of the other paper on which rests the invisible flap. I lift this paper up now with the others, and take them all including the discarded flap, and quickly remove them from view.

Meanwhile I instruct the sitter how to hold his palms, and I instantly return and direct the seance.

In due time he finds the message. This trick is excellent if worked carefully and not too slowly. If used in the daylight, too strong a light should be avoided; although I have no trouble anywhere, because I always keep absolute control of the subject's attention, which is the most vital part of any trick.

X.

I will next describe a trick known to the "profession" as "Independent Paper Writing." A number of small tablets of scratch paper are brought out. The size that I generally use is about four by five inches. The subject is requested to select a sheet of paper from any of the tablets, which he does. Meanwhile the operator brings to the table two slates about the size of seven by nine inches inside measure.

The operator requests the subject to place his sheet of paper on one of the slates, which he does. There is no writing on the slates, which fact the subject can see. The other slate is now placed on top of the one with the sheet of blank paper. The edges of the slates are made even, and the slates held for a time on the head of the medium in view of the sitter. In due time the slates are separated and the paper is found to be covered with a message on both sides. The writing is in pencil or ink according to the pleasure of the operator.

If the subject has previously been induced to write his questions and retain the same, this message answers them in detail and is signed by the name of the spirit to whom they were addressed.

There are many means of securing knowledge of questions written secretly. Some of the best I am unable to give in this work, as I am under a contract with

the dealer from whom I purchased the same to maintain secrecy in regard to the method. Any of the means previously given may be used if the performer desire. Farther on, however, I will give some additional information on the subject.

I will now explain the slate part of the "Independent Paper Writing." The slates are selected from bound slates, just as the three slates were selected for the first "flap slate" trick. One of these contains a flap, but it is not a slate flap. It is what is known as a "silicate slate flap." These are very light and about as thick as pasteboard. Procured from some dealers they are a little too dark to exactly match the slate in color, but I have generally been able to procure exactly the proper shade from George L. Williams & Co., 7145 Champlain Ave., Chicago, Ill.

In the prepared slate which I lay upon the table, and upon which the subject is to place the blank sheet of paper, is a similar sheet of paper under the flap. The message is, of course, written on this paper in advance. As the flap is over it, nothing can be seen and the slate appears merely as an ordinary one. Most generally I take the sheet of paper from my subject with the tips of my fingers and place it on this slate. I then lay the other slate, which I exhibit to the spectator, on top of this one. I even up the edges, and then grasp the two slates by their edges tightly and bring them on top of my head for a time. This move naturally turns the slates over, and of course the flap drops quietly into the lower slate. Meanwhile I address the subject in the proper manner; and when I take the slates down, lowering them to the table, I leave the slate that is next my head underneath the other one. I lift off the top slate and hand the subject the slip of paper, which

he sees at the first glance is covered with writing. The effect is very great.

The subject immediately begins to read the message with such interest, that I have ample opportunity to take the slate containing the flap in my left hand, and while the subject reads the message aloud (which I direct him to do), I step through a door to a drawer to get some article; and, of course, I drop the flap and concealed slip of blank paper into the drawer, but keep the slate still in my hand as I return to the subject. I then lay this slate on the table while I inspect the message.

This is really one of the most effective tricks and is very easy to perform. The operator should select slates that are well matched and should procure a flap of the desired color. The flaps are very cheap.

Sometimes I tear a corner from the slip of paper containing the message. When I do this I conceal it between the ends of my fingers; and when the subject gives me his selected sheet of paper, I tear a similar corner from it. I apparently hand this last corner to the subject with the request that he retain it. Of course, I give him the corner which was torn from the message slip instead and conceal the last corner torn off in its place.

After the message is produced and read, I remind the subject to see if this corner fits his slip of paper. Worked as a conjuring trick, this last effect adds some improvement to the trick; but I am not sure that it adds to the effect if given as a genuine phenomenon; for tearing off the corner reminds one of conjuring tricks, and thus suggests the idea of trickery.

However, I generally tear off this small corner so that on one side of it, there is a portion of one of the words

of the message. In this case, instead of giving this corner to the subject to hold, I lay it on the table, writing side down, and request him to place his finger on it. Finding a part of one of the words on this corner gives the idea that this writing was done while he held it. This adds more mystery to the effect.

XI

The trick described here is most suitable for platform production. The performer takes a single slate in his hand and a piece of chalk in the other hand. He exhibits one side of the slate to the audience, saying, "Side one." As he does this he makes a large figure "one" on that side of the slate. He then turns the slate, and saying, "Side two," makes a large figure "two" on that side of the slate. He next steps to a chair or table, and taking a damp cloth, washes off first one side and then the other. He immediately sets the slate in full view of the spectators in a vertical position, so that one side faces the spectators and the other side is of course hidden from view. He leans it against any object that may be convenient, usually against a chair or table leg with one edge resting on the floor. In a short time he lifts the slate, exhibiting the rear surface on which is written a message in chalk writing.

The secret of this trick is again a slate flap. The message is prepared and the flap in place. The performer grasps the slate so as to hold the flap in position, and exhibits and marks the two sides of the slate. He now steps to a table or chair to get a piece of damp cloth; and as he washes "side one" of the slate, he rests the lower edge of the slate on the table or chair. As he does this he tilts the slate backwards slightly. He next

turns the slate so that "side two" faces the audience; and as he washes this side, he releases his hold on the flap on the rear of the slate, and allows it to drop on the table or chair.

If a chair be used, a newspaper is in place spread out on its seat; and a piece of newspaper is also pasted on what will be the upper side of the flap after it be dropped on the newspaper. If instead of a chair a table be used, and if it have a dark or slate colored cover, no newspaper need be used on either the table or flap. However, the newspaper can be used when using a table if the performer so desire, or the slate can first be cleaned and then taken to the paper to be wrapped up. In this case, the performer merely places the slate on the newspaper, flap side down, remarking that he will wrap it up; then as if suddenly changing his mind, he remarks, "No, I will stand it here where you can all watch it, instead." He then places the slate in the vertical position before described; but of course uses care not to expose the rear side of the slate containing the message.

Some performers prefer to have the table top covered with velvet or felt, and a piece of the same material glued on what will be the upper surface of the flap after it is dropped on the table.

This trick makes an excellent conjuring trick, if a single word in a book be chosen and then made to appear on the slate in chalk writing. In this case I first prepare the slate, and after thoroughly washing both sides, place it on the platform as I have described.

I now take two books not alike, and descend to the audience, giving one of them to some spectator to hold. Next I give a card to a second spectator and ask him to insert it in the end of the remaining book

which I still hold. I ask him to let it protrude from between the leaves about a half inch. I tell him to place it between any of the leaves he may desire. When he has done so I step to another spectator and request him to open the book at the position occupied by the card, and to call aloud the page that it marks.

I step to this third spectator, a slight distance away, and before I reach him I ask him if he will assist me. As I ask this I start towards him. All eyes are turned towards him as I direct my attention to him, and of course at this instant I turn the book in my hands end for end. In the other end of the book a duplicate card has previously been placed at the page I desire; and as I approach him, my fingers secretly press the second spectator's card entirely into the book. The third spectator, of course, opens the book at the position marked by the duplicate card.

As soon as he reads aloud the number of the selected page on his right (which I request him to do) I ask the spectator holding the other book to open it at the page chosen, and to read aloud the bottom word, which is of course the word prepared on the rear of the slate. If the performer can procure a book which somewhere within it has two consecutive pages on which the bottom words are the same, he can have some spectator choose whether the page selected shall be the right one or the left one. This choice should be made before the book containing the cards is opened.

If such a book can not be procured, then the operator can simply ask the spectator opening the first book to read aloud the page number on his right. He should then turn to the person holding the second book and request him to turn to that page and read aloud the bottom word. As soon as the word is read aloud, the

performer takes both books, runs to the stage, and turning over the slate exhibits the word. The slate is passed down for inspection.

* * *

Another method can be used for forcing the choice of, say, the right page, of the two pages where the duplicate card is located. When the third spectator opens the book at the card, the performer turns to another spectator and asks, "Which page will *you* take, the right or left?" If the spectator choose the right page, the performer directs the person holding the book to read aloud this page number. If, however, the person should take the left page, the performer then remarks in a natural manner to the person holding the book, "He chooses the left, so *you* will have to choose the right." This seems perfectly natural to the audience, and the person holding the book is then directed to read aloud the number of "his page."

If the operator prefer, he can, when the spectator first opens the book, stand directly in front of him and grasp the two sides of the book with his two hands. He can then ask, "Which shall I take, the right or left page?" If some one replies, "The right," the operator asks the person holding the book to read aloud the number of the page on his right; but if the left be chosen, the operator says, "Read aloud the page number on *my* left." In either case the page is the same. If when asking the question, "Which shall I take, the right or left page?" the operator emphasize the word "right" slightly, and then pause a mere instant before rapidly continuing the question, the "right" will almost invariably be chosen.

I consider this slate trick as the best one for stage work that I have seen. It is very simple, and the

simplest tricks are always the best and most difficult of detection. After the message is produced and the slate sent out for inspection, the operator piles some unused articles on the discarded flap and removes all together.

One operator, when performing this trick in a parlor, previously takes from the shelves of the library some new book that has never been opened, and of the style that opens rather stiffly. He selects the page he desires, and proceeds to open the book up widely at this page. After this, the book will naturally open at this place. He is careful not to open it widely elsewhere.

He now selects two playing cards from duplicate packs, the cards being duplicates of each other, and places one secretly in this book where it has been opened. When ready to perform, he takes one of the packs of cards, and takes a card from it apparently at random. This card is really the duplicate of the one in the book. The performer gives this card to a spectator, and asks him to push it into the book between the leaves at any position he may select, pushing it entirely out of sight. This is done. Now without any change whatever the performer presents this book to a second spectator to open at the card and call out the page. As he does this the book naturally falls open at the place where the first card was concealed, and where the glue used in binding the book has been broken. The card being there, and being apparently a mere playing card selected at random from a pack, lends a color of genuineness to the performance.

Another operator, when performing this slate trick, causes the sum of a number of figures to appear on the slate instead of a word or message. He accom-

plishes this as follows: He writes a horizontal row of three figures on the front fly leaf of some book. Under this row of three figures he writes in different hands, two or three other rows and draws a line below them as if ready to add them up.

When performing, he takes this book; and opening it at the *back* fly leaf, he requests a spectator to write a horizontal row of three figures, each figure to be his own choice. When this is done he takes the book, and in the same manner has another spectator write three figures under these. He continues this until there are as many horizontal rows of figures as he has prepared on the *front* fly leaf.

He now requests the last writer to draw a line under all of the figures; and then, taking the book, he passes it to still another spectator, with a request that he add the figures carefully and announce their sum verbally. Of course, when he gives this book to the last spectator he opens it at the *front* fly leaf, (having previously allowed the book to close), and the last spectator adds up the figures written by the operator and whose sum is on the prepared slate.

Some performers produce this same result by having the spectators write on a card, and then exchanging the card; but the method with the book is the better, as it is perfectly evident that the book is not exchanged. This adds to the after effect of the trick.

* * *

I am acquainted with a performer who uses two slates instead of one when performing this trick. He first cleans the unprepared slate on both sides, showing the spectators that both sides are clean. He then gives this slate to a spectator to hold. He next cleans the slate containing the flap, resting one edge on a news-

paper spread on a table while he washes each side. Of course, he allows the flap to drop onto the paper from behind the slate while cleaning the second side of the slate. Having newspaper pasted on one side of the flap as before stated, it can not be seen when on the paper.

He immediately advances to the spectator who holds the first slate, and says, "I will tie them together." As he does this he carries the slate with the message writing side down, so that no one can see it; and quickly placing this slate on top of the other one, he ties the two together and leaves them in the possession of the spectator to be held.

I know of another performer who uses three slates in this trick and gets an answer to a question which some one asks aloud. Certain words in the answer are written in colors such as the spectator may choose. His assistant behind the scenes has the third slate with the flap; and when the operator gets some spectator to ask the question, the assistant immediately writes the answer and lays the flap over it. The operator at the time asks some spectator to designate which words in the answer shall be in certain colors, and if the fifth, seventh, etc., be chosen, the assistant writes these words with colored crayons.

The assistant now, after laying the flap over the message, places the slate between the leaves of a newspaper, flap side up. This paper he quietly lays upon a table on the stage unobserved. While this is being done, the performer has taken the two unprepared slates down to the spectators and had them thoroughly examined. This has taken the attention of the spectators so that no one has observed the assistant enter and leave the stage.

The operator now returns to the stage; and stepping to this table, he lays one slate on the table behind the paper and starts to place the edge of his other slate on the front part of the table while he numbers and cleans the sides. The newspaper appears to be in his way; so with his left hand he draws it backwards on the table over the first slate laid down; and then, resting the other slate on the table, numbers its two sides with a piece of chalk. He now cleans both sides thoroughly and stands this slate edgewise on the floor against a chair. He next apparently draws from under the newspaper on the table the other slate. In reality, he draws out the prepared slate with the flap in position from between the leaves of the newspaper.

He now numbers both sides of this slate, standing it edgewise on the newspaper and showing each side as he does so. He next cleans the flap side thoroughly, and then turns the slate to clean the other side, and while so doing allows the flap to fall from behind the slate upon the newspaper.

As soon as the second or unprepared side is clean, the operator places this slate in front of the one on the floor and lifts both together, ties them securely, and passes them to the audience to be held for a time. In due time the spectators untie them, finding the message answering the spoken question. The designated words are in the chosen colors which makes the effect very great.

The credit for the invention of this last method belongs to a magician, Mr. Edward Benedict of Minneapolis, Minnesota.

XII.

I will here describe a few methods of obtaining a name or a question which is written by a sitter, and where the sitter usually retains the writing in his own possession. The first that I will describe is the most improved method known at present, and is almost universally used by the professional mediums traveling over the country.

The idea is to get an impression of the writing that is not a carbon impression. The impression is, in fact, invisible until after it is "developed." The paper used is a thin, highly glazed paper. A tablet of this paper is provided for the subject to write upon. He can make an inspection of the tablet if he so desire, and he will find nothing. The operator first prepares a few sheets of the paper by rubbing over one side of them with wax. Some mediums use paraffin wax, which has been melted and mixed with a small amount of vaseline. If this wax be used, it must be kneaded with the hands while cooling and afterwards pressed into cakes. I prefer to use "spermaceti" wax. The wax being white, can not be seen on the paper after the same has been coated with it.

The sheet must be laid on a flat, smooth surface and thoroughly rubbed over with the wax. This prepared sheet is generally placed in the tablet two or three sheets below the top, coated side down. It should be held in place with library paste; and another prepared sheet should be similarly placed a little further down, to be used in case emergency demands it.

When the writing is done, an invisible impression of it is transferred from the waxed surface of the prepared sheet, to the sheet next under it. Of course

this can not be seen until developed, as the wax is very thin and is the color of the paper. After the subject writes his questions, and removes the sheet bearing them, the operator secures this tablet by almost any secret means; and then he secretly removes the sheet bearing the impression and develops it. This is most generally done by throwing on the sheet some powdered charcoal, and shaking the sheet around until the powder adheres to the wax, after which the surplus powder is dusted off. The writing appears plainly and may be easily read. Some performers use plumbago, lampblack, or coal dust instead of charcoal. Many different powders may be used. The magician Mr. Edward Benedict merely holds the wax impression over a lighted gas jet moving it about. The flame blackens the wax portion which melts and dampens the paper where it adheres. If a little camphor be held in the flame it will blacken the impression more completely.

When this trick is used at private readings in apartments, the operator after the writing usually leads the sitter into the next room for a reading. Meanwhile an assistant secretly secures the tablet and leaves another in its place that is unprepared. Generally the door between the two rooms is left open; and it is only necessary for the operator to engage the sitter for a moment, to give opportunity to the assistant to make the exchange, which can be made in many different ways. After the assistant has time to develop the writing, the operator leaves the room for a moment on some trifling errand and of course secures the information while out of the room.

Sometimes the operator produces a slate message for the subject; and then while the subject is inspect-

ing it secretly exchanges tablets from a large pocket in his coat. When this method is used, the operator generally pretends to hear some one at his outside door; and as his servant fails to respond, he excuses himself for a moment, and taking advantage of his absence, develops and reads the writing.

* * *

I am indebted to an accomplished magician, Mr. Gabriel Rasgorshek, for the secret of an excellent means of working this trick. It is being successfully worked by an expert medium at the present time, and Mr. Rasgorshek is thoroughly informed as to the means employed.

The medium gives his readings in a large store room. He curtains off the room into three apartments, making a large reception room in front, a middle or waiting room, and a third room in the rear where is concealed an assistant unknown to all callers. He uses a twelve-foot cabinet in the *center of the rear of the middle room,* directly against the rear cross curtain. The cabinet is merely formed of curtains, and is divided into two compartments by a curtain partition.

In one of the compartments of the cabinet is a table, a prepared tablet and pencils. This is the room into which each sitter is invited by an attendant, to write out and prepare his questions, signing his name to them. In the large middle or waiting room near the walls are seats for callers, and one caller at a time is invited to enter the solitary room in the cabinet and prepare his questions. The other room in the cabinet has a table near the back curtain, with a chair on each side of it. In this latter room, on one side of the table the medium is seated, giving the readings, slate writings, etc.

The concealed assistant in the rear of the apartments secretly reaches through the cabinet curtain into the room where the tablet has just been used, and removes it, leaving another prepared tablet in its place for the next subject. He now develops and reads the questions, names, etc.; copies them neatly on a small card and also *adds to them information secured from the city directory*; then placing the card containing the copy in a cleft in the end of a stick, pushes it through a small slit in the back curtain of the *other room* in the cabinet. This slit is located so that the stick enters the cabinet just by the medium's hand behind the table. The subject is by this time on the opposite side of the table receiving his reading, and the medium secretly reads the information. The medium has a strong electric light back of him which makes this quite easy. The man in the rear apartment must be as expert as the medium, and he can by a careful search of the directory, and by a reference to notes of other readings given to other callers, frequently push much information into the view of the medium. Meanwhile another subject has been invited into the other room in the cabinet to prepare his questions.

There is also a small cloth tube on the side of the table next the medium's hand. This tube runs through the rear curtain. In case some one has become unduly excited over a reading, and has prepared questions at home and returned for a second reading, the medium takes them in his hand for a moment, fingering them. He keeps on hand a number of folded billets of different styles; so that when he sees the ones the subject has, he can secretly secure duplicates in his palm. When he fingers the subject's billets, he adroitly exchanges them for his own, and apparently places the

subject's billets in a book on the table. In reality he places the substitutes in the book, "palming" the originals, which he sends through the cloth tube to the assistant. Very soon they are returned to the hand of the medium under the table. He now takes the billets from the book, apparently returning them to the sitter, but really again substituting, so that the originals are returned to the sitter. He conceals the duplicates; and by this time the information begins to come into his view beneath the table, and the reading becomes very effective.

There is a means of developing the wax impression that I consider superior to the methods given above; but I am restrained from making it public by a promise of secrecy to the dealer from whom I purchased the secret. It can be obtained of George L. Williams & Co., 7145 Champlain Avenue, Chicago, Ill. The method given here, however, works very well, and is the one generally used by most mediums; this secret has become common property among mediums and has even been published before. In the chapter entitled, "Performances of the Annie Eva Fay Type," I will give some further information in regard to developing these impressions and the methods of using the same. This will be of considerable value to the performer.

A magician, Mr. C. S. Weller of Mitchell, South Dakota, has experimented considerably with different methods of preparing impression paper and developing the impressions. He sometimes prepares the sheets with common cocoa butter, and sometimes he saturates the paper with a forty per cent. solution of cream and water, afterwards stretching the sheets in frames until dry. These can be used on a marble-top table, the bottom of a porcelain dish, or a marble slab. In this

case he dusts ultramarine blue on the object bearing the impression and then blows it lightly, so that all of the powder is blown off except that which adheres to the impression. Any of the colored powders may be used. Some performers place a prepared sheet on a glass plate and another sheet over this for the subject to write on. In this case the impression is transferred to the glass plate.

* * *

I am acquainted with a lady medium, who, when she gives private readings, answers some questions for each of the sitters, which they have written and retained, giving them their correct names, etc. The method she uses is very simple, yet she assures me that it works most successfully.

This medium is working in connection with a lady "Palmist" who always receives the visitors in the waiting room. When the visitor arrives, this lady has a book in her hands, which she has apparently just been reading. There is no furniture in the room except some chairs. The lady seats the visitor; and in case this person does not desire a "Palm Reading," she says, "Madam B— is not quite ready to receive visitors just now; you will have to wait a few minutes." She then continues, "While you are waiting, just write down the questions you wish to ask," and she gives the visitor a sheet of paper and a pencil; and as there is no table upon which to write, she also gives this person the book which is still in her hand.

She places the sheet of paper on the back of the book and says, "Write the questions you desire answered on that sheet of paper and keep it. Madam B— prefers to have you write them down so you will

not forget them. Sign your name to them and address them to some spirit near to you."

The subject does as requested, and the lady again tells her to "just keep her questions." She now relieves the visitor of the book. She waits and converses for a while, and then says, "I do not see why Madam B— does not come. I will go and see if she is ready." She retires to the other rooms, and incidentally takes her book with her. She quickly returns with a duplicate book in her hands which the visitor thinks is the original, and says, "Madam B— is nearly ready, and she will be out in a few moments." She converses with the visitor until the medium comes in and proceeds to give the reading, which fully answers the questions.

The first book was a new one and had a paper cover on the backs. Under this cover, on each back, was a carbon sheet, with a sheet of white paper under it. When the lady went to see if the medium were ready, she left this book with the medium, returning quickly with the duplicate. The medium read the impression and committed all to memory before entering.

There are many methods of secretly securing an impression of the writing of a sitter. Sometimes, where no table is handy, the subject is given an ordinary "clip board," such as stationers furnish for clamping bill-heads and blank papers. This consists of stiff pasteboard and a spring clip or clamp. A sheet of blank paper is in position held by the clip; and the writing is transferred from a sheet of copying carbon concealed under the mottled paper covering the inside of the "clip board," to a sheet of white paper between it and the board. The "clip board" is then taken secretly by an assistant, or sometimes by the medium who ex-

cuses himself for a moment on some pretense, after adroitly exchanging a concealed "clip board" for the prepared one which he also conceals. A sharp knife is then run under the edge of the mottled paper of the board separating it therefrom. The carbon is removed and the impression read. After this a new blank sheet is put on the board, the carbon replaced, all is neatly covered by mottled paper which is pasted in position, and the "clip board" is again ready for a sitter.

* * *

The most common method and the one most generally used is a bold "switch" of the paper before the eyes of the sitter, when the operator takes it to press it against his forehead. When this method is used, the medium and subject sit at opposite sides of a table. The writing is done on a small card, which is then folded two times by the subject. The medium reaches and takes it in this condition, and presses it against his forehead; then returns it to the subject to press against his own forehead for a time. The operator again takes it, and pressing it to his own forehead, gives the reading.

In this method the operator has concealed in his left palm a duplicate card folded similarly; and when he takes the card from the subject with his right hand, first places it in his left hand directly over the duplicate. The back of the operator's hand is toward the subject so that the cards are concealed from his view. Now with a deft move of the fingers, he pushes forward the duplicate into view, withdrawing the original, then fingering it with his right hand he takes the duplicate and presses it to his own forehead. He next hands this duplicate to the subject to press to his head; and meanwhile with his left hand below the table, he se-

cretly opens and reads the question. The card can be opened and folded silently, which is the reason cards are used instead of paper. The original is now palmed in the left hand, and the former maneuvers are gone through with again; this time handing back to the subject his own card. After this the reading is given.

There is another method of making the "switch," which is in very general use. In this case it is made with one hand alone. Soft paper is used instead of cards so that it will fold into a smaller space. Proper paper can be opened and re-folded silently if care be used. The slips are of a uniform size, so that when folded they will always be of the same size. The subject is instructed how to fold them after he shall finish his writing.

When the operator makes this "switch," he has a duplicate piece of paper inside his right fingers, held between the middle and first finger near the end. He keeps the back of this hand towards the subject so that the duplicate can not be seen; and when he picks up from the table the paper that the subject has written upon, he deftly draws it from the ends of his fingers with his thumb, up into his palm beyond the duplicate, and then with his thumb pushes the duplicate into view.

With a little practice this "switch" can be made in an instant, and the move will escape the subject entirely. *If, at the moment the operator picks up the paper, he addresses the subject, the latter will invariably glance into his face for an instant;* just at this moment the right hand deftly makes the "shift" and instantly brings the duplicate into the view of the subject in a perfectly natural manner, which seems en-

tirely honest in appearance. He then proceeds with whatever method he may prefer in finishing the trick.

* * *

I will next describe two tricks depending entirely on this "switch." They are used very extensively by the professional mediums of this day in the larger cities. The second one I will describe is used by a number of the most celebrated mediums of Chicago, such as advertise with flaming head-lines in the daily papers.

In the simplest form the operator seats the subject at a large table, facing it, and near the right corner of one of its sides. There is nothing on the table but a few slips of paper, a Bible, and a bell. The subject is instructed to write his questions, fold his paper and lay the same on the table, and then to tap the bell when ready.

On hearing the bell the medium enters, steps to the table and picks up the billet, at the same instant asking the subject if this paper contains his questions, name, etc. At this instant, while the subject glances at the medium's eyes, the "shift" is made; and the operator, instantly, opens the Bible with his left hand, and with his right apparently inserts the billet between the leaves, closing the book. He, of course, inserts the duplicate billet, retaining the original in his right palm. He now steps to the left side of the subject, who remains seated at the table. He faces from the table so that his left side is next to the left side of the subject, and he instructs the latter to place his hands on the Bible. Then the medium places his left palm on the subject's head to "establish conditions"; and as he does so he places it rather on the side of the head nearest himself, and so that his palm and wrist are opposite the left eye of the subject. This prevents

the subject from turning his face towards the medium, or seeing what he is secretly doing.

The reader must form a good mental picture of their positions if he desire to realize the possibilities of this trick. The medium has his back to the table and his left side to the left of the *subject, who faces the table.* They are thus facing in opposite directions; and while the medium now describes his impressions to the subject he secretly opens the billet with his right hand and reads it. His right hand is behind the range of vision of the subject, and is also concealed from the view of the latter by the medium's person and left hand, which latter is pressed against the upper left side of the subject's head.

He now folds it again, placing it in position between the ends of the first and second fingers; and turning he opens the Bible, taking out the billet and apparently presenting it to the subject. He asks the subject to hold it to his own head; and of course he gives the subject the original billet, secretly "palming" the substitute at the same time.

Next he places his hand on the subject's head, and gives the reading, answering the subject's questions, giving his name, etc.

* * *

In the next trick, which is slightly more complicated, five slips of paper are used. The medium addresses the subject somewhat as follows: "You came here for me to help you. You are in trouble, or worried about something, else you would not be here. Now I desire to help you if I can. I charge one dollar, and I answer four questions. It is necessary for you to ask these questions if you want me to be certain to answer them. If I were to proceed of my own accord, I might give

you something which you would not care for; therefore I will ask you to write your questions on these four slips of paper, writing only on one side of the paper, and folding them twice with the writing inside. On the fifth slip write your name, occupation, and address. Now write questions which, if answered will be a benefit to you, something that will do you some good. Let one be about business matters, another about love or family matters, etc. If you desire results that will benefit you, write your questions openly, giving the names of all persons concerned, in a straightforward and honest manner. When they are written, folded, and all is ready, tap the bell." The medium now retires until he hears the bell.

The subject invariably complies with all conditions. When the operator enters, he immediately takes the billets, one at a time, as they lie on the table, and crimps or folds them an additional time. He does this hurriedly, as if he desires them to be very securely folded. Of course he "switches" the last one, leaving a "dummy" in its place, and secretly retaining the original in his right palm.

He now takes the same position as in the previous trick, with his back to the table, left side to the left side of the sitter, hand on the sitter's head, etc. He then asks the subject to "make a wish" while he is "establishing conditions." While the subject is thinking of a wish, the medium secretly opens the billet with his right hand, reading and re-folding it as in the other trick. He now remarks, "Have you made a wish?" On being answered in the affirmative, he replies, "That wish will not be entirely fulfilled." He now turns, and picking up one of the billets, apparently hands it to the subject, requesting him to hold it to his own

head. Of course he changes the billets again, *handing the subject the one he has just secretly read,* and retaining in his palm the new one. He requests the subject to hold it to his own head with one hand, and to lay his other hand on the Bible.

The medium now places his palm on the side of the subject's head as in the preceding trick, and with his right hand secretly opens and reads the second billet, memorizing it. As he does this he is verbally answering the question on the first billet, which the subject is now holding to his head. If the first question was, "Shall I make a certain investment in mining stocks, etc.," the medium says, "I see you contemplate investing in mines, etc., etc. This will not prove a profitable investment; you should by no means do this. I see there is another opportunity coming to you for an investment, that will be much safer, etc., etc. Now, sir, open the question you are holding to your forehead, and see if I have answered it correctly."

Meanwhile the medium has secretly read the second question, and the billet bearing it is in position between his fingers. He now picks up another billet apparently giving it to the subject to hold as in the first case. Of course he gives the subject the second one which he has just secretly read, and retains in his palm the new one. While he answers the second question, which may pertain to love or family affairs, he again secretly reads the question in his right palm.

After answering the question, the subject is directed to open his billet and see if it be correctly answered; and the medium turns and picks up another one, apparently presenting it to him. This is continued until all of the questions are answered, and the subject's name, occupation, etc., given.

At the last billet, which is the "dummy," the medium again makes the "shift," retaining the dummy and giving the subject the last genuine billet. This time he leaves the side of the subject, and answers the question correctly without contact with him. This trick is very effective and gives the greatest satisfaction to the medium's patrons.

* * *

There are so many methods of gaining knowledge of what a sitter secretly writes that it is impossible to give them all here. It is safe to say that in any case where the subject is required to write anything, that there is always a secret means of gaining knowledge of the writing. In such cases no information is ever given except such as could be inferred from the writing, or such as can be given by shrewd guesswork.

I know one medium who wears a skull cap when giving a reading. It is made of black silk; and in the top of it, held in place by a lining of oil cloth, is a sponge saturated with odorless alcohol. The subject writes his questions on a card and seals it in an envelope. The medium and spectator sit at opposite sides of a table, and the operator now takes the envelope, and presses it on top of his head directly over the hidden sponge. The alcohol renders the envelope transparent; and after a moment the medium brings the envelope in front of his eyes, with its upper edge resting against his forehead, and there reads the question. He is near-sighted and this is quite easy for him.

He holds it in this position while he talks to the subject, until the alcohol evaporates and the envelope assumes its natural appearance. He then gives the reading and returns the envelope unopened. This is a very impresssive trick. The use of odorless alcohol

for such purpose is well known in some quarters, but I think this method of using it is not generally known at present. The envelope never leaves the sitter's sight and the experiment appears very marvelous.

Other means of securing information from writing are sometimes adopted, but they are complicated and in some cases require a very expert operator. Dr. Schlessinger referred to elsewhere in this volume seemed to be able to so manipulate his subjects as to secure much information from the writing in the most concealed manner ever known. I merely mention this that the reader may be on his guard in any case where the subject writes anything whatever, and where the operator claims to secure knowledge of such writing through the assistance of spirits of the dead.

XIII.

I will here describe a few slate tricks wherein the subject takes his own slates (usually marked) with him. In the first case I am about to describe, the medium is supposed to be in his own home where things can be arranged for the business. The subject comes with two slates either tied, screwed together, or with merely a single slate.

In this instance the medium does not even look at the slates which the sitter brings. He merely directs the subject to lay the slates well under a rather large and heavy library or center table. This table has a large heavy cover or drape. When the subject does this he is directed to take a seat at this table and place his palms thereon.

The medium usually stands and places his palms on the opposite side of the table, and for a time interests

the subject in conversation. During this time an assistant in a low room under the floor silently pushes up a small and well-concealed trap in the floor and carpet. This trap is directly under the table, the carpet is cut very neatly over the cuts in the floor, and is left tacked in position. He takes the slates inside with him leaving others of the same appearance in their place. As soon as the message is ready he again changes the slates and hooks the trap shut from underneath so it will be solid. As the carpet is tacked along the cut, there is no danger of the sitter discovering anything of the kind, should such an idea enter his head.

There is a variation of this trick that is far superior to it. In this case the medium takes the subject into a very light room, bare of blinds, carpet, and furniture, except a curtain cabinet across a corner; a small simple table is in the cabinet, and two chairs are in the room near the only door.

The walls and ceiling are papered, and the floor can be seen so easily, that any one thinking of such an idea could plainly see that there are no traps in it. It can also be seen that there are none in walls or baseboard, which in this room is too narrow to admit a person through any trap which might be concealed in it.

The table and cabinet are thoroughly inspected, and then *the subject* lays his own slates on the table in the cabinet and draws the curtains. He takes a seat with the medium near the door, and after a time goes into the cabinet and examines his marked slates. They are covered with messages both inside and outside.

The effect of this is simply beyond description. It is accomplished in a very simple manner. The secret is a trap in the ceiling which is masked by a heavy dark

border of the ceiling paper. It is hooked up solidly by a strong hook opposite its hinges, and the curtains of the cabinet extend too high for its operation to be seen from outside the cabinet. The ceiling is too high to be inspected by the subject, and in fact he never thinks of it. An assistant from the room above opens the trap, which is padded, and reaching down a long rod with a grip on the end of it, draws up the slates and prepares them.

It adds to the effect if the medium have a music box in the room, which plays during the wait. This also hides any noises. This is the same trap that a noted medium of San Francisco has used for materializing. He has many assistants and much paraphernalia. The "spirits" descend and ascend on a padded ladder which is slipped down from above. The medium to whom I refer is probably the greatest in the world at materializing; and his assistants are so good at "making up," that any noted character can be "materialized" in a few moments.

When this trap is used for slate writing, and if the subject comes with a single slate, it is sometimes placed in a shallow box and the box locked and sealed. The box is of wood, is about an inch thick and just large enough to take in a slate. There is a secret sliding panel in the box which can be slipped out by the assistant to permit the writing. If no panel is used then a slate pencil is inserted within the box on the slate before locking. The pencil is made as follows: A round piece of soft iron is coated with powdered chalk or pulverized slate pencil mixed in a little glue. In this case the writing is done by manipulating a powerful magnet on the outside of the box. The soft iron core of the

pencil is drawn by the magnet, making the marks with its outside coating.

* * *

At one time a marvelous medium appeared in a neighboring city, giving slate writings in so mysterious a manner that it caused considerable talk and discussion among the thinking men of that community. A certain reporter called for a slate writing and was greatly mystified.

This reporter took his own slate with him, which he marked. The medium merely placed it on the floor in the room where they sat, and it never left the sight of the reporter; yet after a time it was examined and a message found thereon.

The medium then stated to this reporter that he would forfeit twenty-five dollars if he could not produce a message for any individual whatever without the slate (which said person could bring with him) leaving that individual's sight.

This was a pretty bold challenge; so the reporter decided to take a certain gentleman who was a friend of his, and by-the-way an expert magician, to this medium for a slate writing. The gentleman selected was Dr. A. M. Wilson of Kansas City, Mo., editor of the magician's journal, *The Sphinx*, and to whom I am indebted for the secret of this impressive trick.

Dr. Wilson purchased and took a slate with him, which he marked. On his arrival the medium insisted on taking the slate and laying it on the floor. The Doctor did not object to this, as he felt sure that the medium would be unable to divert his attention from the slate for a single instant. I will mention that a large piece of furniture—a kind of wardrobe—stood against the wall on the side of the room to the left of

the Doctor. There was also, between the Doctor and the near side of this wardrobe, a large upholstered chair which partly concealed from his view a portion of the lower part of the wardrobe.

The medium laid the slate on the floor a little distance in front of this wardrobe and then began a rapid discourse to the Doctor on spiritual science. He grew very excited and kept pacing the floor, advancing to a position near the Doctor and then returning to the far end of the room. As he made these pilgrimages up and down the room, he came near stepping on the slate as it lay in his way; so with his foot he pushed it slightly toward the wardrobe at each journey. Meanwhile he seemed to forget about the slate so intent was he on his lecture.

Had he been able to control the attention of the Doctor so as to "hold his eye" when secretly shoving the slate with his foot, as he would have been able to do with ordinary persons, all would have gone well. The Doctor, however, was not so interested in the lecture as he was in the slate; and he saw it gradually worked nearer to the wardrobe at each excursion of the medium, until it was partly under this piece of furniture.

The Doctor now interposed and remarked to the medium that this performance had gone far enough; that his challenge was to produce a message without the slate leaving his sight, and that the slate was now nearly out of view. The medium grew very angry and stormed at the Doctor, but all to no avail. Finally the Doctor said to him that he himself was a magician and a performer of such tricks; that he did not intend exposing him, so that he might just as well confess. The medium hesitated a moment and then, laughing, said "Boys, you are too much for me. I own up." He

then conducted them to the room adjoining theirs, where sat the medium's assistant waiting to perform his part of the trick. A small slot had been cut through the base-board adjoining the floor. This slot was directly underneath the wardrobe in the adjoining room. The assistant had an old-fashioned "soot scraper" such as is used for cleaning out the bottom of the old-time cooking stoves. With this useful article his task was to reach through the slot and draw or scrape the slate through the slot in the wall, and shove a duplicate into view while he wrote the message. When this was finished he drew back the duplicate and pushed the original slate into view.

When this was all over, the medium, finishing his discourse, would be suddenly reminded of the slate, look for it, and see it just out from under the wardrobe; then lifting it from the floor he would triumphantly hand it with its message to the sitter. The business was quite lucrative.

At another time a wonderful medium appeared in the same city and gave psychometric tests in a public hall to those bringing articles with them. The tests were very marvelous, and the medium carried away thousands of dollars.

All of this information was furnished to the medium by two prominent gentlemen in Kansas City, who knew nearly every one who attended spiritualist meetings. One of these gentlemen received a very fine test; and the medium, looking at him, said, "Did I ever see you before?" And the gentleman said, "You did not." Now, Dr. Wilson happened to know that at the time the medium was actually stopping at the home of this gentleman, who feigned that he was a total stranger to the medium.

Much of the work of mediums is performed in an impromptu or extempore manner. They must be familiar with the various tricks, but can not invariably follow any fixed rule. They must perform one way for one subject, and maybe in a wholly different manner for another. I can not better illustrate the extemporaneous nature of their work, than by describing two slate writings given by a professional medium whom I know.

Mediums are continually working for what they term "cases." This is where the medium exerts his spiritual influence in behalf of the subject in some matter, and for which he receives usually a goodly sum. Most ardent believers have some matter wherein they need assistance; and they usually employ a medium, if he impresses them properly, and if they believe implicitly in his powers.

There was an elderly gentleman who had repeatedly received slate writings from this medium, but never on slates of his own. The medium had been prevailing on this elderly gentleman to give him his "case," but the gentleman had no means of his own. He could only secure the necessary sum of money from his son-in-law, and the latter refused to let him have it, saying that all mediums were fraudulent; and that he would never advance the funds, unless the gentleman should secure a slate writing on his own slates.

Of this the gentleman informed the medium, and he then made an appointment with the medium for a certain evening that week. This gentleman had a spiritualistic book that dealt with an "Indian Spirit Guide," and some similar matters that interested him greatly, and over which he was very enthusiastic. This book

he loaned to the medium to read, at the time when he made the appointment.

The old gentleman, at the proper time, went to a store and purchased two slates, carrying them to the home of the medium wrapped and tied in the original paper of the stationer. Meanwhile the medium had instructed his confederate, who was concealed in the adjoining yard. It was summer time and the medium's windows were open. A center table stood by an open window.

When the gentleman arrived, the medium directed him to lay his package on the table and to give him his attention for a few moments. The medium was reading in the "Indian Spirit" book, and seemed to greatly desire to discuss certain passages with the gentleman. A chair was placed so that the gentleman's back was towards the table; and as he was very enthusiastic over the aforesaid book, he became deeply interested in the discussion. Meanwhile the confederate, who had seen the gentleman arrive, reached secretly through the open window, drew the slates out, untied them, wrote a message, re-tied and replaced them. When the medium saw them again in place on the table, he said to the gentleman, "You want a message on your own slates. I suppose you have them there. Of course you know that there is nothing on them; so just get them and hold them in your lap, still tied up." This the subject did. After a time the medium asked the gentleman to look and see if he had received anything.

The gentleman could only walk with a cane, and had not gone without one for years. When he saw his message, he became so excited that he immediately started to his son-in-law's home in Council Bluffs, to

show his message in triumph; and in his excitement he never thought of his cane, and walked several blocks to the car line without it, and did not recover it for three days. I know the name of the confederate who wrote the message, and he is a resident of Omaha. The medium secured the gentleman's "case" without trouble after this.

I know another instance where this same medium sold to a business man of Omaha, who happened to be a believer, a girdle which he should wear and which would increase his business twenty per cent. He paid sixteen dollars for this girdle. I have secured one of these and have it in my possession.

* * *

At another time a gentleman had repeatedly received slate-writings from this medium, but decided to investigate further and bring his own slates. Now, mediums are not looking for patrons of this class, and only give them a sitting where there is considerable money or some good advertising to be gained thereby. At this time the medium had rooms in a business block. The believer moved into this block, taking a room on the floor above the medium, in order to be near him and have good opportunity to conduct his investigations.

The medium was not anxious; and although the gentleman came repeatedly with his own slates tied up in paper, always managed to put him off in some manner, saying that conditions were not right or something of the kind. Finally one day the medium saw the gentleman leave his rooms on some errand; and securing a pass key, he entered the gentleman's room, untied the slates, prepared a message, re-tying them and leaving all as before. He knew if the gentleman

should make an examination and find the message, he would attribute it to "spirits," so he took the chance. In due time the gentleman walked in with his slates still tied and under his arm. He had not opened them, and he received a message that completely satisfied all of his previous doubts.

I also know of an instance where a medium stopped at the home of a believer over night. He was left alone in the room a short time while the host was busy elsewhere. During this time he succeeded in locating the host's slates (most believers have a set) tied up neatly in a bureau drawer. He quickly prepared a message, and again tied them up as before. Later he asked for some slates, and when they were brought out asked the host to hold them just as they were. His success was so great that he was paid a goodly fee; and this led to many "readings" by mail and quite frequently brought the medium a ten dollar bill in a letter, as the gentleman was wealthy. This gentleman lives in a small town about thirty miles from Omaha.

In case a medium or his assistant secretly obtains possession of a sitter's slates in a manner such as described in the first part of this number or by any other method, and they are securely screwed or fastened together, he may proceed with any of the methods given below.

If the two slates are screwed together, the assistant opens them with a screw-driver and replaces the screws after writing the message. If the screws are sealed, he may be able to remove the wax by passing a heated wire under the seals, and afterwards replace them with a small hot iron which he keeps over an alcohol flame for such purposes. If he is wholly unable to get into the slates, he then drives a small wedge between the

frames, spreading them a trifle, and inserts a corset steel with a small pencil at the end and does the writing with this.

If everything else fail, a message can be written on the outer sides of the slates, and there will be some effect; although the effect will be nothing like it would be if the message were inside.

In case a pencil can not be inserted between the slates with a corset steel, sometimes the message is written on a slip of paper and this can be slipped in rather easily.

XIV.

There is another case where a message is produced on a marked slate brought by a subject. In this case there is no assistant and the slate never leaves the sitter's hand. He is instructed to place his slate under and near the center of a small table, to press it up against the table and to hold it by the edges only. In a short time a message is found. In this case the message is printed by the medium pressing a rubber stamp containing it (and which is previously covered with powdered chalk), against the slate while under the table.

This stamp is made from a message written out by the medium, so that it looks like ordinary writing. It is attached to a rubber elastic under the medium's coat; and the chalk on its letters is not disturbed owing to the fact that the medium has a tin case or guard on his trousers at the top on one side.

The stamp is held in this tin guard or clamp until the slate is under the table. The medium pretends to feel under the table to see if the slate is in the right position. He secretly carries the stamp up in his hand,

presses it quickly against the slate, then removing his hand, releases the stamp. It is drawn quickly out of sight by the elastic under his coat, just like a handkerchief vanisher used by a magician. The medium has a number of stamps each bearing different messages, so that he can select a suitable one for each sitter.

* * *

As I write this chapter, there is a medium about one hundred miles west of Omaha who is traveling around giving slate writings. His method is very simple but is perfectly successful.

He is very expert at talking, and can hold a subject's attention in a marvelous manner. During the entire experiment he talks constantly, with great rapidity, and greatly interests the subject.

He uses three slates, but the subject sees and examines but two. The third slate, with the message, is in a large pocket on the inside of his right coat front. He has the slates examined; and during this time he is nervously walking behind the subject, and then in front of him, tapping him on the shoulders, and talking rapidly. He takes the two examined slates and places them together, and stepping behind, the medium apparently places them on the subject's head, requesting him to reach up and grasp them. He immediately steps to the front without any cessation in his discourse, and completely controls the subject's attention; so that the latter thinks nothing of the fact that the medium passed back of him, and in fact soon forgets it.

Just as the medium steps back of the subject, he quickly takes the back slate with his left hand and leaves it in his large pocket, and instantly draws out

and substitutes the prepared slate. He does this so quickly, without any pause in his walking or talking, that he never fails with the trick.

If a medium be a lady, she has many opportunities for slate writing that a male medium does not have. She can have so many large pockets in her skirts, and can so easily conceal and exchange slates under a table and in so many ways, that it is very hard to detect the exact means she may use. One lady medium had a mechanical rapper under her skirts which rapped loudly on the floor when she pressed her knees together. She could thus have the "spirits" announce in this mysterious manner when a message was completed.

There are also means for using secret panels, if a subject allow his slates near one, or even near any draperies; and in fact, there are so many secret means, that the only way a subject can be sure of a genuine slate writing is to *have his own slates and never let them out of his hands or sight for even one instant after cleaning them.* I do not think anyone will ever obtain such a writing.

* * *

There are also chemical tricks, although they are not so much used. If a message be prepared with nitrate of silver, and then breathed upon, it will vanish. If the slate be washed with salt water, the message appears but can not be erased. There are also dozens of chemicals for writing invisible messages on paper, which will appear from heat, or from the application of a blotter saturated with other chemicals. If a message be written on paper with a solution of sulphate of iron, it is invisible. If the paper be placed in an envelope moistened inside with a solution of nut-galls,

the writing appears. The paper can be placed between slates just washed with the same solution, and the writing will soon be visible.

There are slate writing mediums such as Slade, who can use the toes for writing messages on slates laid on the floor under the table. The medium wears a shoe that he can slip off the foot easily, and the end of the stocking is cut away. There are also slate writers who write with a small piece of pencil held on the end of a single finger by a little piece of flesh colored court plaster with a hole in its center. In such cases the message is written while the hand pinches the slate up under the table. There is a thimble used, sometimes, with holders attached containing colored crayons; but it requires an expert to use it. Messages can be written on paper by the "court-plaster method" while holding the paper or card in the hand and waving it about.

In many of the slate tricks where an assistant is used, a system of speaking tubes can be employed with wonderful results if the medium be in his own home. The openings are concealed by picture molding, draperies, etc. They enable the assistant to hear all the information the medium gets from the subject during the reading, and he can thus prepare a more effective message. These same tubes can be utilized by the medium for producing "independent" whispers and voices in a room where he holds a circle. By the use of switches the voices appear to be first here, then there, or can even enter at all of the openings at once. Sound is very deceptive, and in the last case it appears to be in the very air.

There are many slate tricks that I have not described here; but I have endeavored to give the best, and

also to give a good example of the different types, which will well illustrate the principles employed.

In reference to information furnished by mediums in slate writings or otherwise, there are so many means of obtaining the same, that it is difficult to be certain of a test of this kind. The "Blue Book" of Boston contains over seven thousand names alphabetically catalogued, with tests for each individual. Some of the names are marked with such marks as "D. E." (dead easy), etc.

Information is gathered from tombstones, old files of the daily papers and even by an advance agent who does secret detective work for that purpose. The most information used in circles, however, is obtained in the private readings given by the mediums. This is all catalogued, and used with telling effect.

SOME MODERN SORCERY.

I.

NOT long ago I received a letter from an old time friend, in which he urgently requested me to make a journey to his city. In by-gone days he and I had spent many hours together, discussing the mysteries of existence, the hidden powers which nature manifests to us, and the origin and destiny of the human soul. My friend is a physician, and what is more, an earnest student; and he is also an investigator of that strange phenomenon in nature which manifests itself in organized beings subjectively, as thought, feeling and things spiritual.

Many times had we discussed the possibility and also the probability of an existence of the spiritual part of man after death. Many times had he reported to me cases of strange phenomena that tended to prove the indestructibility of spirit.

When I received this missive, it stated to me that the writer most earnestly desired my presence in his city, that I might assist in investigating a very strange and marvelous case of psychic phenomena. The case was that of a certain traveling spirit medium, who claimed the power to summon from the realms of the invisible, the shades of our departed friends and loved ones. He gave most marvelous exhibitions to prove

his strange and miraculous power. My friend stated that he thought he had at last found a person with at least some queer psychical gift, if not even possessing the power that he claimed. He had watched the exhibition most carefully, and had even served on a committee on the psychic's stage; and he could find no evidence of trickery of any kind. He was inclined to believe that this strange being really possessed the power of vision without the use of human eyes as he certainly read sealed missives, of which he could in no secret manner have obtained knowledge.

Accordingly, on Saturday evening, I journeyed to a city one hundred miles away to witness the work of this modern sorcerer. On my arrival I suggested to my friend a number of ways by which such things could be performed by trickery, but he informed me that none of my explanations seemed to elucidate this strange work. The secret did not consist in the use of odorless alcohol, for the reason that the medium never touched the sealed envelopes at all. In fact he was never nearer to them than ten feet. This also made it impossible for him to use the principle on which the trick is based, which is known to the profession as "Washington Irving Bishop's Sealed Letter Reading."

He informed me that sheets of paper or cards were passed to the spectators in the audience, and at the same time envelopes in which to seal their questions were furnished for them; that the spectators wrote questions as directed, many times signing their own names to them. He was certain that many persons folded their written questions before sealing them, and that the operator himself did not even collect the envelopes on many occasions. He informed me that the

best evidence of the genuineness of the performance, lay in the fact that the medium seemed to have no fixed conditions for his experiments; but seemed to perform them in a different manner on each occasion. The conditions were different in every case, yet he always read the questions with the most marvelous certainty.

I thought the matter over after this, but could in no way think of any plausible means of accomplishing his work by trickery. I finally decided to wait and see the performance first, and to figure afterwards on the method employed.

Accordingly, at eight o'clock that evening I was seated in the hall with my friend, and shortly afterwards the "Seer" made his appearance, taking his seat on the stage. He was a very slender personage, with long hair and a particularly ghostly look. He took his seat quietly on the stage. In a short time his manager appeared and made an opening address, which I will not repeat, and then asked some boy in the audience to pass cards around to the spectators on which they were to write questions. Envelopes were also distributed, in which to seal the cards. When the writing was finished, the manager asked any boy to take a hat which he held in his hand, and collect the sealed envelopes. After the boy, whom every one knew to be a local resident, kindly volunteered for this service and executed it, a committee was invited to the stage to properly blindfold the medium. This was done in a satisfactory manner, and the committee then returned to the audience. The manager now led the blindfolded medium to the rear of the stage, where he was seated somewhat behind a table, on which were some flowers, a music box, etc. However, the medium

was in view plainly; and he never removed the bandage from his eyes or in any manner molested it.

When the boy came on the stage directly from the front with the hat full of sealed envelopes, the manager placed a handkerchief over the hat and asked the boy to take a seat near the front of the stage facing the audience. He was also directed to hold the hat in his lap, and to deliver the envelopes to the manager, one at a time, as he should call for them.

The operator now delivered a lecture, lasting some ten or fifteen minutes, explaining the strange powers of the blindfolded medium, who sat at the rear of the stage in full view; while the boy still maintained the seat at the front of the stage, and held the hat of envelopes in sight of all.

After the lecture, the manager requested the boy to give him one of the envelopes, which the boy did. The manager did not look towards it in any manner; but took it in the tips of his right fingers, held it in the air, and asked the medium to give the writer of this question a test. The medium shivered a few times, allowed his frame to convulse slightly, and thus began:

"I feel the influence of one who was a brother. I get the name of Clarence. Will the one who wrote this question identify it as his?" There was no response from the spectators, and the medium asked again that the writer speak out. Still silence greeted his request; when suddenly he pointed his bony finger into the crowd, while his blinded face confronted them, and exclaimed: "Mr. John H—, why do you not respond to your test?" A gentleman in the audience then acknowledged the test as his. The medium then continued: "Clarence was drowned. I sense the cold chilly water as it envelopes his form." At this the

lady sitting with the gentleman began to cry. The medium continued: "The drowning was wholly an accident. There was no foul play. Now, Mr. H—, have I answered your question, and are you satisfied with your test?" The gentleman, a well-known citizen, acknowledged that he was perfectly satisfied.

The manager then laid the envelope on a small table and asked the boy for another one. The boy gave him another from the hat when the blindfolded medium, ten feet or more distant, gave the second test.

He shivered again and began: "I feel the influence of a young lady who died suddenly. She says, 'Sister Mary, I am very happy, and death was not so hard to endure. I want you to consult a good honorable attorney, and take his advice in the law suit you ask me about.'" The medium then continued, "Miss L—, your sister regards you with a look of great tenderness and love. Are you satisfied with your test?" A lady then replied that she certainly was entirely convinced.

The manager now laid this sealed envelope beside the other one and again called for another. This was continued until all of the envelopes in the hat were removed and the questions answered. None of the envelopes were opened. In some instances the medium first read the questions, word for word before answering them; and when he did so, he described the writing minutely, even the formation of the strokes of the letters.

After all of these tests were given, the medium removed the blindfold and seemed much exhausted. Then the tables were removed to one side of the stage, and a cabinet erected; after which some cabinet manifestations that were very interesting were given. When these were over, the manager collected the sealed en-

velopes from the table, and placed them on the front of the stage, inviting the writers to call, should they so desire, and get their questions. Some availed themselves of this opportunity and tore open a number of the envelopes until they found their own questions. The audience seemed greatly impressed with this exhibition, and the next day it was the talk of the town.

* * *

On the next evening I again repaired to the public hall to witness, and if possible, fathom this performance. This time, however, I found that an entirely different method was employed. Envelopes and slips of paper were distributed; and after the questions were written and sealed the manager went about the room, gathering them up in a small black bag with a draw-string around its top. As he gathered up each one, and while the writer still held it, he gave to that person a number which was to serve as that particular person's number during the tests. At the same time the manager marked the number on the subject's envelope, while the subject held it, drawing a circle around the figure, after which the subject dropped the envelope into the sack.

When all were collected, the operator took the sack in the tips of his fingers, and holding it aloft, walked up the run-way to the stage where a cord hung from a screw-eye fastened in the ceiling above. The other end of the cord was attached to a piece of furniture on the stage. The manager now attached the black bag containing the envelopes to the end of this string, and then taking the other end, drew the bag up to the ceiling near the screw-eye, where it remained in full view during the tests.

While the manager was doing all this, the ghost-like

medium had been walking about the stage, reading in a large Bible. He now laid the Bible on a table and advanced to the front of the stage, while the manager delivered a lecture on spiritual philosophy and also on the strange power of the medium. After this the manager announced that the medium would hold a Bible service, during which time he would give the tests.

The medium now took his Bible, and seating himself in a chair facing the audience, began by reading a verse. After this he closed his eyes for a time, and then gave the first test. He began: "I will give these tests in the order in which the manager gave you your numbers, commencing with number one. Now, Mrs. Clara S—, I see standing near you an elderly lady, somewhat stooped; but I can not see her face plainly. She seems to be your mother. She says to tell you that your son is doing well where he is, and for you not to worry, for he will return to you in time. Are you satisfied?" A lady in the audience was visibly affected, and acknowledged that the medium had answered her question correctly. The medium read another verse in the Bible, after which he gave the second test in a manner similar to the way in which he had given the first one. After this he read another verse, and so continued until all the questions in the sack were answered. The manager now lowered the sack, and emptying the envelopes into a small basket distributed them unopened to their writers.

The effect of this exhibition was fully as great as was that of the former one, and the medium continued to be the wonder of the town.

* * *

On the next evening I again attended the meeting. On this occasion questions were written and sealed as

on the former occasions. This time the medium was dressed as a "Mahatma," wearing a large turban. As soon as the questions were written, the manager collected them in a small wicker basket, and emptied them on a table on the stage. He only talked for a moment, describing what the medium would do. During all this time the medium was seated near the front of the stage. The medium now tapped a little bell he held in his hand, as if summoning the spirits, and began giving the tests in the most marvelous manner. He seemed somewhat nervous, and finally arose and walked across the stage, stopped a moment and then continued his walk. Meanwhile he kept giving the tests. Occasionally he would walk about nervoulsy, and sometimes he would seat himself in the chair for a time; but he kept right on giving test after test, with perfect accuracy, while the sealed envelopes remained in full view on the table. During this time, and in fact during the time the audience was writing the questions, neither the medium nor the manager had ever left the sight of the spectators for even an instant.

After all the tests were given, the medium, very much exhausted, fell on a couch on the stage; while the manager scooped the envelopes back into the basket, and then distributed them to their writers in an unopened condition.

I will now explain how this "occultist" gave these various billet tests.

II.

We will first refer to the tests given the first evening. A boy from the audience gathered up the sealed envelopes in a hat, and brought them to the stage, sitting with them in his lap; while he delivered one at a time

to the manager, who held it aloft, during which time the blindfolded medium in the rear gave the test.

There was a simple little move that escaped the eyes of the spectators in this instance. The spectators did not know what was to happen, neither did the boy. The move was executed as follows: Just as the boy came on the stage with the hat the manager received the hat in his right hand and in a natural manner. Nothing was thought of this, as there was nothing suspicious in the act. Meanwhile the manager directed the boy to take a chair that sat to the left of the front of the stage, and to place it to the right side in front, facing the audience, and to take his seat thereon. Now, this conversation with the boy naturally occupied the attention of the spectators; and while the boy was executing the directions the manager turned to the table, which was somewhat back on the stage, and apparently took a large handkerchief from it, and with the hat still apparently in his hand, he stepped to the boy, giving him the hat of envelopes and the handkerchief, at the same time instructing him how to cover the hat, and how to deliver the envelopes one at a time. All of this maneuvering seemed so natural that the audience thought nothing whatever of it.

Now, as the manager turned to the table to get the handkerchief, and while most eyes were on the boy as he placed his chair and took his seat, the manager deftly exchanged the hat in his right hand for another hat just like it, that was filled with "dummy" envelopes and which was behind the flowers, music box, etc., on the table. As he immediately turned with the hat apparently still in his hand, but with a large handkerchief in his other hand, everything seemed natural and the audience thought nothing of the incident.

The manager now, after giving the boy the hat and handkerchief, invited a committee to come forward and blindfold the medium who had been seated at the left of the stage. The committee first placed a lady's glove on the eyes of the medium as an additional precaution, and then placed a handkerchief over this and tied it behind his head. This method of blindfolding is the one usually employed by most mediums. If the face of the medium be properly formed, he can easily shift such a bandage with his eyebrows, sufficiently to see directly under his eyes, by looking down alongside his nose. The committee now retired to the audience, and the performer led the medium to a seat behind the table.

Now, while the manager delivered the lengthy lecture, the medium quietly tilted over the hat of envelopes behind the objects on the table; and then taking one at a time, opened the envelopes and removed the cards, arranging the cards on top of each other like a pack of playing cards. The lecture lasted long enough for the medium to complete this task; and as he held the cards in his left hand, he could now move slightly to the right so that he was pretty well in view of the spectators. However, his left hand did not come into view.

By the time the lecture was completed, the spectators had entirely forgotten the fact that the manager ever received the hat from the boy at all. In fact, next day I noticed from the talk of the spectators, that they invariably asserted that the hat never left the boy's hands or their sight.

Now, while the manager held each envelope aloft, the medium had but to read the top card in his left hand and give the tests in a dramatic manner. After

the tests, when the tables were set to one side and a cabinet erected, an assistant out of view received the cards from the medium's left hand; and then while behind the scenes, replaced them in envelopes, sealed them, and then exchanged these for the "dummy" envelopes on the small table. After the entertainment, the manager placed the originals (now again sealed), near the front of the stage for the writers to take and keep as souvenirs if they should so desire.

It is evident that this method could be varied a little. For instance, when the manager holds the envelope aloft, the medium could first read it and carefully describe the writing. He could then ask for the envelope, so as to become *en rapport* with the writer, in order that he may give the correct answer. In this case he could leave the surplus cards on the back of the table behind the music box, and have in his left palm, only the single card he is reading. When he receives the envelope, he should place it in his left hand directly over the card, and tear off the end of the envelope. He should then apparently take out the card from the envelope, but in reality take the original card from the rear of the envelope with his right hand. He should then with his right hand press this card on top of his head and give the answer, while his left hand lays the opened envelope on the table or music box. In this case, as soon as he answers the question, he should return the card to the manager with his right hand, and ask the manager to have some boy run with it to its writer. After it is returned to its writer, the manager can hold aloft another envelope and the medium continue with the tests. After the tests, the manager should remove the torn envelopes, as they contain "dummy" cards.

I will now explain the method pursued on the second evening. After the questions were written and sealed, the manager went among the spectators collecting the envelopes in a cloth bag. He first numbered the envelopes, at the same time instructing each spectator to remember his number, after which the envelopes were dropped into the bag. When all the envelopes were collected, the manager lifted the bag in the tips of his fingers and ascended to the stage with it in plain view. He quickly attached it to the cord and drew it up to the ceiling. So far all was fair; but just at this moment a person in the rear of the hall made the statement that he desired to place his envelope in the bag also. The performer asked a gentleman on the floor to take the bag, which he now lowered and detached, and to kindly go to the gentleman and get his envelope. While he was doing this the manager held the audience by his discourse. The two gentlemen were, of course, paid confederates; and when they met behind the spectators, they merely exchanged the first bag for a duplicate under the coat of the rear confederate, who then slipped around behind the stage with the original.

When the other confederate returned to the stage with the duplicate bag and handed it to the manager he ran this one up to the ceiling. This method can be varied by the manager making the exchange under his own coat in the first place when in the rear of the hall after collecting the envelopes.

Meanwhile an assistant behind the scenes opened and copied the questions neatly on a sheet of paper, and *numbered each one.* As he did this he slipped each one into a duplicate envelope, which was also numbered by the manager with a ring drawn around

the figure. This he sealed. As soon as all were copied this assistant carefully drew the medium's Bible just out of sight from the table near the flies where it rested, inserted the sheet containing the copied questions, and pushed it back into view again.

During this time the medium was walking slowly about at the front of the stage while the manager delivered his lecture. At the close of the lecture the medium stepped back to the table where he had laid his Bible a short time before, picked it up and came forward taking a seat facing the audience. He next opened the Bible and turned the leaves over slowly, passing the sheet of paper and reading and memorizing the first question quickly. He then turned the leaves beyond this sheet of paper and finally selected a verse and began reading it impressively. As he read this verse he allowed the Bible to tilt forward sufficiently for the spectators to see that there was nothing like a loose sheet in it, should such an idea occur to any one.

As he had turned over other pages after secretly reading the question, the sheet was hidden from view. After reading the verse he allowed the Bible to close, and then closing his eyes gave the test for number one. After this he again opened the Bible and turned the leaves through it slowly, read the second question secretly, and finally found a second verse, which he proceeded to read in a solemn tone. He then gave a second test, and so continued until all the tests were given. He then lay down very much exhausted, and the manager lowered the cloth bag containing the dummy envelopes, and emptied them upon a small table near the front of the stage. He then stepped to the rear of the stage and picked up a little wicker basket, into which he scooped the dummy envelopes

from the small table where they lay in full view. He now descended and rapidly returned the unopened envelopes to their respective writers.

The basket is what is known as a "Billet changing basket." It is lined with red satin and is a small affair with straight sloping sides. It has a handle which, when down, locks two flaps up against the sides of the basket. This is done by two little projections on the base ends of the handle. They are of wire and are bent into such shape that they project downward when the handle is down, and hold the two side flaps up against the sides. These flaps are of pasteboard, and are covered with red satin the same as the basket lining. There is a spring in each flap which closes it upon the bottom of the basket when it is released by raising the handle. Envelopes in the bottom of the basket are thus hidden and retained, when the flaps are released, and the duplicates drop into the basket, from the sides where they were concealed by the flaps.

This basket can be supplied by the conjuring depots, or it can easily be made. The handle can be made of wire and wrapped with raffia grass which is on sale at the department stores. A pasteboard lining covered with red satin must first be sewed into the basket, and then two flaps of pasteboard should be hinged to a pasteboard bottom by pasting on a hinge of cloth. A suitable spring can be made of spring wire and sewed into position, after which this is all covered with red satin and placed in the basket. The basket should have sides about four inches high, and the bottom should measure about seven and one-half by ten inches. The sides and ends slope outward, and the basket is open wicker work. Suitable bows of ribbon on the

ends of the handle and corners of the basket conceal the mechanism.

In the present instance, the assistant behind the scenes, after reading and placing the questions in duplicate envelopes which the manager had previously numbered, sealed them and placed them in the sides of the basket, bent up the flaps into position, and lowered the handle locking them in place. He now pushed this basket into view on a table at the rear of the stage; and when the manager was ready to return the envelopes, he scooped the dummy envelopes from the table (where they lay after the bag was emptied) into this basket. He then lifted the handle which released the flaps, covered up the dummy envelopes and dropped the originals into view. These he took down and quickly distributed to the writers. Being numbered, this could be quickly done.

* * *

I will now describe the method employed on the third evening. This time dummy envelopes were placed in the sides of the basket, and the handle left in a lowered position while the operator gathered up the envelopes. As the manager returned to the stage he took the basket by the handle. This released the dummy envelopes, and covered up the originals retaining them. He emptied the dummy envelopes upon the small table and then laid the basket on a table near the flies in the rear, and rather out of view. An assistant behind the scenes took out the original envelopes, opened them, and as he read the questions repeated them into a small telephone. The wires from this telephone ran under the stage carpet to a pair of metal plates with a tack in the center of each plate which pointed upward. These plates were located under certain spots in the

carpet and directly in front of the medium's chair. There were also two other pairs of wires leading to two other positions on the stage. The medium was dressed as a "Mahatma" on this evening, wearing a large turban. A large tassel dangled by his left ear, completely concealing a small "watch-case receiver" which was attached to this ear. Two tiny wires led from this receiver, inside his collar, down his person, and were connected inside his shoes to other wires which penetrated the soles of his shoes. These latter wires were soldered to copper plates which were tacked into position on his shoe soles. He now took his position in the chair and placed his feet over the hidden tacks, which now contacted his shoe plates, completing the circuit, so that anything whispered into the telephone on the stage was repeated in his ear. He then gave a few tests, tapping his spirit bell, which was a signal for more information from the assistant.

He soon grew nervous and walked away giving a test as he walked. He now paused in a certain position for a moment, placing his hand to his head as if somewhat dazed and tapping his bell. In this position his feet were again over two concealed tacks, and he again secured information for another test, which he gave as he walked about. He now paused in a third position and gave another test, after which he returned to the chair, continuing his work. This maneuvering he kept up, until all the tests were given; after which he fell upon a couch exhausted, but with his feet from the spectators.

The manager now stepped to the rear of the stage and took the basket, which was now in place containing the original(?) envelopes behind the flaps; and stepping to the small table he scooped in the dummy

envelopes; then taking the basket by the handles, he stepped down the run-way and rapidly returned the unopened(?) envelopes to their writers. The assistant had, of course, sealed the questions in duplicate envelopes previously numbered by the manager. He had placed these behind the flaps, and shoved the basket into view on a table at the rear of the stage.

III.

I use a variation of these tricks in my double parlors. I have made a "billet changing basket" as above described, and have also made a similar basket except that it contains no mechanism.

I pass cards and envelopes to the spectators in the front parlor. When the questions are written and sealed in the envelopes, I gather them up in the mechanical basket; I step to a table in the rear parlor and apparently empty them upon it. In reality, I have just raised the handle so that the originals are retained, and the dummy envelopes are emptied on the table instead.

I now step to an adjoining room for an instant, to get a small decorated screen. I secretly leave the basket containing the original envelopes in this room and return with the other basket in my hand in its place. I place the small ornamental screen on the table back of the envelopes, but leave the envelopes in view and request the spectators to notice that I do not go near them until I get ready to give the tests. I now carelessly lay the non-mechanical basket on a table in the room where the spectators are and proceed with some other tricks.

Usually I give the series of experiments described

in the chapter entitled "Mediumistic Reading of Sealed Writings." I state to the spectators that I will not give the tests for the sealed envelopes until later in the evening.

Meanwhile, should any one think of such a thing, he can easily examine the little basket, which he thinks I have just used; as it still lies on the table in the front parlor with other discarded paraphernalia, including slates, etc. I use no assistant; so after a time has elapsed, and when by the performance of other sealed readings, suspicion has been diverted from the tests with the billets, my wife retires on some trifling errand. While out, she opens the envelopes in the basket, prepares the sheet of questions, and places it in the Bible; then she re-seals the questions in envelopes previously marked by me, places them in the sides of the basket, raises the flaps and lowers the handle. She then usually enters with some light refreshments for the spectators, which explains her absence with a word.

I continue with other experiments for ten or fifteen minutes after her return; then I gather up my surplus paraphernalia, including the dummy basket and carry all to the room adjoining the back parlor, where I leave it. I return instantly with the mechanical basket which I place near my own table; and then I give another experiment of some kind.

I now pick up the basket and announce that I have decided to return to their writers, the envelopes on the table in front of the screen, before attempting to give the tests. I do this as if it were a later notion. I now scoop in the dummy envelopes, and raise the handle, which action covers them up and releases the originals (now sealed). I now distribute to the writers their envelopes, which I can do, as they are numbered as

described earlier in this chapter. I request each sitter to hold his envelope until I shall give his test. Then I usually perform some other little experiment before giving the tests.

I now take up my Bible, which I will state I brought into the room, unnoticed, when I returned with the last basket. I then seat myself and leisurely turn the leaves through the Bible, reading verses, and giving the tests as before described.

I always first read a question secretly, and then turn by the sheet of paper and begin reading a verse of Scripture. As I do this I permit the front of the Bible to lower enough for the spectators to see the printed pages. This prevents suspicion. Meanwhile, the spectators have forgotten that I ever stepped from the room at all with the basket, and even that my wife retired for some refreshments. Neither did they notice the Bible when I brought it in.

The effect on each person, as I call him by name and describe the "influence" of his "dear one," giving names and most marvelous information, is far superior to what it would be, were I merely to read the questions literally, and give the answers.

IV.

There is another method of working this trick, which a certain medium whom I know, used an entire winter with great success. He gathered up the envelopes in his hand; and holding them aloft in view of every one, he ran up to the stage and laid the envelopes in full view on a table.

Now without any pause, he turned to the audience and began giving the tests in a very marvelous fashion.

He paid no attention to the envelopes behind him on the table, but stood on the stage, moving about occasionally, and gave every test in a very telling manner.

The secret lay partly in a little move that escaped the attention of the spectators. A chair sat upon the stage, and it was directly in the path of the medium when he returned with the billets. This chair he set to one side, just out of view in the flies, and quickly thereafter placed the envelopes on the table. The move seemed so natural that it attracted no notice, and was immediately forgotten.

Now, on the back of the chair, concealed from the view of the spectators, was what magicians call a Card *servante*. This appliance consists of a wire ring some five inches in diameter upon which is sewed a shallow cloth sack. It is fastened to the back of the top cross piece of the chair so as to hold the mouth of the sack open in a horizontal position.

Extending vertically above this ring, and soldered to it on the side next to the chair, is a strip of brass three inches long and one-half inch wide. This is fastened to the chair with a thumb screw. On this strip of brass is another strip riveted to it at the bottom, but separated from the upper portion a half inch all the way up, so as to form what is called a "clip." Into this clip, prior to the performance, is slipped a package of dummy envelopes.

When the medium returns to the stage, this chair appears to be in his way; so he takes it with both hands and sets it into the edge of the wings. The hand containing the envelopes catches the top cross-piece of the chair with the fingers of that hand and the envelopes just behind it. At this instant he releases the package of original envelopes and they fall into

the open sack of the *servante*. At the same time he grasps the package of dummy envelopes held in the clip, and retains them when he sets the chair down. The spectators naturally suppose these dummies to be the originals, still in his hand. He lays them on the table and turns to the audience and begins the tests.

While he does this, an assistant in the wings opens and reads each question, and writes the same quietly on a large blackboard which faces the medium. The blackboard and assistant can not be seen by the spectators, and no thought of them ever occurs to any one. The medium has but to glance at the writing, which is done in a large hand, read each question, and give the tests. The assistant can again seal the questions and an exchange of them can easily be effected after the performance.

* * *

There is an improvement to this trick when worked in a large hall that I believe will prove thoroughly practicable. If so, it will do away entirely with the use of a Bible, blackboard, or telephone wires.

When the manager returns to the stage with the sealed envelopes, the medium, who is on the stage in full view, immediately begins giving tests while he walks about. He can even go down the aisles and give the tests from any position he may choose. While in the aisle giving the tests amongst the spectators, he need not pause any more between the tests than was necessary in the previous method on the stage. There are no visual signals whatever.

If this method prove practicable, it will be the most marvelous performance of the kind ever given on earth. I am indebted for the idea to my brother-in-

law, Mr. Charles W. Robbins, who is an electrical engineer for the Western Electric Co. of Chicago. Mr. Robbins is well informed on the subject of trickery, and is quite a performer himself.

He suggested to me the idea of doing away with the wires which I was contemplating should lead down the aisles to metal plates under the carpet, and to substitute wireless telephony in its place. He thinks that an apparatus can be concealed on the person of the medium, with wires leading to the same "watch-case receiver" on his ear. The tassel from the turban can conceal it if the medium be a gentleman, while if a lady, the hair can be dressed and combed so low as to conceal it effectually.

There will be a telephone on the stage in the rear as in the other case, and a small wire will have to be laid entirely around the outer edges of the hall. This can be next to the floor or ceiling, or it can be buried outside.

He informs me that words have been sent inside a court of a size of 150 by 200 feet, and that he sees no difficulty in designing this for an ordinary hall. The mechanism which the medium is to wear will doubtless require some experimenting.

SOME UNUSUAL MEDIUMISTIC PHENOMENA.

IN the book entitled *Psychics: Facts and Theories,* by Rev. Minot J. Savage, at page 15, the following account will be found:

"Soon I began to hear raps, apparently on the floor, and then in different parts of the room. On this, the lady remarked, simply: 'Evidently there is some one here who wishes to communicate with you. Let us go into the front parlor, where it will be quieter.' This we did, the raps following us, or rather beginning again as soon as we were seated. At her suggestion I then took pencil and paper (which I happened to have in my bag), and sat at one side of a marble-top table, while she sat at the other side in a rocker and some distance away. Then she said: 'As one way of getting at the matter, suppose you do this: You know what friends you have in the spirit world. Write now a list of names—any names you please, real or fictitious, only among them somewhere include the names of some friends in the spirit world who, you think, might like to communicate with you, if such a thing were possible.' I then began. I held a paper so that she could not possibly have seen what I wrote, even though she had not been so far away. I took special pains that no movement or facial expression should

betray me. Meantime she sat quietly rocking and talking. As I wrote, perhaps at the eighth or tenth name, I began to write the name of a lady friend who had not been long dead. I had hardly written the first letter before there came three loud distinct raps. Then my hostess said, 'This friend of yours, of course, knows where she died. Write now a list of places, including in it the place of her death, and see if she will recognize it.' This I did, beginning with Vienna, and so on with any that occurred to me. Again I had hardly begun to write the real name, when once more came the three raps. And so on, concerning other matters. I speak of these only as specimens.

"Now, I cannot say that in this particular case the raps were not caused by the toe joints of the lady. The thing that puzzles me in this theory, is as to how the toe joints happened to know the name of my friend, where she died, etc., which facts the lady herself did not know, and never had known."

It has been the writer's good fortune to witness practically this same experiment, performed by a very expert medium, Dr. Schlessinger, who was traveling over the country a few years ago.

I was residing at that time in Falls City, Neb., a place of a few thousand population. For two winters I had traveled some as a magician, so when the medium came to town, and began to perform his miracles, certain members of the community suggested having me witness one of his seances, thinking I would be able to discover whether his tests were genuine, or whether they were performed by the aid of trickery. Accordingly, one evening, a prominent physician invited me, with certain relatives and friends, to attend a seance given in his parlors.

When we arrived I was introduced to the medium, an elderly gentleman with a long white beard, and wearing glasses. He appeared to be slightly deaf, as he placed his hand to his ear and had my name repeated. He was introduced to the remainder of the company *en masse,* the names of the visitors not being given to him.

The medium soon announced that "his mission on this earth was to absolutely prove to humanity the immortality of the soul." He now offered to give some tests to those desiring it, and asked for a small table which was placed in an adjoining room. He invariably held his hand to his ear, to catch what was being said, being apparently quite deaf. He also used this same expedient when listening to the voices of the unseen spirits, and reporting their communications.

My father and another gentleman were selected for the first test, as they were considered very skeptical in such matters. As they retired to a closed room I did not see the experiment, but will give some parts of it as reported to me, further on. In a short time they returned to the parlor, engaged in a discussion over the matter; and my father remarked, "I do not know how you got your information, but I feel certain it was not from my brother, or he would have given a certain point correctly." The medium then said, "If I will tell you where your father died, and the disease he died of, will you be convinced?" My father replied, "I suppose I will have to be, if you can do that."

They then retired, and the medium succeeded partially in the experiment; and would have certainly succeeded entirely, had my father followed his instruc-

tions. I will describe what was reported to me of this test, further on.

I now offered myself for a test. I retired to the room with the medium, and incidentally offered him one dollar and fifty cents, the same my father had given him; but he refused the money, saying: "Your father is not convinced, and I will not take any more money."

He now took a sheet of paper from a tablet, and drew five straight lines across it, spacing the sheet into six spaces about equal. Next taking my hand, and looking earnestly into my face, he said: "Promise me that if I succeed, you will not make light of this. Promise me, for this is very sacred to me." I did so. He now directed me to write names in the spaces on the sheet, any names I pleased, writing but one name in each space. All the names were to be of living or fictitious persons except one, this one to be the name of some one I had known who was then dead. He said, "Be fair with me, and I will scratch out the dead person's name." These were his exact words, therefore I in no way tried to hide my writing from him, although he stood at a distance and did not appear to watch me. I took a pencil and began writing the names; being unprepared I had to think of the names I wished to write. I desired to select names of persons living at a distance, so that he could in no possible manner know them. While I was writing he talked incessantly, which in spite of myself divided my attention. At the same time he kept urging me to write, and immediately after urging me, would begin talking rapidly on some spiritualistic subject. I remember saying, "You must give me time to think." I thought I used great care, so as to write each name with the

same precision, and tried to betray no emotion when writing the dead person's name. I selected the name "Cora Holt" for the dead person's name. This was the name of an aunt who had died in another state.

As soon as I had written the names he asked me to cut them apart into slips, having one name on each slip. Now here I do not remember whether he folded them himself, or had me help, as I was not expecting them to be folded. However, we folded each one into a billet with the writing inside.

He now directed me to place them in a hat, and to hold the hat under the table, take out the billets one at a time, and throw them on the table top. This I did while he stood with his right arm extended toward the table and about one foot above it. After I had thrown a few billets on the table, as I threw the next one, I heard three loud distinct raps. He said, "There, that's the one that is dead. Open it and see if I am right, but do not let me see it. Fold it up again and place it in your pocket." I opened the billet. I did not know what the name would be, as I had mixed them under the table; yet I had a feeling that it was correct. I opened it, and sure enough the name was "Cora Holt." I refolded it, placing it in my pocket. I must confess that I felt a momentary creepy feeling pass over me, as my emotions were wrought up to such a pitch by the intense manner in which I had watched all the details of the experiment. I informed him that he was right, but did not tell him the name. He now took my hand in his, and leading me into the parlor, had me state to the company what had just occurred. Now placing his hand on my head, he said: "I will endeavor to give you the name." Closing his eyes, his body trembled or shuddered with a kind of paroxysm, and apparently

with a great effort he pronounced the name "Cora Holt." This effort seemed to greatly exhaust him, and coming out of his temporary trance he begged us to excuse him, saying that there were opposing spirits present and he could do no more that night; that he had done all for us that lay within his power. He now took his leave.

This was all very impressive to me at the time, except the raps. It was only afterwards that I thought out the explanation, which I will give further on. As to the raps, they had the sound as of a pencil tapping loudly on a thin strip of wood, or a ruler, and not the sound of tapping on a table. I had previously known of the mechanical and electrical rappers, supplied by certain conjuring depots, and worn on the person of the medium, or attached to a table. My impression was at the time that possibly he had a rapper in the sleeve of the arm extended over the table, and by directing the attention to the table the sound would appear to come from there. As I was sitting right against the table, I will say that the sound did not appear to me to come from the table, but more nearly from his person.

Referring again to the test given my father, the medium first announced his prices, which he would accept if satisfactory. This was agreed to and paid. He then had my father write names on paper in a manner similar to the way I have described, except he did not request my father to write a dead person's name; instead, he requested him to write, among other names, his mother's maiden name, his wife's maiden name, his father's name, also the names of certain members of his family and of some of his friends, some of whom should be dead. This my father did.

Among the names written by my father was his mother's maiden name, viz., "Celestina Redexilana Phelps," a name certainly out of the ordinary. He also wrote his wife's maiden name, his father's name, his brother's name and several other names—six or eight altogether.

When the medium had the billets taken out of the hat he said, "You have there the name of your mother; the name is something like 'Celestia (not Celestina) Roxalena (not Redexilana) Phelps,'" thus giving wrong pronunciations to the first two names. However, when my father opened it, sure enough it was his mother's maiden name. My father now took another billet which had written thereon his father's name. This the medium gave correctly, stating that this was his father's name. The next billet had written thereon the name of my father's brother; the name was "James Asahel Abbott." The medium then said: "Your brother James is here, and he says to tell you that he is happy and that you are making a great mistake not to believe."

Now this brother had always been called by his second name and not by the name of James. My father said, "If you are my brother, give me your full name." The medium replied, "James Ash-a-bell Abbott," giving an entirely wrong pronunciation of the second name. This it was, with some other error, that led to the discussion they had on returning to the parlor, and in which my father remarked, "If you get your information from the dead, they should be able to pronounce their own names correctly."

My father, not being familiar with the methods of trickery, could not with exactness give all the minute details of the test as I would have wished: and as I

never had an opportunity to see this experiment myself, I can only surmise the means employed in its production.

The second experiment with my father had been an effort to tell the disease of which my grandfather died, also the place where he died. The medium required my father to write on the usual ruled paper, a name of a disease and also a name of a place, in each space, that is, one disease and one place in each space. He remarked in giving directions, "Like New York measles, Philadelphia smallpox, etc." He required, however, that my father write *in the same space* the correct disease, and also the correct place of his father's death. The remainder of the spaces were to contain the names of any disease or any place he might choose.

This my father did, writing in one space "Sacramento dysentery." This was the correct disease, but the city was the place of my grandfather's burial, and not the place of his death, the latter being a village called "Hangtown." The medium quickly gave dysentery as the disease, and Sacramento as the place of my grandfather's death. It was plain that had my father written the village where his father died, instead of his burial place, the medium would have succeeded.

This, however, proved beyond a doubt that the medium obtained his information *from the writing,* and not from the spirits of the dead.

* * *

After thinking the matter over, I decided that, while I was uncertain as to the manner in which Dr. Schlessinger had performed all of these experiments, I could reproduce two of them with certainty as often as he did. I immediately made the trial and found I could

succeed fully nine times out of ten on an average. I might state that the doctor also failed about one time in ten on an average; nevertheless, the people of the community were greatly excited, talking of his miracles, in groups on the streets, for some days. The medium was coining money, yet I found a few cases where he failed totally. The failures were seldom mentioned; it was the successes that excited the people.

The method I use in reproducing the first test given me, is to so direct the attention of the subjects before the writing, by my discourse, as to cause them to select unconsciously the name of the dead person in advance. This is easily managed with a little practice in talking, and still they will never guess that it is done on purpose.

Now, as they begin to write, they will naturally pause before writing each name, to think of a name to write. The pause may be but slight, yet there is some pause. Of course, when they write the selected name, no pause will be necessary; and if hurried properly at that time they will make none. This is the object of the incessant talking during the experiment. If left to themselves, the subjects will, in about one-half of the cases, write the selected name in the third space from the top. In about half of the remaining cases the selected name will be written in the fourth space from the top. This is especially true if in your instructions you direct the subject to "mix the dead person's name somewhere in among the others where you cannot know where it is." In the remaining cases the subjects are liable to write the selected name anywhere, generally first or last. Now my object is to so manipulate my subjects as to cause them to write the selected name when I want them to

do so. This is done by continuous talking, and distracting their attention until the proper moment. I choose the third space, since this, being the one they are most liable to choose of their own accord, is easiest to force. Just as they begin to write the first name, before they make a mark, I say suddenly, "Now be sure and select names of living persons that I could not possibly know." This is almost certain to insure a pause, and the name of a living person to be written first. I continue my talking in a natural manner, taking the attention to a great extent from the writing, and nearly always observing another pause just before writing the second name. When the second name is almost finished I exclaim suddenly, "Now write as rapidly as possible!" If the subjects have been properly impressed with the seriousness of the experiment, they will almost invariably, on finishing the second name (in obedience to my command "to be as rapid as possible," and in their desire to please me), hurry into the name already in their minds, thus writing the selected name in the third place. If such is the case they will now most surely pause to think of a fourth name. If so, I am certain that I now know the selected name. However, if they should rapidly pass into the fourth name, it is then uncertain whether the selected name is in the third or fourth space. This, however, seldom happens if worked in an expert manner.

In rare cases the subject cannot be manipulated by the performer, in which case it is purely guesswork; even in such cases, however, I stand one chance in six of succeeding; and if I make a second trial on failing (not uncommon with mediums), I stand one chance in three of succeeding.

It is hardly worth while to say that as I fold the billets, I fold the third one slightly different from the rest, so that while it will not attract attention, I can see at a glance what it is when thrown on the table. I memorize the name; also, if in doubt, I fold a second choice in a still different manner for a second trial. Frequently I memorize more of the names, folding so I can pick them out. Then, after giving the dead person's name with proper effect, I pick up the others, hold them to my head and call out the names. The effect of this on a subject is very impressive.

With a little practice the above test can be given with very small chance of failure; and in the event of making a failure it can be explained by the statement that "there are opposing spirits present," or some similar excuse. If one has other tests at his command, it is well in the event of failure, to announce that he will try something else, and then give another test. As these experiments are always tried alone with one or, at most, two subjects, a failure attracts little notice.

Now I can not say positively that Dr. Schlessinger performed this experiment in exactly this same manner; but I do have a recollection of his hurrying me along in my writing at some stage of its progress. I also know that I can succeed as often as he did. I will add further that a few days later I prepared six names in advance, and, with my wife, had a sitting with the medium; this time, although I paid him, he failed utterly. He tried in every way and had me write additional names. This time I guarded the points in the above explanation, yet no matter how he tried, he made an utter failure. All tricks require certain conditions, and this is why it is not safe to repeat the same trick for the same person. There is too much danger that

the subjest may notice the sameness of the *modus operandi.*

Referring to the second test which was given by the medium to my father, I will state that when the subjects are writing the cities and diseases, they will naturally pause after writing the city, to think of a disease to go with it. Of course, when writing the correct ones, which are already in mind, no pause will be necessary. Also advantage may be taken of the fact that a small per cent. of persons die of smallpox or measles. If in giving the directions one says, "Write like this: 'Philadelphia smallpox, New York measles,' " and the subject writes smallpox or measles in the list, it is safe to eliminate that from the case. This is especially true if written in connection with some large city, the name of which occurs readily to the mind. It is safe also to eliminate Philadelphia or New York if these should be written, providing you mentioned these names in the directions, and that the test is not being given in their section of the country. A small per cent. of the people of a country die in any two places of prominence. Yet these places will be written readily by most subjects, if they are suggested, or at least other places of equal prominence will be written. If an unusual place or disease should be written, it is almost certain these are the ones.

It can readily be seen how expert one can become at this by continuous practice, such as a medium has many times a day; how one can learn to take advantage of every little point, and use it with telling effect on unsuspecting strangers, who do not know what is going to happen, or what to look for.

I have been told that Dr. Schlessinger had a very sharp eye, although wearing glasses; and that the

glasses were probably to make the subject think it impossible for him to read writing when they were moved out of position and placed on the forehead, as they were during the tests. It has also been suggested that his poor hearing was feigned, to enable him to hear remarks made about himself in his presence. I have suspected that his memory had become trained to a high degree of accuracy, enabling him to give his tests with such marvelous success, as he did with nearly all wherever he went. That he does not use one set of principles only in his tricks, I am certain, but has many more at his command which he uses continually. However, I can only vaguely guess at them from having seen his tests but once.

Now, I do not say that this was the method employed by the lady with Rev. Savage, given in the account at the beginning of this chapter. But as the experiments are practically the same, it is safe to conclude that the methods used are the same, or nearly so. If the test were genuine in the case of the lady mentioned, it was probably genuine in the case of Dr. Schlessinger. On the other hand, if it were trickery in one case, it probably was in both.

Dr. Schlessinger gave other tests than the one he gave me. I heard of them from various sources, and they seemed to be similar to one of the tests given to my father. I could only guess at the method he employed from the descriptions I heard. It was quite evident that he could have a stranger write a number of names of persons living or dead, relatives, friends, etc., in an apparently haphazard way; and that he could successfully point out or have the "spirits" point out the living from the dead, give the correct relationship of each, etc. While doing this he talked continu-

ally in a very rapid and eccentric manner, and seemed a very strange person.

It was hard to tell what his principles were, from seeing a single experiment only once; but I noticed one fact, and that was that he, in his incessant talking, would direct the sitter to write a name, contradict himself in a very eccentric manner, order the subject to ask him a question, then answer with a rising inflection before the subject could ask it, and then again contradict himself in a very peculiar manner. All of this seemed so strange and unusual that one could hardly tell by what subtle art he gained his information.

Fortunately, a magician, Mr. C. S. Weller, had an opportunity to see this performance; and I am indebted to him for a description of it. I will say, however, in Mr. Weller's own words, "This *talk stuff* is very difficult to describe intelligibly on paper." If one could only have an expert stenographer to take down the discourse of the doctor, with all the exclamations and unusual inflections, it would be a subject well worthy of study afterwards; and the method would then appear very plainly. The difficulty lies in the impossibility of quoting from memory the exact words and modes of expression used by him, in his expert conversational tricks.

The substance of the account which follows I quote from Mr. Weller:

* * *

"To exactly describe my experience, I was requested to write the names of relatives, friends, or any names of living or dead persons. He divided the paper into not more than seven sections. In each section I wrote a name, and in one section I wrote my own. The

paper was then divided, by placing the same, face down on the edge of the table; and each section was cut off with a knife and rolled into a billet. I did all, or nearly all of the preparing.

"During the time, and while names were being written, the medium retired to the farther part of the room, remarking, 'I beg you not to let me see what you write—Promise me you will not tell me—Oh! I am so nervous—This work is so very trying on me, etc.'

"After the billets were prepared he successfully selected, (by the aid of his spirit guide, Levi), first, the living from the dead. Then he selected the name of a friend, 'who was nothing more than a friend'; a sweetheart 'who was no longer a sweetheart,' etc. Levi at first failed to make the table rap, and conveyed the information by whispering; at least so it appeared, for the medium held his hand to his ear, listening intently, to sounds (?) which I could not hear.

"He also selected the name of an uncle and the name of an aunt 'who had just gone over.' This aunt sent a message ending with these words: 'Charlie, I am watching over you; be good, be true; investigate and know the truth.' The medium then continued, 'Charlie—Charlie Weller—that is your name—Please heed this message from your aunt, etc.' This last came from the medium direct, and furnished in an effective way a dramatic manner for introducing my name. He properly described five out of six or seven names, as will be seen. There was no sleight-of-hand, no impression or anything of the kind; merely a mental trick, and one that has deceived many and has produced a very great effect on the most intelligent persons.

"I will now describe the performance a little more fully, giving such explanations as have occurred to me. The tests were given in Sioux City, Iowa, in 1903.

"There was a company of some twenty persons gathered to witness the tests, each person paying fifty cents. The medium explained that he would not have time to give each person a test; and asked that two be chosen, a lady and a gentleman, to 'form a battery.' A lady was duly chosen; and I (thanks to a friend), was chosen on the other end of the 'battery.' We were accompanied by the host, who was self-appointed, and retired to another room.

"The medium took two sheets of paper, and divided them with lines drawn across as previously described. As nearly as I can recall, the lady was handled in about the same manner that you were. There was one difference, however. In a spell of apparent nervousness, the medium retired for a drink of water, secretly taking one of the lady's billets with him. The self-appointed witness followed him. The medium dismissed this witness, asking him to inform the company that he would give them a test soon. He then gave the lady some little information, making a mistake as to relationship, and dismissed her.

"Then he asked me to write some names on my paper. After I had written two or three, he said: 'Do not neglect to include the name of a departed person.' At the time, I had a distinct feeling that my action showed by the manner in which I began writing again, that I had not previously written the name of a departed person.

"I did not know whether I was to write one, two, or a hundred names. Each time I wrote a name

(thinking I was through) *I had a feeling of a completed task.* He would then urge me to write another name, and say, 'Can't you think of another name—an uncle—aunt—father—sister—or friend?' By watching my eyes, he could tell as soon as I had fixed my mind on a name, and would know with considerable certainty whether it was an aunt, or uncle, etc. This is based on the same principle as a certain card trick, and one can be certain that it can be worked.

"After I had written four or five names, which owing to his constantly talking and directing me, I had a hard time to select, he suddenly said, 'You have included your own name? Don't tell me. At least write some more names. I will not look. Promise me you will not let me see what you have written. Oh! I am so nervous; this work is so trying on me, etc.' All of this spoken in a very eccentric and excitable manner. I wrote the other name, which of course he knew was my own, for the reason that if I had already written my own name, I would not have written another. *Also because I started to answer his question when he stopped me.*

"So far, he knew the location on the paper of the name of one departed person, who, by his suggestion, he was reasonably certain was an aunt. He knew my own name was the last written, or next to the last. He could tell which was which, by the way I dashed off my own name, and by the slight hesitation I made when writing the other.

"Further, by watching me write, he knew nearly all of the names. The few he had not learned, he familiarized himself with when he showed me how to prepare the billets. By the shape of each billet, or the principal ones, he knew the names on them. He next

asked me to select a billet and directed me to look at it. Then, following the direction of the raps, or the inaudible whispers of his guide, he would either direct me to lay it down, or would say for instance, 'It is an aunt.' This in tone and inflection a partial statement, likewise a question.

"If he was right, my eyes would light up, and I would start to nod my head. If he was wrong, I would try to keep my face a blank. By watching my expression, he knew whether he was right or wrong. He could then either say, 'Yes, it is an aunt'; or placing his hand to his ear, 'Levi! Tell me!—No, it is not an aunt.'

"Here is another example: When I opened another billet he would speak like this: 'This is an uncle—grandfather? Levi! Tell me!' Or he would ask the raps. If this did not show him, he would say, 'Don't tell me—I mean for you to ask me, is it the name of an uncle and so on, but include in your question the right relationship.' Then I would repeat a list, as 'uncle? aunt? mother? friend?' etc., but naturally would not mention the right relationship until I had run out of questions.

"By this system of watching me, of 'forcing' and suggesting names, of mentally retreating and advancing, of asking questions which were asked in such manner that at the time I did not fully realize he was questioning me, but felt that I was doing the asking, he gained the principal amount of his information, and soon knew the different names and in what relationship they stood to me.

"During all of the time I felt I was unintentionally aiding him; but I could not prevent myself from a nod of the head, a brightening of the eyes, or an involun-

tary start, etc. Not until later could I determine what he had really done.

"As yet he had told me very little. Now he asked me to pick up the billets, count them, and lead him into the other room.

"There he put the billets into a hat and had some one else take them out, while he closed (?) his eyes. Then it was that he picked out the names of uncles, aunts, friends, sweethearts, etc. He stated which were the departed ones, and got the message mentioning my name. He also told the lady several impressive things. One thing I should, however, mention. After he had told the lady some few things in the first instance and while he was absent getting the drink of water, she discussed with me whether he was right or wrong. She also told me some facts regarding names, part of which he repeated when he gave the tests before the company.

"Every one was impressed that he was quite deaf, and also that he could not see well without his glasses. I am sure his hearing and vision were both excellent; and that he could read writing upside down, or read it by merely watching the writer covertly while he was writing.

"When he divided the paper on the edge of the table, he first laid it face downwards; but in folding over each name to cut it off with his knife, this brought such name into view, although the paper was face downward.

"Let me repeat that the questioning was all done in such a manner that the subject was not aware that he was questioned. The medium was very expert, clever, and subtle in his work. He also gave us a 'Vision of

Jesus Christ,' which was supposed to be a sermon inspired by the great Jewish Reformer.

"All of this possibly sounds like child's play; but I want to say that it was very effective and most startling, both to myself and the company. I experienced the 'cold shivers.' This gentleman, by his clever presentation of the work which I have here very poorly described, greatly mystified the most intelligent persons all over this Western country, and made a greater impression on them with it than did anything of the kind that had ever occurred in their history. At the best I can only faintly convey the idea of the effects he could produce, and of the almost impossible things he could accomplish with this conversational art. The reader must remember that he had grown so expert that he was very rapid in the work, although it takes so long to describe it. This rapidity added an effect of its own."

MATERIALIZATION.

I HAVE referred elsewhere in this work to the above subject. I will here give a little additional information in regard to it.

Where the medium works alone he generally uses the luminous costumes previously described; but when he has confederates who impersonate the spirits, this is unnecessary, as is also such complete darkness. Let us suppose that the medium works from a cabinet. He first allows strangers to erect and at the same time to thoroughly examine it. Next he is taken into the cabinet and thoroughly disrobed by a committee, and his clothing is examined. Then the committee retires.

The medium has a gentleman assistant who stays with the spectators during the seance. This gentleman now steps in front of the cabinet and makes a short talk to the spectators in regard to the conditions to be maintained during the seance. While he is talking, he is standing directly in front of the closed cabinet curtains, and close to them. Under the tail of his coat, behind, is a small load of luminous silk forms, faces, hands, costumes, and two pencil reaching-rods. The medium slips his hands secretly through the curtains and removes this load, taking it into the cabinet.

The assistant now has the lights put out, and seats himself in the front row with the ardent believers who help to see that conditions are not disturbed.

The lights being out, the medium can emerge with a luminous costume on his person, and with two other forms supported by the extended reaching-rods; so that in the darkness there appear to be three persons who come out of the cabinet. These the medium can move about at his pleasure and two of them float up into the air on the ends of the invisible rods.

The medium can then retire into the cabinet, and push out a number of hands and faces on the ends of the rods. After the manifestations, there is always considerable time taken up in waiting for more manifestations, before the believers conclude that all is over for the night. This gives the medium time to conceal the costumes, which go into a very small space, and he can also telescope the rods and conceal them. As he has been previously disrobed, he would not think of submitting to the humiliation of a second examination after the seance.

In case the medium be a lady, she has these costumes and rods in a hollow belt which is worn around the waist next to the skin. The ladies are invited into the cabinet to disrobe her and dress her in their own clothing. Now for "modesty's sake" the medium retains a black underskirt on her person until she is dressed in the committee's clothes. Then she reaches under her skirts and loosens the black under-skirt and removes it. She then lifts the other skirts as high as possible, showing the committee the bare skin and that she wears no other clothing. In this manner the hollow belt escapes detection. The usual method, where this means is not resorted to, is for a secret confedereate to slip the load to the medium after the lights are lowered and before the medium enters the cabinet.

In some cases the medium submits to being tied in a chair in the cabinet after the disrobing process, and the ends of the rope are passed out to a committee that hold them. The feet are roped and tacked to the floor. I will not describe the means by which the medium escapes from these ties as there are so many books published explaining the various rope ties. However, it is very easy for an artist in this line to escape and perform the usual manifestations.

In some instances the medium is placed in a large wire cage and the same is screwed to the floor. No cabinet is used in such cases. After the lights are put out the medium pushes the hands, faces, and forms on a reaching-tube through the cage. Some of them are made of fine rubber and are blown up through this tube.

Where a hall is used, sometimes the instant the lights are put out a spirit appears on the stage and then vanishes. In this case there is a tube under the floor; and the rubber form is blown up out of this tube, with a bellows, and then sucked back. The lights are turned on instantly and the hall stage is seen to be vacant.

Many mediums prefer to use the various traps and sliding panels for admitting confederates, who impersonate the spirits. The best trap is the one in the ceiling described elsewhere in this work. I know of a medium who took rooms, and materialized simply by having the spirits enter through a door. The cabinet was erected in front of this door, and his various "spooks" came in through the door into the cabinet, and then out of the cabinet into the room where were the believers. This was in Omaha and it did very well for a few nights; but many grew suspicious.

The landlady now went away for a short visit, leaving the medium in charge of her home. The medium then decided that as she was gone, he would take advantage of her absence and cut a trap in the baseboard of the room. He hired a cabinet maker and did the work in the daytime. Now, during the materializing, the believers all usually sang loudly, such old hymns as "Shall We Gather at the River." This was supposed to aid the "dear departed" in materializing. One quite prominent young man of this city had been playing "spook" for the medium, and he happened along as the trap was being cut. He was quite portly built, so the medium had him creep through the opening to see if it were large enough. It was almost too small, and he got fastened in rather tightly, and could not of himself get out. Just at this moment another comical young man appeared, who had also been impersonating for the medium. He looked down and saw his portly friend half-materialized through the trap and "stuck" there. He did not say a word but simply began singing, "Shall We Gather at the River." Mediums and their confederates have many a joke at the expense of the believers whose money they are enjoying.

Detective Clifton R. Wooldridge of the Chicago Police Department, in a published report, speaking of a materializing seance which he attended, says:

"I attended a seance and seized a 'spirit.' When I grasped the ghost I felt the rotund form of a woman who squirmed like an eel. When the lights were put up I found that my prisoner was dressed like a man. Her face was smeared with white paint.

"Attached to a pole in front of her was a paper head around which was a white shroud four feet in length.

Those in attendance believed this image to be the spirit of a believer's dead relative. The 'mediums' had spook images of men, women and children and could produce them as circumstances demanded. The light was turned up and the contemptible imposition on credulity was exposed to twenty-six dupes, who had been paying one dollar apiece for the privilege of attending meetings of the spook grafters for years. It was the greatest exposé of 'spooks' that has been made in many years. A wagon-load of masks, wigs, false whiskers, tin horns, gowns with safety pins in them, skulls and skeletons with cross bones to match were seized."

* * *

There was a medium who gave some very successful seances in Omaha a few years ago, as a "Materializing Medium."

The audience could examine his cabinet and himself thoroughly, then lock the only door to the room and keep the key themselves, besides bolting the door on the inside. The sitters would now form a circle about the room, holding hands and guarding the door. Nevertheless, as soon as the lights were lowered, the medium came from his cabinet, leading numerous spirits. Parents recognized their children; and one fond parent still has a withered flower which money cannot buy, given by the spirit of a dead child. The medium took the town by storm, carrying three thousand dollars away with him in a short time; yet his spirits were produced in the simplest manner.

He had trained children in costumes in an adjoining room. There was a trap in the base board running along the wall of the room. This trap was behind the curtains of his cabinet. Through this the children entered and retired at the proper time. As they hooked

the movable part of the base board with strong hooks to the studding from the room where they were concealed, and as there were dummy nails in this board apparently holding it in place, the audience could not discover but that it was perfectly solid. In the room where the children were concealed, the base board was held in place by door knockers which were screwed through it into the studding. When time came to perform, the children unscrewed the base board on their side, letting it down; now unhooking the other board, they entered through the opening into the medium's cabinet. After the experiment the children hooked the base board in place and screwed the second board in place on their side of the wall; then with their make-up material they made their escape to other apartments, leaving the door open in a natural manner.

During this time the spectators were examining the medium, his cabinet and the room again, and telling each other of the "dear one" they had recognized, while the medium sat, exhausted, recovering from the weakening effects of his recent "trance."

* * *

Probably the greatest swindle ever perpetrated in the name of spiritualism, was recently brought to light in Stockton, California. The medium and his confederates materialized everything from frogs and small fish to a huge boulder of gold quartz weighing several hundred pounds. This latter had to be brought from the mountains with a mule team.

The materializing was done through sliding panels in the walls, while the believers sat holding hands about the opposite side of a table, and loudly singing sacred hymns. They had the only door to the room

locked and sealed, and never dreamt that the spirits who brought the quartz from the mine were mules.

Thousands of dollars were invested in this "spirit mine," the believers stacking their money on the quartz as it lay on the table at a dark seance, and receiving deeds in return for their money, which the spirits dematerialized.

The medium established, or had his spirits establish, a "Treasury of Heaven" for the faithful to deposit their money in, and on which they were to receive fifty per cent. interest. This interest the believers continued to receive at dark seances from the spirits for a time. Each sitter's interest was found on the table stacked in front of him when the lights were lighted. When the spirit bank became insolvent and the chief medium disappeared, the believers were out about thirty-five thousand dollars.

No less a personage than a millionaire of Tacoma, Washington, is said to have contributed largely to this spirit fund. I had known of this case for some time before the exposure (conducted by a performer engaged for the purpose), and knew that certain interested persons were contemplating bringing it about, in order to rescue certain estimable persons from the clutches of these mediums. This was successful; and the confederates of the medium signed written confessions in the presence of one of the most devout of the believers, and a gentleman who is otherwise very intelligent. Upon this the gentleman was greatly crestfallen, but he still insists that there are certain mediums who are not impostors; and that certain mediums in Chicago who produce spirit portraits are genuine.

A full and very interesting account of this exposure

is given in the *San Francisco Examiner* of March 3 and 4, 1907.

* * *

I could report enough cases of materialization to fill a volume. These I know of, from various sources, and in every case they were invariably fraudulent. I will give a short account of a materialization which a very expert medium, who is on friendly terms with me, witnessed. The gentleman was originally a minister, and afterwards began investigating spiritualism, as he was a believer in it. He hoped to become a medium; and at one time paid two lady mediums of some renown, who reside in Chicago, three dollars a sitting for three sittings a week. These sittings were conducted for the purpose of developing this gentleman in mediumship. He continued this for a long time, but was no nearer to being a medium than he was in the beginning.

At one time he detected one of the sisters passing a slate to the other, and substituting another in its place. He saw the edge of one of the slates protruding from behind the dress of one of the sisters. They never knew they were discovered as he said nothing, but this "opened his eyes." After this he investigated everywhere, and at every opportunity, and grew to be a very expert medium himself.

Recently, when in Los Angeles, he visited a seance conducted by a medium who claimed to be a Buddhist priest. This medium was known under the name of "The Reverend Swami Mazzininanda." He had an altar in his home, constructed something like those in Roman Catholic churches. He had various candles and images on this altar, including an image of Buddha, and also a number of mystical figures. It was a

great mixture of "fake" Buddhism, Roman Catholicism, and modern spiritualism. The medium also wore the costume of a Buddhist priest at his seances.

This "priest" held services here for the faithful. He conducted all in Hindoostani(?), his native tongue. He chanted, prayed to Buddha, etc., all in a queer-sounding "gibberish." Certain evenings of the week were devoted to "soul-travel," and certain evenings after the religious services a "Black Chapter" was held.

The gentleman whom I have mentioned attended one of these dark seances. He sat with other spectators around the room in perfect darkness. The spectators were not required to hold hands, so great was their faith. Finally, in the darkness, a queer-looking, vapory, luminous form floated around in the air and paused in front of the spectators. My friend slipped down quietly on his knees, and gradually worked closer and closer to the luminous form, until he could detect that the vapor was a kind of luminous "cheese cloth." He did not desire to expose this "priest," but he desired to have the "priest" know that some one had discovered him. My friend accordingly took hold of the gauze and gave it a very slight downward jerk. He then immediately returned quietly to his seat.

There was an immediate pause in the discourse of the "priest," who had really been floating this form on the end of a stick. Every one knew that something had happened, but no one but my friend knew what it was. The "priest" then said in his slow, peculiar, eccentric and measured tones, "I have received a very great shock; and I will be unable to continue further this evening." The next day, when in conversation with some of the "faithful," this "priest" stated in his peculiar manner of speaking, and with intense earnest-

ness, that which follows: "Last night I received a very great shock. I was just in the middle of the 'Dark Chapter' and the spirit of the Master, Krishna, was out. Having spent the greater portion of my life on the Himalayas, my right eye has become injured by the snows." Then pointing to his right eye, he added, "My right eye has a defect in it which you can not see; but on account of that, I can only see in the dark with it. I immediately turned my right eye downward and I looked! I distinctly saw a lady's hand reached out towards my robe in the darkness, and this hand took hold of it and jerked it lightly just like this." The "Reverend Swami" here illustrated, by slightly jerking his coat downward. It was very amusing to hear him, in great seriousness, relate this in his low and measured accents to his faithful followers.

Shortly after this, when the *Los Angeles Herald* was conducting a crusade against the numerous mediums of that city, and when it had an exhibit in its windows of the confiscated material of some of them, this "Buddhist priest" was arrested and imprisoned for some of his practices.

THE RELATION OF MEDIUMSHIP TO PALMISTRY, ASTROLOGY, AND FORTUNE-TELLING.

THERE is one feature of mediumistic work which can not be taught to any one, but depends entirely on the natural tact and the personality of the medium. This is what is known to professionals as the ability of a medium to give a reading. This consists in adroitly revealing to the subject many things that appear to fit into his life. It is the capacity for shrewd guessing, and of adapting one's revelations to the replies and conversation of the sitter, so as to impress him with the idea that the medium possesses a mysterious and occult power of seeing remote and hidden events in the former's life and of reading the future.

If a medium be very expert at this, as sometimes is the case where he has had long and continued practice, it is unnecessary to resort to any trickery other than this. In such cases the medium's patrons tell such marvelous tales of what has been foretold to them, that such medium will do a thriving business in one place for years and will never be caught in any trick. Mediums, when speaking of each other, frequently make such remarks as "She could give an excellent reading," or, "She never could give a very good reading," etc. They rate the standing of each other by the

ability of each to give a reading. This is the very foundation of all mediumistic work, and tricks are but an accessory to the art.

This same power or ability, is the underlying feature of palmistry, of modern astrology, and of fortune-telling. The underlying, and in fact the principal, feature of all of these, and of mediumship as generally practiced, *is absolutely this same unteachable thing.* This forms the ground work, as it were, of the whole business, and can be acquired only by continued practice. In the practice of the business, necessity develops this faculty.

There is a demand among a certain class of persons for fortune-telling under a modern name, and they will pay for it at any time they can get it. There will always be those who will avail themselves of this demand, for the purpose of making a living out of it. The reader will doubtless have little idea of the number of persons following this profession. Detective Clifton R. Wooldridge of the Chicago Police Department in a published report says, "War against the swindlers, impostors, and blackmailers who operate in Chicago under the guise of clairvoyants, trance mediums, astro-psychics, palmists, magicians, and fortune-tellers, of whom there are about 1500 in Chicago, is being vigorously prosecuted."

Many mediums combine palmistry with their work, but this class of "workers" do not pander to the genuine spiritualists, who accept spiritualism as a religion or philosophy. One medium told me that it would surprise me to know the number of persons who come to them and want their assistance in love matters, in unearthing buried treasure, in forecasting the future,

etc. In fact, the most of their money comes from this class of persons.

I am acquainted with a young medium who combines palmistry with mediumship, and I shall give a little further on, the method which he constantly uses with great success. He at all times has in his possession a large number of cards bearing the questions and names of his patrons, which these latter wrote out; and who now think that the cards were burned. These frequently contain confessions and even questions so indiscreetly worded as to reveal to the reader the innermost secrets of the writers' lives. It would be a great surprise to any one to read over a number of these signed questions.

This medium presented me with a collection of these original cards, that are as interesting as a romance. I will not quote any of the more interesting or amusing ones for certain reasons, but I will quote one question or set of questions which reveals the "fortune-telling" ability required of a medium. These questions were written by one of the most intelligent of the medium's patrons who had been a school teacher for twenty years. I will omit the names for obvious reasons.

"Three different men within two months have given me attention, ——— of Boone, ——— of Sioux City, and ——— of Ogden. Which one loves me and which should I cultivate? Will ——— be my husband, and will he be kind to me? Does ——— admire me, and are his attentions of a pure character? What shall I do next year?

signed "———."

The above is quoted literally and the original is in my possession. It will be seen that these questions

(like most of the others) should more properly have been addressed to a fortune-teller.

* * *

Before giving the method of the medium above referred to, I will state that he makes out a chart for each patron. He has the blanks printed and mounted in a tablet, and he fills out one of these for each sitter. I will first describe the chart. The sheets are eight and one-half by eleven inches. The left half of the lower half, contains the chart, while the right half of the same contains the name(?) of the medium. The upper half of the sheet is left blank, and on this the medium prepares a likeness of the sitter's palm. This is done in the following manner: The medium has a vessel on the table containing some cold cream, such as is used for chapped hands. He first rubs some of this over his own right palm. Next he takes the sitter's hand and rubs his right palm over it until it becomes coated with a small amount of the cold cream.

He now spreads the chart over the head of an ordinary tambourine, and has the sitter place his palm on the upper portion of the chart, to spread the fingers, and press the palm tightly down on this sheet. While the sitter's palm is on the sheet the medium outlines the hand and fingers with a lead pencil. The sitter now removes his palm, leaving the outlines of the hand on the paper defined by the pencil marks.

Next, the medium takes a small brush or pepper box, and dusts over this impression of the hand, some Prussian blue, a powder which he usually has in a vessel on the table. The blue powder adheres to the cold cream and then the paper is dusted off. There will be found to be an exact impression of the sitter's

palm on the paper, with every "line" defined very accurately.

Here is a copy of the blank form printed in the lower left corner of the chart:

"BIRTH MONTH.
.....

YOUR LIFE'S HARMONY.

Your Lucky Figure is .... or any number that can be divided by it.
Your Lucky Day is .....
Your Lucky Stone is .....
Lucky Year .....
Your Lucky Months are .....
Direction of Journeys You Will Take and the year taken .....
Your Lucky Color is .....
You will positively live to be ..... years of age, and probably ..... years older, unless you commit suicide. This is your Creator's design, printed, promised, and guaranteed in your hand.

(Should you call again, please bring this hand with you as it will then cost you nothing.)"

I shall now describe how this young medium and palmist gives his readings. He has each sitter write on a card a number of questions which the latter desires to have answered, and he also has the subject sign his or her name to them. These are white cards of a size of three by four and a quarter inches.

The writing is done on one side only, and the card is folded each way with the writing inside. It is thus about one and one-half by two inches in size. The patron sits at a table while preparing this, and then the medium approaches the left side of the subject. He reaches and takes the subject's card in his right fingers and proceeds to grasp the other end of it with

his left fingers. Now just as he does this, *he leans forward, looking intently into the eyes of the sitter,* and asks, "Now my dear madam, did you write your name on this card?" He does this so earnestly and intently, that no one can help glancing into his face and answering. At the instant that the sitter glances up he quickly draws, with his left thumb, the original card back into the left palm, and pushes a duplicate forward into his right fingers. This move does not require a second; and just as the sitter answers, the medium brings the right fingers containing the sitter's(?) card up against his forehead. He shudders, and then turning his right side towards the sitter, places the card against the sitter's forehead, and asks the sitter to place his palms against the medium's right hand and his own forehead. At this time his left hand goes into his left pocket on his side away from the sitter, to get a match with which to burn the card; and he secretly leaves the question card in his left pocket.

He brings out the match and says, "I will burn this question." Suiting his action to the word, he strikes the match and lights the dummy card, placing it on a dish where it burns to ashes.

Next, the medium prepares the impression of the sitter's hand, before described, which operation greatly interests the latter. Just as he finishes the preparation, he takes the sheet in his right hand, and holding it near the bare floor, dusts off the surplus powder. Now as he does this his left hand secretly gets from his left pocket the original question. When the chart is dusted off, he passes it into his left hand front side to the left, and grasps it with the left fingers con-

taining the card under the sheet. The card is now effectually concealed.

The medium now goes to his chair on the *opposite side of the table,* and with his right hand takes from the table a small "blotter pad," with leather corners for slipping blotters into. This pad is such as is used for holding a blotter on an office desk to prevent the latter from becoming scratched, but this pad is of the exact size of the chart sheet. He brings this pad into a vertical position in front of him, and then with his left hand inserts the corners of the chart under the leather corners of this pad. *The pad of course prevents the sitter seeing the sheet, as well as the concealed question card.* He inserts the card in one corner, opening it out. He now appears to study the hand-impression for a while, meanwhile secretly reading the question and memorizing it. During this time he fills in an occasional blank on the chart, and asks the sitter certain questions relative to the date of his birth and such matters. Having now thoroughly memorized the question and name, the medium takes the pad in his left fingers and draws out the chart sheet with his right fingers.

His left fingers keep the card under the leather holder across the corner. He then turns the pad upside down, laying it on the table naturally, and then lays the chart on this and finishes filling it out. As the pad is inverted, the card is under it and can not be seen. The medium fills out the chart and hands it to the sitter. The pad being on the opposite side of the table from the sitter, and having the concealed question under it, is out of the sitter's reach.

While the sitter reads his chart, the medium takes up a city directory and gathers what information he

can from it. He knows the subject's name; and in some of the smaller cities the directories furnish much information, even giving the various marriage licenses issued, with their dates and other details. As the medium has removed the backs or cover from this directory and put on it the back from a book on "Mental Psychics," or something of the kind, he can open this book without creating a thought of suspicion in the mind of the subject. Now, laying his book of "Mental Psychics" on his pad, he goes around to the sitter, and, grasping the latter's hand, gives a splendid reading; elaborating on his knowledge of the sitter, giving the latter's name, occupation, etc., and answering all of his written questions in detail.

This is one of the most practical and best methods of giving a reading in existence. This secret has never been published before, is unknown to the dealers, and has never been sold.

PERFORMANCES OF THE ANNIE EVA FAY TYPE.

I HAVE recently met a medium who for some years traveled with a lady giving stage performances of the Annie Eva Fay variety. In this performance the spectators write questions which they desire answered, sign their names, and retain them. A lady who sits on the stage calls out the names of the respective writers, answering their questions in detail without seeing them. The spectators usually write on paper which is on tablets furnished by the company; but sometimes they write on their own paper, or bring their questions with them, having written them at their own homes before leaving. Sometimes the lady answers some question that some spectator did not write, but of which he is simply thinking. She also sometimes locates lost or stolen articles.

The tablets furnished the spectators to write on, have the surface sheet on which they are to write, divided into four sections; and each section is partly torn off, as if marking where each spectator is to tear off his slip after writing his question. Among the spectators there are a number of attendants who distribute the tablets, each in his own section of the house; and after the writing they gather them up. In gathering up these tablets, the attendants pass around

from aisle to aisle in the rear of the audience, where they secretly exchange them for "dummy" tablets which are then carried down and deposited in a pile on the stage near the foot-lights. The originals are sent around secretly under the stage.

The tablets are prepared as described elsewhere in this work, by having a sheet in each tablet, which has its under surface coated with white wax. The gentleman referred to had, at each performance, to develop a large number of questions in a very short space of time. Usually some two dozen tablets were passed to the spectators, and generally four questions were written on the surface sheet of each tablet. As each spectator tore off his section of the surface sheet after writing, no two impressions were ever superposed.

He always places the prepared sheet in the tablet, so as to be the third sheet below the surface sheet, on which the spectators are to write. It transfers a good impression to the sheet next under it nevertheless, and the spectators in retaining their questions have in their possession only unprepared paper. The prepared sheet can thus be used over and over again; and it might be called a "white carbon" sheet, as it practically takes the place of an ordinary carbon sheet.

This gentleman uses a paper that is fairly highly glazed, but nothing like the paper known as "onion skin." Neither is it very transparent or porous. A proper paper is of the utmost importance, but he could not tell me the best make to use. He could not find the variety he prefers in this city, but he found some that works nicely. This is stamped on the tablet, "The King's Crown." He prefers to use undiluted paraffin wax. He takes a large cake of it and trims off the hard surface smoothly, then holds

the cake over a lighted lamp for a moment, moving it about until the mere surface of the wax is very slightly softened. He now rubs this over one surface of the sheet while it rests on a smooth surface. He applies considerable pressure; and after rubbing it thoroughly he takes an ordinary "case knife" and scrapes off all surplus wax. He now again rubs the sheet over lightly with the cake of wax, and then smooths it up by rubbing with his palm. He does this until he gets a fine surface that no one can tell is prepared.

This sheet he places in position in the tablet, fastening it with library paste. The older it gets the better it works, as the wax gets harder with age. He gives the hardness of this wax, as his reason for preferring it to spermaceti wax. This sheet gives a fine impression of the writing and I must say it works splendidly.

He prefers plumbago to any of the powders for developing. He says this is on account of the weight of it, as this feature causes it to adhere to the wax better. He also prefers this powder because it slips off the paper so easily, leaving the sheet perfectly clean except where the wax impression is. He has a vessel under the stage containing the plumbago. He takes each impression sheet, and holding it over this vessel at an angle of forty-five degrees, pours a large spoonful of the powder on its top portion. The powder runs down to the bottom of the sheet, falling back into the vessel. The sheet is left perfectly clean, except the writing is now very plain. Sometimes he mixes a little powdered charcoal in the plumbago, when he can not get a black variety of the latter. This is merely to blacken the powder more, and the plum-

bago gives it the weight. His impressions are much plainer than the original writing; and I must say, after witnessing him develop some of these, that I prefer his method to any other. He can develop all of the sheets and hand them to a confederate at a telephone in a period of five minutes.

The man at the telephone reads the questions and names into it. This latter is connected to two ordinary wire nails that are driven through the stage floor from above. The lady on the stage has a receiver such as telephone operators use, (with the head portion removed) concealed under her hair, which is dressed low with two curls over the former. Wires from it lead down, under her clothing through her shoes to copper plates on their soles. She merely places a foot on each nail head when she takes her seat, and she thus hears all of the questions and names distinctly. This method is superior to the original method wherein the lady was enveloped with a sheet which reached to the floor, and then a speaking tube was pushed up through the floor, under the sheet, to a position near her ear. It is also superior to the "foot telegraph," which has been employed on occasions.

* * *

Sometimes, during the performance, the lady reads questions which the subjects wrote on their own paper. This is called by some performers "reading the house questions" for the reason that the writers of the questions frequently write them at their own houses.

When an attendant sees a spectator in "his section of the house," either with a "house question" in his hand, or in the act of writing one on his own paper, this spectator is immediately "spotted." The attendant now secretly learns this person's name from the local

manager, or from some other prominent person. He sends it around, together with the spectator's occupation, if possible. A directory is also handy under the stage and this is consulted; and the name, and all information is telephoned up to the lady on the stage.

Now, during the performance, as the lady answers each spectator's question, an attendant steps to this person; and while the lady is reading and answering it, he says to the spectator, "Let me see if she gets it right." He generally takes the question out of the spectator's hand for an instant, and then returns it. Now, when the lady begins, by calling the name of the writer of a "house question," an attendant immediately steps to this person and either *catches a glimpse of the question,* or asks to see it as in the other cases. If he takes it, he instantly returns it. Meanwhile the lady on the stage has given the spectator his name, has told him his business, and has given him some wholesome advice, etc. She seems to have difficulty in reading his question, however, and the floor-manager directs her to "go to something else and not to keep the audience waiting, but to come back to this question later." This she does.

Now this attendant has in his right coat pocket a small tablet and pencil. With his hand in this pocket, he secretly writes the spectator's question on a sheet, tears it off and folds it up so it is small. He is usually in the rear of the aisle while doing this. The floor-manager now happens(?) to pass him, and he secretly passes this copy to the latter. The floor-manager next passes down the aisle to the foot lights and allows his right hand to rest on the stage just back of the "dummy" tablets. Here there is a slight crack in the floor through which he secretly slips the question to

a confederate under the stage, while he is addressing the audience *in relation to what the lady is doing.*

In a short time the lady states that this former spectator seems to keep coming to her, that "she can not get him out of her mind," and that she "gets the impressions that he wants to know so and so," according to what his question is. She now answers it for him.

Sometimes there is a "run-down" from the stage, and in such cases the floor-manager allows his hand to rest carelessly on it while talking to the spectators. In such cases there is a confederate concealed under the "run-down" who receives the question when the floor-manager secretly slips it through a crack in the former, and he passes it on to the man at the telephone.

Some performers still use the old prepared pads that have a carbon sheet concealed within them, but I think the method given here is the very latest. The lady soon learns the nature of the majority of the questions asked, and can thus frequently mention questions that certain persons in the room are "thinking of and have not even written." This always makes a "big hit"; and then, when some confederate in the audience who has been paid to lose some valuable at some definite place, receives an answer to his query telling him where it can be found, and a committee goes out and finds it, the reputation of the performer is made and the performance is well attended after that.

It would surprise many to know how many really intelligent persons take these performances seriously. A lady has recently given a "two weeks stand" with this performance in Omaha, and has packed her hall regularly. An attorney in my block had his "house question" read and is very enthusiastic. He assures

me that his question never left his hands at all; but I know that it did, for I am well acquainted with the lady's manager, and know her "system" well. The receiver which she wears is held in position just above her ear until the manager blindfolds her. He then secretly draws it down over the ear together with the hair covering it, and binds it there. When he takes off the bandage it is drawn back in place by some concealed elastic.

VEST TURNING.

SOMETIMES when a medium is left in a cabinet with his hands tied together and the knots sealed, his vest will be found to be turned wrong side out under his coat when the manifestations are over.

Also, when a subject is left in a cabinet with a medium and his hands are tied behind him and sealed, the subject's vest is sometimes turned wrong side out under his coat, neither coat or vest being removed.

This at first sight seems impossible; but it is as simple as "working" a toy puzzle. I will first explain how to turn a gentleman's vest when his hands are tied behind him.

A gentleman should be selected, if possible, who is not too heavily built, one whose coat and vest are not made of too heavy material, and that fit loosely; as with these the work can be done more rapidly. After the subject's hands are tied together behind him, the medium steps behind the subject, and, taking his coat by the collar, draws it down and from over his shoulders so that it is entirely removed from his body, and is merely supported by his two arms which pass through the two sleeves. Next the vest is brought into the same position as the coat. In this position the coat is under the vest, both are merely on the subject's arms behind him, and both have their wrong sides uppermost.

Now, before the vest can be turned, it must first be separated from the coat and drawn upon one arm and the coat must be drawn upon the other arm. To do this, it is necessary to pass the coat entirely through one arm-hole of the vest.

I usually pass the coat entirely through the right arm-hole of the vest. The right sleeve of the coat is drawn through first, then the body of the coat, and after this the left sleeve of the coat. As this is done, it is necessary to move the vest over the coat to the left. This brings the vest on the subject's left arm and it is now ready for turning.

Al that is necessary in turning the vest is to reach the hand through the left arm-hole and grasp the lower right front corner of the vest and pull it up through the left arm-hole, drawing it as far as can be done. Next, again reach the hand through the left arm-hole of the vest and this time grasp the left front corner at the bottom and draw it up through the left arm-hole as far as possible. The entire vest has now passed through its left arm-hole and the vest is turned.

Next comes the task of replacing the vest. It must first be placed in its original position over the coat, so it is necessary to now pass the coat through the right arm-hole of the vest. The moves are just the reverse of the moves that were used when it was passed through in the first place. As soon as the vest is over the coat on the arms it can be drawn up over the subject's shoulders into position as when worn. It is now wrong side out, and the coat is next drawn up over the shoulders of the subject into its usual position over the vest as when worn. The vest is now under the coat, and both in their natural positions, except that the vest is wrong side out.

If any one will place a vest without any coat upon a common broom-stick, and reach through either arm-hole and draw through first the far lower front corner of the vest, and then the near lower front corner, the vest can be turned wrong side out in this manner, and the reader will immediately see the possibility of the trick; and that it is necessary to first get the vest upon one arm by itself in order to do the turning.

To turn one's own vest, the hands must be tied in front of one, and with sufficient length of string to allow some eight inches of play. Now it is only necessary to "shed" the coat and vest over the head upon the arms in front of one, when the same maneuvers can be gone through as in the other case. After turning and replacing the vest over the coat, the medium can give the coat and vest a toss over his head and slip into position again with them on his person; but the vest is now wrong side out.

AN IMPROVED BILLET TEST.

THERE is an improvement on the old-time trick known as "Washington Irving Bishop's Sealed Letter Reading." I will give a description of how it is worked. The operator requests each spectator to write on a slip of paper given him a question which he desires to have answered; and to fold the same a certain number of times with the writing inside.

The operator now gathers up these billets on a tray and places them on a table in full view of the company. However, just before gathering up the billets, the operator conceals a folded blank billet between the ends of his first and second fingers; and while gathering up the billets, he leaves this blank on the tray with the others, and secretly purloins a genuine billet in its place. The blank is folded somewhat differently from the others so that the performer can tell at a glance which one it is.

The performer now retires to another room to bring a glass of water before beginning this "trying work," and while out he opens and reads the question. He quickly memorizes it, folds it again, secretes it between the ends of his fingers, and returns to the parlor.

He now faces the spectators, standing behind the table on which are the billets. He next takes up a

genuine billet from the tray, and pressing it against his forehead, proceeds to *answer the question but not to read it.* Let us suppose the question is. "Will I take a trip to Chicago next summer?" The operator instead of reading this question, proceeds something like this: "I get an impression of an answer which seems to be, 'Yes, if walking is good.' Now that sounds queer, doesn't it? I wonder what kind of a question that can be?" Suiting the action to the word he opens the billet and reads the question.

Let us suppose this second question to be, "When will I be married?" The operator, instead of reading it aloud, repeats the first question which he secretly read when outside getting water. He remarks, "Will I take a trip to Chicago this summer?" audibly, as if *it* were on the billet, and then folds the latter again. Meanwhile he has secretly memorized the second question.

When folded, he apparently takes the billet out of his left hand with his right fingers, and hands it to the writer. In reality he palms the one just folded, and taking out the first billet, he presents it to its writer. The spectators do not know that he now has another billet in his left palm. He next picks up another billet with his right hand, and placing it to his head, says, "I get an answer which sounds like, 'It looks a long way off.' Now that is a queer answer, isn't it? I wonder what that question is." He again opens the billet, reading and memorizing the third question secretly, and at the same time pronouncing verbally the second question which was, "When will I be married?" He now folds the third question, and when appearing to take it out of his left hand with the fingers of his right, again takes out the palmed

duplicate, presenting it to its writer. He proceeds in this manner, being always one billet behind in his reading, and leaves the blank billet until the last.

When he comes to this blank he does not open it at all, but reads and answers it while pressing it against his forehead. He now "shifts" it in his palm, and returns the last genuine billet to its writer, retaining the blank concealed in his palm. I believe the credit for this improved method belongs to Mr. Edward Benedict.

APPENDIX.

CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN INQUIRERS AND MR. ABBOTT THROUGH THE COLUMNS OF "THE OPEN COURT."

MEDIUMISTIC SEANCES.

Letter to Mr. Abbott.

DEAR SIR:

I had the pleasure, some time ago, of reading an article of yours in *The Open Court* on "Mediumistic Phenomena." Of the following which I submit to you, I feel that I will be satisfied with the explanations you may make. I am not a spiritualist, but while visiting some friends in Kansas City, recently, who *are* spiritualists, I was invited to attend a "trumpet" seance given at a private house. Out of curiosity I attended. The seance was held in an unfurnished back room up stairs. All the room contained was a row of chairs around the wall. In the center on the floor was a small rug on which stood a large trumpet and some flowers. A lady clairvoyant from Topeka conducted the seance. In the circle were believers and unbelievers. We were seated around the room with feet touching. Lights were put out and we were in black darkness. They said the medium was controlled by an Irish spirit. Presently the Irish spirit spoke through the trumpet giving us a welcome greeting. After this each one in turn was spoken to by supposed dead relatives.

When it came to my turn, a sister who has been dead

many years spoke her name and talked to me. (No one in the circle knew anything about me except a sister-in-law who was with me.) I had not been thinking of this sister, but of others whom it might be possible would appear, and my sister-in-law said, *she* had not. I have no faith in it all, but would like your explanation, if you will be kind enough to favor me with it. I would like you to explain another thing. My sister-in-law told me she had seen her husband, who died about a year ago. She said she saw him as plainly as she ever did in life; that he came through the front door, went right up to her, spoke a few words and disappeared. This she declares to be true.

I will tell you of another instance. A daughter of the sister-in-law of whom I have spoken, when quite a little girl, saw my mother who had died some time before. She went up-stairs and in one of the rooms she saw my mother sitting in a rocking-chair. She ran screaming down-stairs, almost frightened to death. At another time she saw her standing by the stove in the room. This all seems very strange to me, but I have no reason to doubt their word.

Very respectfully,

Reply.

DEAR MADAM:

Your letter is received. It is hard to explain something some one else has seen; when, to do so correctly, one should have been present to personally observe all the little details, for trickery.

I will say that no one would be more happy than I were it possible to prove personal immortality in this manner; yet I do not wish to be deceived and to believe that which is not true. Therefore, I always look

for fraud or trickery in manifestations of this nature. I will further add that in all my life I have been looking for things of this kind, and have never yet been able to see one little thing that was genuine. Always, when I have been present, I have found a trick.

I have attended but one "Trumpet Seance," which was some eight or ten years ago in Lincoln, Nebraska. This was given at the home of a lady where the medium stopped; and as the family was poor, the lady was glad to have the medium's seances a success, so that she might receive the proper financial remuneration for his board.

The room was bare of furniture, and the guests were seated around the room on chairs holding each other's hands. The medium sat in this circle, and the trumpet stood in the center of the circle.

As soon as the lights were out the trumpet apparently floated into the air, and from its mouth we were greeted by an "Irish Spirit." This spirit attempted to be a comedian; but his brogue was unnatural, and his wit was so poor that I felt ashamed for the medium. It, however, seemed to satisfy the majority of the sitters, who appeared to be possessed of only very ordinary mental powers.

Tests were given to various persons present; but as no one present knew anything about me, I, of course, received no test.

I was satisfied that the medium held the trumpet to his mouth and did the talking. I knew that by pointing it rapidly in different directions, the voice would appear to come from the various positions occupied by the bell of the trumpet; and the spirit would thus appear to change places rapidly over our heads.

I felt certain that the persons sitting on each side

of the medium were his confederates, and that they held the hands of the ones next to them; but, of course, released the medium's hands so that he could handle the trumpet.

I was inclined to think that there were a goodly number of confederates in the circle, who probably shared in the proceeds of the seance; for I found the persons next to me would not let my hands loose for even an instant. I felt sure that confederates took possession of all strangers, and saw to it that their hands were not released; and thus they prevented accidents.

To me it seemed merely a very cheap and poor trick. I have never fancied any trick where the lights had to be put out. It requires too little skill to perform such tricks. I have always felt that if the spirits of the departed could return to us mortals, they would not require a tin horn to talk through, and the entire absence of light-waves in the room. To me this all savors too much of charlatanism, and that of the cheapest kind.

Some time after I attended this seance, I had some financial dealings with the daughter of the lady at whose home this medium had boarded. I told the daughter what I had concluded in regard to the matter, and she confessed that I was right in every particular. I thus verified all my suspicions in the case. This lady told me that there was money in this business and that she intended going into the profession. This she did soon thereafter, advertising as a clairvoyant and trance medium. I understand that she has become quite successful in the business.

There is one statement in your letter that is entitled to considerable more consideration than ordinary work

of this kind. This is the statement of the appearance of your dead sister's voice, when no one in the room knew of this sister except your sister-in-law who was with you. In regard to this I cannot say positively how the medium obtained the necessary information in your particular case; but I know the methods employed in securing such information by nearly all the first-class professional mediums who are traveling over the country.

Each medium keeps a record of all information obtained in a book for that purpose. All questions asked by any persons at any of the seances, are catalogued alphabetically in this book under the names of the persons asking them. Also the medium catalogues alphabetically any other information he may be able to obtain about any of the persons who attend spiritualist meetings. When visiting with the members and gossiping the medium quietly "pumps" each person about other members. As soon as the medium is alone all this information is catalogued in this book. Children are questioned adroitly about their own relatives, and about those of their neighbors and friends; and all this is added to the store of information.

Graveyards are visited and the secrets of the tombs catalogued. Also, the old files of the daily papers are searched for information relating to deaths and marriages; and, by all these ways, in time the book contains many tests of value to a medium. When this medium leaves town, the book (or a copy) is passed on to the next medium, who enters town equipped with all the information previously gathered. Professional mediums are generally pretty well known to each other, although for obvious reasons they pretend not to be.

Some of the better grade of mediums have an advance person, who, in the guise of an agent of some kind, visits the proper families. During the time he is in each home, he asks for a drink of water; and while the lady is getting it, he studies the family Bible and the album, or questions the children about such matters as will be of use to the medium who will soon follow. In all of these manners much information is secured in the course of time. It is not unusual for a good medium to enter town with over a hundred good tests for the citizens there.

In addition to the above there are certain members of each spiritualistic community who make a business of acting as confederates for mediums. They usually receive pay for their services. You would be surprised were you once behind the scenes, and a performer, to know how many apparently respectable persons at a seance are secretly confederates of the medium. These confederates make it their business to learn all they can of the family history of their neighbors, or of any friends or relatives visiting their neighbors; which information is at once conveyed to the medium, and the same properly catalogued.

You would think that respectable persons would not take part in fraud in such matters; but they get into it gradually, and really come to enjoy it. I am personally acquainted with a certain sleight-of-hand performer in this city, who has for years served as a confederate for most of the mediums visiting this place. He tells me that he enjoyed it at first, but being so well versed in tricks, his services were of so much value to mediums that they were after him to help them out continually. This required so much of his

time that he has of late given up this work and now refuses to attend seances at all.

In addition to these methods of obtaining information, most members are so anxious to see some one converted, that what information they possess is not guarded from the medium very closely. In fact, they seem in many cases to be trying to help the medium out. They are all so anxious to see their medium succeed; and are very quick to feel proud of him, when such tests are given.

There can be little doubt but that the information about your dead sister was obtained in some of these manners from your sister-in-law or her family, especially if she has children. No doubt some confederate has heard her mention your dead sister's name, in some time past. This may have escaped your relative's memory. Or, if she is a believer, she has undoubtedly attended other seances, and asked questions, usually written ones. If so, the mediums may have been in possession of the proper information for some considerable time.

I feel certain that this information was gained in some such manner; and while you may doubt this explanation, I feel that were I to go there and begin operating as a medium, the confederates would soon make themselves known to me; and that I could quickly learn where the medium got her information in your case.

You thought you were a stranger; but you may rest assured that you were known as soon as you entered the room, and that a test was planned for you that would make a sensation. And they probably hoped also to make a convert.

It is probable that your dead sister bore the same

relation to your sister-in-law that you do. If this be the case, and she being dead, your sister-in-law would have been almost certain at some meeting some time, to have asked some question, which, within its lines, conveyed the information that there was such a person then dead.

It is a great advantage to mediums to be able to give tests of this character; the effect being so great on those present and so convincing, it adds greatly to the medium's reputation, as well as to his finances, to be able to give such tests. As a result, a medium is always on the lookout for such information; and makes securing it his principal employment when not engaged at the regular work. You may rest assured that a medium will not hesitate to use such information in the manner you have outlined, no matter how he may have come into possession of it.

Frequently, when such tests are given, the ones receiving them are so taken by surprise and so greatly impressed, owing to their affection for the departed and their longing to feel that the departed still exists as an individual or unit, that they imagine afterwards that they noticed a resemblance in the voice, to that of their dear one. I do not know whether or not you noticed such a resemblance to your sister's voice.

There are dealers who sell to mediums secrets which give them instructions for performing their work. I have bought many such secrets myself, paying a large price for them; and I can assure you that I know what I am talking about in this instance.

The fact that dealers in such secrets can follow the business successfully, is proof that they receive sufficient patronage to support it, and this patronage comes almost entirely from professional mediums.

I could recall to you many instances of fraudulent mediums, had I time and space to do so. I hope at a future time to publish in *The Open Court* another article, describing the work of some of the best mediums. If ever you come to Omaha, I should be pleased to make your acquaintance; and would personally illustrate to you what may be accomplished by trickery in this field.

As to the apparitions which your sister-in-law and her daughter claim to have seen, there are but three solutions possible.

First: There is the solution that the statement is not true; but as you assure me you have every confidence in their truth, I will not consider this solution.

Second and Third: We have the solutions either that they did see what they claim to have seen objectively; or that they imagine that they did, but really saw it subjectively. There is no professional medium at work here, and consequently no trickery to explain.

If the doctrine of scientific men (as for instance set forth in Dr. Carus's *Soul of Man*) be correct, each object viewed throughout life leaves an impression in our brain-structures. When such object is first viewed, the form of the outside motions of the ether (light-waves) is transferred to the proper position within the brain by the mechanism of the nervous system. Here this produces a commotion and as a result this commotion leaves a "trace" which is preserved in the brain structure.

When such trace is being formed, the subject experiences subjectively a sensation which he identifies with the outside object producing it. The fact is the formal features of the outside object have been transferred to, or reproduced in, the sensation. When next

the same object is viewed, the same nerve energy passes along the same channels into the same trace and stimulates or excites it again as was done in the first instance. During this process the subject again experiences the same sensation as was experienced in the first instance. The subject recognizes the sensation to be the same as the first one experienced, and naturally attributes it to the same outside cause.

If, now, this particular trace in the brain structure be artificially excited or stimulated by any means, the subject will experience the original sensation, and will perceive the object that originally formed such a trace. The perception will be just as real to the subject as was the original perception, or as it would be if the exciting cause were the original object outside. The original object could not produce a perception more real to the subject, because it could only excite or stimulate the same trace in the same manner; and the subject would have no means to distinguish between two identical impressions, although produced by different causes.

It is due to such local excitements and stimulations that we see objects in our sleep, just as real as if they existed objectively in the positions in which our perceptions picture them.

Now, if, from any cause, a highly-strung, sensitive, or nervous person, stimulate or excite any particular trace in the brain-structure, he will see subjectively but as perfectly real, the original object that formed this trace. Such person is most liable to excite in this way that portion of the brain wherein is the image of some dear one on whom the mind has been dwelling too intently; and which has thus been overworked, so

that the mechanism of this particular part of the sentient substance has been weakened and impaired.

If we conclude that your relatives really saw these dead persons objectively, this can only mean that these dead persons were really present in this room. Now, if they were clothed as in life, we must also conclude that the clothing of persons as well as their spiritual part is immortal. As Ingersoll said, we must conclude that clothing has ghosts. But if we accept the theory of a mere subjective apparition or illusion, caused by a local excitement in the brain structures, we should naturally expect the images to be clothed as in life.

The question is, which do you regard as most probable: that your relatives really saw the spiritual part of two beings objectively—that is, the part that is not material, and that it had this material appearance—or that they saw a mere subjective apparition within their own brains? I should prefer the subjective theory.

I remain, dear madam, yours for truth,

DAVID P. ABBOTT.

Second Letter of Mr. Abbott.

DEAR MADAM:

Since writing my former letter, it has been my good fortune to come into possession of a little information that might interest you; accordingly, I write you this second letter.

There recently arrived in Omaha two "Celebrated Occultists." They hired a hall and some parlors, and began a series of public meetings, seances, and private readings. They had considerable difficulty in securing rooms as the property owners were afraid of the reputation their property might acquire of being "haunted." Finally the papers came out with quite a sympathetic

article in their behalf, with the result that they have started off very prosperously. There is an attendance of three or four hundred persons at their Sunday night meetings, while they have from thirty to forty at the parlor seances; and during the day they are continually employed giving private readings.

I called on these mediums, and was surprised to find that the principal medium was the lady I formerly knew in Lincoln, Nebraska, to whom I referred in my former letter. She has been regularly in the profession for the past nine or ten years, has a good acquaintance with all the professional mediums, and comes direct from Kansas City, Missouri.

She recognized me at once, and seems to intend making a convert of me. She has evidently forgotten the little confession she made to me just before entering the profession.

I had several little confidential visits with her manager, and incidentally mentioned to him the name of a certain dealer in secrets for the use of mediums, stating that I was familiar with most of the effects of the kind, and was a performer of them. This seemed to "break the ice," and he was ready enough to give me any information he possessed about other mediums, at the same time claiming that his medium was, of course, genuine.

I find that the lady who gave the seance you wrote me about is an acquaintance of theirs. They know her well, and her name is Miss ——.

You will know if this be right and if my information be correct. He assured me that her mediumship is fraudulent, and informed me that she has an artificial hand which she frequently uses in her "Trumpet Seances." This hand is attached to the person and can

be bent into different positions. When she sits with the subject next to her, she takes hold of the subject's two hands with her left hand, and, incidentally, does not let loose of them during the seance. This is done after the lights are out. Then she, with her remaining hand, bends down the artificial hand (which has been concealed in her clothing), so that its fingers clasp the arm of the sitter. The subject can then inform the spectators at all times that the medium has both hands on his person. Meanwhile, the medium's right hand is free to grasp the light aluminum trumpet, and point it into different positions while she talks through it. She also, on occasions, uses a telescopic reaching-rod which can be carried in the pocket, but when extended it reaches a length of several feet, and enables her to float the trumpet on its end around the room over the heads of the spectators, giving them an occasional "bump," while her voice can be heard in the position where she sits. This is done in the same manner that guitars and other instruments (frequently self-playing) are sometimes floated over the heads of a circle of sitters by many mediums. This is done while they apparently hold the hands of one of the spectators at their side of the circle.

I asked the manager how he considered that the medium got her information about your dead sister. He replied that she undoubtedly got it from what is known to certain members of the profession as the "Blue Book." This is the book I referred to before in which the tests are alphabetically catalogued for each town. He said that his medium never uses the "Blue Book" as her mediumship is genuine; but, however, he has in his possession a similar book of Kansas City. I asked if I could find the information about

your dead sister in his book; but he said that possibly he did not have that particular item, although there could be no doubt but that it was contained in the book of the lady or of the noted medium Mr. ——, as these two have worked together to a considerable extent.

There can be no doubt but that all the questions that your relative ever asked the mediums in any of the Kansas City meetings, have been preserved and catalogued; and thus the information about your dead sister may have been obtained for some considerable time. Although the medium was a stranger to you, it is quite certain that you were known to the medium when the seance began. This is part of their business, and the knowledge of a suitable number of "tests" is a medium's stock in trade.

I remain, dear madam, very truly yours,

DAVID P. ABBOTT.

Inquirer's Reply to Mr. Abbott.

DEAR SIR:

Your communication which I have just received deserves an early reply.

The name of the medium who held the seance was ——, the same as you mentioned. I was introduced to her but I never heard her given name. Of course, she must be the same one. I saw her and Mr. —— at a Sunday evening meeting at their hall, so you are on the right track.*

* Since the above correspondence was first published, I have journeyed to Kansas City, Mo., and had a sitting with the medium herein referred to. I found her performance to be a simple fraud.

After the seance I privately complimented her on her power to modulate her voice, informed her I was a performer, and

I do not see how any one can practice so much fraud in such serious matters.

Thanking you for your kindness,

I am very respectfully,

A PUZZLING CASE.

Dr. Burgess to The Open Court.

One would hardly expect any proof of the future life to reach his ear in the dark through an aluminum horn. But if it was not what it purported to be, the puzzle is to know what else it could have been. Like your valued contributor, Mr. Abbott, I have usually had little trouble in arriving at a solution of such puzzles. But this one stumps me, and I should be glad to have him help me out, if he will kindly do so. For I am satisfied that the "spirit" in this exceptional case did not inhabit the medium's body, and Mr. Abbott seems as anxious as I am to be convinced that the spirits of departed friends may really live without any bodies whatever. It is a plain proposition that there can be no life without wear and tear upon the means of its production. To believe in the future life, therefore, one must confess that he believes in something that utterly passes his comprehension. But we not

offered to give her some instruction if she should so desire. She, seeing my knowledge of the profession, made no claim to genuineness after this.

She said that if I could give her any instruction that would aid her in making a living, that she would be very grateful; for she said that she had an invalid husband somewhere in Colorado whom she had to support. I thereupon taught her a slate trick which she accepted gratefully, and I left her practicing it. I may have done wrong in increasing her powers of deception, but at least I satisfied myself as to her honesty.—D. P. A.

only believe in many uncomprehended things but know them to be true. Just as we will believe in this trumpet affair—that it was done by spirit agency—unless some one can point out how else it could be done. There will be doubting Thomases in any event; but the writer, with seventy-five years of life behind him, cannot help feeling that he will soon be in a position to know the truth of the matter—or else to be lost in the depths of utter knownothingness.

The puzzling occurrence alluded to took place at a trumpet seance which, for precautionary reasons, was held at my own house; and the medium and members of my own household were the only persons present. None of those present except myself had ever seen the medium before, and I had simply met her once to make arrangements for her coming. She was an intelligent, middle-aged woman of somewhat reserved but agreeable manners, and she came alone to the seance bringing no paraphernalia with her except the trumpet. She never to my knowledge advertised herself or gave public seances.

She readily consented to be bound to her chair in such a way as to effectually prevent any movement of her hands or body, and the tapes she was bound with were finally tacked to the floor so that the chair itself could not be moved without detection. In fact, in the stillness of the room it would have been impossible for any person to move about without attracting attention. Having taken these precautions, it seemed a foregone conclusion that any trickery or collusion with confederates on the part of the medium was simply out of the question.

The trumpet occupied a position several feet in front of the medium, and after a tedious wait in the dark,

we were finally startled by hearing it move. Shortly afterward faint whispers were heard through it which soon became so strong as to be partly or wholly understood. And now jocularity gave place to intense interest, and the anomalous character of the proceedings was lost sight of as the names of friend after friend were feebly given. No one could help sympathizing with them in their heroic efforts to be heard and understood. And not all of these efforts were made through the trumpet. Clearly some of the whisperings were outside and independent of it.

Not much of details will be necessary to my present purpose. Suffice it to say that, one after another, the trumpet came close to every one of us, giving the names of departed friends and relations most of whom had never been within thousands of miles of San Francisco. But the marvel was how the trumpet could move about so rapidly and unerringly in the dark, caressing us gently on the hands, cheeks, top of the head and elsewhere, and occasionally dropping on the floor with a thud as though the force which sustained it was well nigh exhausted. Once, indeed, it fell near me with sufficient force to drive the two sections of it together so that I had to pull them apart again before the performance could be proceeded with. As a further illustration of the mysterious forces employed, raps, some of them loud and jarring, were occasionally heard upon the doors and walls of the room in various places, and once the tall doors of my bookcase were rapidly swung back and forth a number of times as if to make sure that it had attracted attention. No person in the room was in a position to have swung the doors or made the raps without leaving their seats, and thus attracting attention. Many

remarkable things were said by the trumpet voices, but I pass them by as merely cumulative evidence.

The puzzle is to account for the remarkable doings of the trumpet which were as much or more mystifying than its sayings.

It is needless to add that when the lights were turned on the medium was found securely bound in her place as we had left her when the lights were turned out. O. O. BURGESS.

Mr. Abbott's Reply.

I have read the communication of Doctor Burgess, and it is evident that he is quite critical, and that this case is worthy of attention. I have attended trumpet seances quite recently, also rope- and tape-tying seances, but have not attended a seance where the two were combined.

I take it for granted that the persons present were all so nearly related to the Doctor that the possibility of confederates being employed was entirely out of the question.

As the Doctor says, I should be glad to prove personal immortality in any manner if possible to do so, yet I should want to be quite certain that there was no resort to trickery in the case. I have investigated so many cases and found so much fraud that naturally I always expect to find it.

It would be no reflection on the Doctor, if he were deceived by a clever trick, for the most intelligent are easily deceived by an art with which they are not familiar.

It would be impossible for me to explain the exact method this medium used, unless I could see her work. I can only describe work of a similar kind with which

I am familiar, and explain how it is done. I am aware that this does not prove the present case to have been clever trickery; yet if this work is duplicated frequently by trickery, it is strong evidence that the medium resorted to the same means in this case.

In regard to rope- and tape-tying, I will not enter into a detailed explanation of the various tricks of the kind used by professional mediums and conjurors, as this would require altogether too much space. Suffice it to say that the Davenport Brothers originated the first rope-tying experiments. They were bound in the most thorough manner, and left in their cabinet; when the most marvelous manifestations would take place as soon as the curtains were drawn. It was supposed that spirits appeared in the cabinet through the occult powers of the Davenports, and performed these maneuvers in order to convince unbelieving mortals. It was many years before the secret of their original tie was discovered. I will refer the reader to the work, *The Spirit World Unmasked,* by Henry Ridgely Evans, for a full account of this.

Soon after the appearance of the Davenports, other mediums experimented and invented many different ties. Finally the conjurors took the subject up, and the secrets of such ties became common property. One has but to witness Kellar, the magician, on the stage using his best spirit tie, to realize the possibilities of this art. The committee tie his hands behind him very tightly; yet he will instantly bring either hand forward and exhibit it, place it behind himself, and turn his back; when his hands will be seen to be tied together as tightly as ever. The committee think that they tie his hands in their own way.

Yost & Company of Philadelphia, dealers in magical

apparatus, spiritualistic secrets, etc., advertise for sale the secrets of a tie which they call "Kellar's Best Tie."

It is doubtful if any rope-tying experiments ever performed were equal to that of the Davenports. Their work was surely the greatest mystery of the kind ever exhibited before the public. The following passages I quote in full from *The Spirit World Unmasked.*

"In the dark seance, flour was sometimes placed in the pinioned hands of the Davenports. On being released from their bonds, the flour was found undisturbed.

"This was considered a convincing test; for how could the brothers possibly manipulate the musical instruments with their hands full of flour. One day a wag substituted a handful of snuff for flour, and when the mediums were examined, the snuff had disappeared and flour taken its place. As will be understood, in the above test the Davenports emptied the flour from their hands into secret pockets, and at the proper moment took out cornucopias of flour and filled their hands again before securing themselves in the famous slip-knots.

"Among the exposés of the Brothers Davenport, Hermann the conjuror, gives the following in the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*: 'The Davenports, for thirteen years, in Europe and America, augmented the faith in Spiritualism. Unfortunately for the Davenports they appeared at Ithaca, New York, where is situated Cornell University. The students having a scientific trend of mind, provided themselves before attending the performance with pyrotechnic balls containing phosphorus, so made as to ignite suddenly with a bright light. During the dark seance when the Davenports were supposed to be bound hand and foot within

the closet and when guitars were apparently floating in the air, the students struck their lights, whereupon the spirits were found to be no other than the Davenports themselves, dodging about the stage brandishing guitars and playing tunes and waving at the same time tall poles surmounted by phosphorescent spook pictures.' "

Tape-tying was not originated until after rope-tying had become quite common. Annie Eva Fay used a tie called "The Cotton Bandage Test." She was seated on a stool which was placed against a wooden post, the latter being screwed tightly to the floor. Her wrists were bound tightly with cotton bandages, and the spectators were allowed to sew the knots thoroughly and place courtplaster over them. These bandages were tied tightly together behind her and fastened securely to the post, the knots being sealed. She bewildered a committee of English scientists, yet the secret of her tie is well known to conjurors at the present time.

The reader can find a full explanation of this tie in *Shaw's Magical Instructor,* or in the above-mentioned work by Mr. Evans from which I quote the following:

"One of Annie Eva's most convincing tests is the accordion which plays, after it has been bound fast with tapes and the tapes carefully sealed at every note, so as to prevent its being performed on in the regular manner. Her method of operating, though simple, is decidedly ingenious. She places a small tube in the valve-hole of the instrument, breathes and blows alternately into it, and then by fingering the keys, executes an air with excellent effect."

There is a celebrated medium in Kansas City who submits to a tie allowing the tapes sewed to the

carpet and corn meal is placed in his palms, where either it or other meal will be found after the performance. The manifestations are very convincing, yet recently a "spirit" was "grabbed" at one of his seances, and it proved to be the medium. This was written up in a daily paper there, as among those who grabbed him was a reporter.

I have an acquaintance, an ex-medium, who is quite expert at the tying tricks. He permits himself to be tied to his chair, yet he can instantly release, and replace himself in the ties. It is very instructive to watch him do this. There is no doubt but that a clever artist, in the art of rope- and tape-tying, can instantly release himself from almost any tie, and as quickly replace himself.

Such being the case, the fact that the medium was well tied in the Doctor's case can hardly be regarded as evidential. While this lady may not have done so, yet the probabilities are that she either escaped bodily from the ties, later replacing herself; or, that she secured the free use of her hands, so that she was enabled to perform the necessary maneuvers.

In case the lady escaped, she probably slipped around the circle handling the trumpet. She could thus drop the trumpet, recover it, whisper through it, etc. She could also make the raps with it, or with a "telescopic reaching rod." This latter is made of aluminum and when closed is but little larger than a lead pencil. Such appliances frequently extend six feet or more when fully drawn out. Being of aluminum they are very light. They have a hook on the end for hooking into the handle of the trumpet or other objects to be floated.

Sometimes the rod is made as a tube. The medium

can then insert a small mouthpiece and whisper or speak in the end of it. The voices will appear to be at whatever location the farther end of the tube occupies at this time. Sometimes this tube is inserted into the small end of the trumpet; and in such cases the trumpet can go very high in the room, even to the distant corners, and at the same time have a voice in it.

The reader will readily see that it would only be necessary for the medium to get the free use of her hands to manipulate this tube; and that she would be able to produce the raps with the end of it, swing the book-case doors, etc. As the tube is but little larger than a lead pencil when closed, it would be very easy for her to conceal such an appliance in her clothing, and as soon as her hands were free, proceed to conduct the manifestations.

It would not be necessary to leave her chair at all. The aluminum trumpets are very light, and for this reason they can be manipulated so that the touches on the sitter's heads are but little more than a caress, and it is very easy to manipulate them. They and the telescopic tubes can be purchased at the mediums' supply depots for a nominal sum.

The mediums who perform the most marvelous appearing work use the telescopic tubes very frequently. They do not all submit to being tied but quite frequently allow a sitter to hold their hands and feet. This is regarded as more convincing than if the medium be trusted beyond the sitter's reach, although he may be securely tied. In some of my articles I have described these holding tests, and the little deception by which the medium gains the free use of one arm with perfect safety.

In some cases the medium has a cage of iron tubing, or heavy wire large enough to cover his person. He is seated on a stool, and the cage is placed over him and securely screwed to the floor. Wax is then placed on the screw heads and sealed. The trumpet and other articles are placed near the cage and all of the manifestations take place when the lights are put out. He reaches the telescopic tube through the open-work of the cage and manipulates the articles.

I had an acquaintance with a medium who talked through a trumpet very often. She informed me that it requires considerable practice to talk well through a trumpet and let no sound escape near the mouth. It is an art of its own, as it were.

In some trumpet seances the lights are not put out but merely lowered until quite dim. The trumpet is laid on the floor in front of a cabinet, and voices issue from it. This usually occurs at the medium's own home. In such cases a concealed rubber tube lies under a loose rug; and when the trumpet is laid on the floor, this tube is secretly slipped into the small end of it. This tube runs into the cabinet where sits the medium, who inserts a mouthpiece and does the talking. In case of the medium hearing any sudden movement among the spectators, she quickly draws the tube into the cabinet, and conceals it in a pocket under her clothing.

In some cases the trumpet is laid on a chair in front of the cabinet and voices seem to issue from it. In this case there is no connection, but the medium in the cabinet has a second *telescopic* trumpet concealed under her clothing. When the curtain is dropped, she secures this trumpet and extends it, holding it near the curtain directly behind the other one. The sounds seem

to listeners outside to issue from the trumpet on the chair. This illusion is perfect, as the sounds have the tone of the trumpet, are in line behind the one in view, and the attention is directed to the trumpet on the chair just as a ventriloquist directs the attention of the spectators to his "figure."

I am digressing some, as these last methods could not have been used in the case the Doctor describes; but I believe the reader will pardon this digression, for the sake of this additional information. While I am dealing with the subject of trumpet seances, independent voices and dark seances, I shall take the liberty of describing some more work of this kind.

When a medium works in his own home, it is an easy matter to have speaking tubes whose openings are masked by picture moulding or other objects. These lead to the confederate who can, by a system of switches, send the voices into the room through any or all of the tubes at will. Such sound appears to come out of the very air and is difficult to locate. The origin of sound is difficult to locate anyway, and in such cases it is much more so.

At one time I heard a report of a case where independent voices followed a young girl out in the open air, and would on occasions converse with her. A certain party accompanied her to a well, and heard a voice speak out in the open air and address her. I do not know if such report were entirely true or not, as the opportunity to investigate the case was lost when I heard of it; but the idea occurred to me that it would be very easy to lay a small iron pipe under ground from a house, and have it terminate in a well near the surface. Its termination could easily be masked and a confederate in the house could send voices into the

top of the well at will. To one unacquainted with the secret, the voice would be extremely difficult to locate. Of this I am certain, from some experiments I once conducted, wherein I sent voices through some hundreds of feet of pipe which ran through a public hitching rack. Passers-by at the farther end would think themselves addressed by some one near them, and would look around in a very foolish manner in search of the speaker. We boys thought this great sport.

By this means, voices can be made to appear on a lawn in the open and will seem very mysterious to a small party. A small half-inch pipe can be laid under the ground near the surface and terminate under an urn, the roots of a tree, or even in the grass just below the level of the earth. It can be kept corked to prevent moisture from entering when not in use, and if the grass be a trifle long and the entrance of the tube a trifle below the surface of the ground, it would escape discovery. Of course it should only be used in the evening, in a dim light, *and then used but sparingly.* If two or three of these were located in different positions, and used sparingly, marvelous reports would go abroad of the mysterious voices heard in the open air by persons when there. After using, the cork should be re-inserted, a little moist earth placed over it, and the grass re-arranged and sprinkled.

I have a letter from a gentleman in Oldtown, Kentucky, who reports to me a seance where in the twilight he saw a trumpet move across the floor, out into the yard and up into the branches of the trees. I have the name of the medium who produced this manifestation. I do not know the means she used, but I know a means by which I have caused other articles to move across the floor. The secret was a thread pulled by

a concealed assistant, and which of course was invisible. If I were producing this manifestation, I should lay a strong black linen or silk thread on the floor, out of the door, on the lawn, and then up over a limb in a tree. From there I should lead it to a concealed assistant, who at the proper time should draw it in. I would have a soft copper-wire hook on the end of the thread, which I should secretly bend around the handle of the trumpet when laying it on the floor. When the trumpet should catch in the branches of the tree, the assistant could, by pulling on the thread, straighten out the wire hook, drawing it in, while the trumpet would drop to the ground. In case the trumpet had no handle, a small hole near the rim would attract no notice. The wire hook could be passed through this hole. I have no doubt that this was the means employed.

At one time I fitted up my home with a number of mechanical rappers under the floor in different positions. The threads that operated them all entered the room through some tiny holes in the floor back of a couch. My wife lay on this couch, apparently resting, and secretly manipulating the threads. I had most marvelous raps which would seem to move to any position asked for by the spectators, and would answer questions intelligently. The effect was very great, although I always afterwards informed my spectators that it was not spirits. I had one set of strings which caused a piano to voluntarily strike chords when I should desire. I have seen nervous ladies greatly frightened by these manifestations.

Mediums claim that spirits have a horror of light-waves and that certain manifestations can only occur in the dark. It is true that the *manipulating spirit has*

a horror of the light, and that certain manifestations can only take place in the darkness. If any one will have the courage at such times, to suddenly flash a pocket electric light on the trumpet, it will not be necessary for him to be a performer in order to discover the secret of the manifestations. There is not a reliable report in the country, where at any time any one suddenly flashed one of these lights on a trumpet seance, that he did not find the medium or the confederates at work producing the manifestations in a very simple manner. It seems to me that if in any instance such a phenomenon were genuine, there would some time be a case where these exposers would find something not a trick.

A lady medium from Lincoln, Nebraska, recently informed me, that the dark seance is rapidly losing prestige since the manufacture of the pocket electric light. She said that these were being used on the trumpet mediums all over the country with disastrous results, and that the profession would soon have to drift into other channels of trickery. She also told me of a medium who uses his chandelier to bring voices secretly into his room; and that he hangs the trumpet on the chandelier and the voices appear to issue from it, while in reality they issue from a number of tiny holes in different parts of the chandelier.

I look at the question of spirit communion somewhat in this manner: We all have a spirit while we live. This spirit cannot perform a physical miracle. For it to talk, nature has found it necessary to develop vocal organs. Without these no living spirit can talk. To move objects, physical contact and force are necessary. Without these, no living spirit can move objects. Why should any disembodied spirit, (if such exist), be able

to execute any act which it could not execute if in the body; or, in other words, why should it be able to perform a miracle?

The theory of certain psychic researchers whom I know seems to be something like this: Spirits of the dead can only manifest themselves through the organism of some person fitted for their control. Such organism is what they term a medium; and they are very doubtful about any physical manifestations being genuine.

As to the information which the voices gave the Doctor, I am not in a position to judge; for I do not know what opportunity the medium may have had secretly to learn the history of those present. However, many tricks are used successfully, even in this feature of the work. DAVID P. ABBOTT.

SPIRIT PORTRAITURE.

Mr. Bennett to The Open Court.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE OPEN COURT:

I am deeply interested in the articles by Mr. Abbott about spirit mediums, because I have been investigating in that line myself, and am now writing to ask you to have Mr. Abbott explain a performance that is done in Chicago. A man in this city went to a Mr. B., a trumpet and also clairvoyant medium of Chicago, (he has been here and is one that I have criticized), and in a seance his mother's spirit urged him to get her portrait taken, as she was anxious for him to know how she looked now. The medium told the man of a lady in Chicago that could take spirit portraits, and he called on her. He says he wrote on a sheet torn from a new tablet that he carried with him asking his mother

if she would come and sit for her portrait. This sheet he folded, and with two other blank ones torn from the same tablet, put into an envelope and held it under a book on the table. He had done all this by instructions from the lady, but she sat all the time clear across the room from him. She talked several minutes on other topics, then told him his message was ready. On opening the envelope the two blank sheets were written full, and *with ink*. His mother consented to sit. So the medium brought out a canvas about 18 by 30 inches stretched on a frame, and hung this on the wall near the man and in front of him. Then the medium retired across the room. Soon colors began to develop on the canvas, and he says in just twenty minutes by his watch the portrait was finished, all the colors developing from a clean, white canvas before his eyes, and no other person near. When he first touched it the paint, or what not, was still green and he blurred it. So he had to leave it a few days to dry before having it sent home. When it arrived it so pleased him that he sent the medium's price, $40.00. He says it does not resemble his mother when she died, (an old lady), but thinks it resembles her when she was about 35, and she assures him that it looks like her as she is now.

I have seen the picture, and should call it an oil painting of a very good looking woman of about 35.

The medium who encouraged this man had met him in this city, and also twice in Chicago at the medium's home or office, and of course he posted the artist medium by telephone or otherwise as to the man's name, his mother's name and other matters. I think Mr. Abbott has already explained how the writing is done in the envelope. But how do they develop what ap-

pears to be an oil painting from a clean canves right before the purchaser's eyes? There is another portrait in this vicinity executed by the same Chicago medium in the same way but I have not seen that. But I am told it is a fine oil painting. Now I wish you would have Mr. Abbott explain this portrait painting, and expose these frauds that are being perpetrated on innocent people in your big city.

C. W. BENNETT.

COLDWATER, MICH.

Mr. Abbott to The Open Court.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE OPEN COURT:

Your letter enclosing one from Mr. Bennett came duly to hand. I think I know the name of the medium or mediums to whom he refers, as I have heard of their work from other sources. I may be mistaken as to this, as there are possibly others producing spirit portraits; but at least I have heard of only one "firm" doing this style of work.

Now I have never witnessed the production of one of their paintings, and to do so would be quite expensive; so I could hardly tell the exact means they use. However, I am familiar with some secrets which are doubtless the same, or about the same, as those that they employ.

I will first give a short account of the evolution of the "art" of producing spirit portraits. Like all good tricks, the secrets have been developed by a process of experiment and gradual evolution.

At the beginning when mediums were able secretly to secure pictures of the departed friends of some of their subjects, they would first secretly prepare the pictures and then produce them at a seance with very

striking effect. At this time a cabinet was used in the production of the pictures. The medium would allow the cabinet to be very thoroughly examined; and, if a lady, would also allow a committee of ladies to examine her clothing. Her attendant would then hand her a blank canvas fastened onto a frame.

The medium would now exhibit this canvas to each spectator at close range, showing both sides of it, and would remind the audience that there were no appliances in the cabinet or in her clothing. She would then retire to the cabinet for a few moments, after which she would come forth with the canvas still on its frame, which could have been and frequently was marked; but on this canvas was now a portrait of the "dear one" of one of the spectators. This portrait was yet hardly dry.

It is needless to say that this always made a great impression with ardent believers. The secret was very simple. The painting was first prepared on canvas. This canvas was then placed over a clean canvas, and the two were tacked to a frame. The clean canvas underneath kept the paint from showing through, and from behind this appeared as an unpainted canvas. Next, the medium tacked a clean canvas over the picture and did it so neatly that no one could detect the deception. This was the canvas that she exhibited to the spectators.

Now, on entering the cabinet, she simply pulled off the top canvas, removed the few tacks that held it, and secreted the same in a pocket under her dress. As she had already had her clothing examined, she need not submit to a second examination afterwards. Now, under her clothing, around her waist, was a belt next to her skin, this had a tiny pocket in it con-

taining a small phial of poppy oil. This escaped detection on the examination, for the reason that the medium appeared rather "modest" and the committee did not make too close an examination of her underclothing. Now, after removing the top canvas she secured the poppy oil and rubbed it over the painting. Then, concealing the phial, she came forth from the cabinet with the painting still damp.

Some mediums merely covered the painting with a solution of zinc white and water. This effectually concealed the picture, if only exhibited from a short distance. This could be removed by the judicious use of a damp sponge.

After this certain mediums invented a way to put portraits on a slate, and then by adroit substitution, to introduce this prepared slate into a stack of examined ones; they could thus sometimes get for a sitter a portrait of a departed relative instead of a message, or they could produce both. Some mediums use a very clever system of substitution of canvases, and I have heard somewhere of a mechanical easel designed especially for substituting them.

Now there was quite a demand for spirit portraits that the subjects could see appear on the canvas before their very eyes. *Believers are never satisfied and are continually looking for stronger and stronger tests.* The mediums are thus ever forced along the road of improvement in their methods.

Mediums now began experimenting with chemicals, to discover those that could be put on a canvas and that would remain invisible until developed. A number of chemicals were found; and the pictures formed did not resemble those made with oil paints, for they

were really mere chemical stains. They thus appeared to be more "spiritual."

I will give the names of a few chemicals that have been used in this manner. If a canvas of unbleached muslin have a portrait painted on it with the solutions given below, it will appear to be unprepared, as the chemicals will be invisible when dry. If sprayed with a weak solution of tincture of iron, the picture gradually appears. Sulphocyanide of potassium is used for red, ferrocyanide of potassium for blue, and tannin for black.

If preferred the following solutions may be used: Sulphate of iron for blue, nitrate of bismuth for yellow, and sulphate of copper for brown. In this case spray with a solution of prussiate of potash.

Originally, when these were used, a canvas was first exhibited and shown to be apparently free from preparation. This canvas was then dampened and placed on an easel in front of a cabinet. A light was placed at such an angle back of the canvas as to enable the spectators to see through it. The other lights were then lowered, and the music started, while the medium entered the cabinet back of the canvas. Then through a tiny hole in the cabinet curtain, the medium, from behind, using an atomizer, secretly sprayed the canvas with the developing solution. The portrait gradually made its appearance before the spectator's eyes. The atomizer had to be kept screwed up tight, and the music covered the slight noise which it made.

A case is reported wherein a medium, after sitting for a time without results, proposed to hurry up the appearance of the portrait by making magnetic passes over the canvas. This he did; and at the same time

he secretly sprayed the canvas from an atomizer concealed in his sleeve.

Before giving my ideas of the methods employed by the Chicago mediums, I will quote an extract from a letter I have received from a gentleman in Tacoma, Washington. This gentleman has an uncle who obtained a portrait of his little girl who is dead. The passage reads as follows: "My uncle is certain that there was no fraud used in the production of the large wall portrait which he secured of his little girl, as he and other members of his family saw the picture gradually appear on the canvas, which was placed in a window. There was no possible chance of fraud, he avers. He has shown this picture, which is quite artistic, to many prominent persons, and before some local literary bodies. The portrait is a reproduction of a cabinet-size photograph which he had with him at the time, but to further mystify him there are some slight changes in the picture. Although he is very intelligent, he says that this picture was never made by mortal hands, or with paint and brush."

It is to be regretted that this description is so meagre of details. I should like to have known what opportunity there might have been for secretly photographing his picture or copying it; whether he had more than the one sitting or not; if the photograph were shown to the medium or left the sitter's hands at all; how soon after his arrival with the photograph he received the portrait; whether the portrait appears to be in oil paints, or is merely chemical stains, etc. It is, however, doubtful if one who was not familiar with the importance of these points would have noticed these things at all, to say nothing of remembering such apparently insignificant details.

In some of the advertising matter of the mediums to whom I refer, I have seen some statements the substance of which follows: They do not care to "pander to the caprice of carping skeptics"; they desire to give their services to honest investigators, and prefer to have an appointment made in advance either by telephone or otherwise when a sitting is desired; they desire to know, also, beforehand, what is the nature of the sitting required of them. All of this is perfectly proper for the convenience of the parties, but the latter part of it is certainly suggestive of preparation.

They also state that, originally, some dozen years ago, when they began developing this phase of mediumship, they had to produce the portraits in a closed cabinet, or in a dark box; but that of late they have become so *highly developed* that the portraits are produced in the daylight; that now the subject selects the canvas and the same is placed in the window with the top leaning against the window sash; the blind is then drawn down to the canvas top, and the *draperies* are arranged so as to let in no light except through the canvas; all other light is excluded from the room. Now, it is quite evident that the canvas might be sprayed from a concealed mechanism in the window casing. If so, the sitter could have no idea of what is employed, for under such conditions one could see through the canvas but faintly.

Let us suppose that in the window casing, concealed by the wood, are some tubes connected with a pressure tank of the developing chemical. Let us suppose that a number of tiny nipples are located along these tubes and almost penetrate the wood of the casing; that then there are some pin-holes in the wood over each nipple; that each nipple is set at the proper angle to spray the

canvas at the proper places. Now when a concealed confederate turns on the pressure, it is evident that the picture will gradually appear. Other mechanisms may be used. The lower part of the window casing, known as the sill, may have a revolving trap that revolves behind the canvas, bringing up into position a spraying mechanism; or more probably, that is merely pushed up out of the way, so as to allow the tiny nipples which are trained on the canvas like miniature guns, to begin operating.

It is also possible that the mediums dampen the canvas before the experiment, with a sponge saturated with the developer, under the pretext of rendering it transparent, or of causing the "spirit paints" to adhere. In such case a developer might be used that would act very slowly, and then no spraying mechanism would be required.

It would be easy for the artist to prepare several canvases all alike before the sitting, so as to give the sitter free choice of canvases. The prices charged, viz., forty dollars, would justify the expense.

Naturally, mediums following this work as a profession and doing nothing else, would do much experimenting, and would greatly perfect their methods. They would doubtless learn to use many chemicals, and could thus produce the beautiful tints in which the pictures are now made. It is even possible that no spraying mechanism is used at present, but that they have discovered *chemicals which develop under the daylight which enters at the window.* The last would be the ideal method. To learn just what chemicals they use, an analysis of the painted canvas would be required.

Now, in the aforesaid advertising matter, I find a

statement the substance of which is this: Spirits continue to develop on the "other side," therefore the portraits do not always look as the persons did in life; that when a perfect likeness is desired, it is well to bring a photograph for the sitter to look at during the sitting, and upon which to concentrate his psychic powers. This is to establish proper conditions so as to enable the "spirit artist" to make a good reproduction.

Now, suppose that when the sitter comes with a photograph, while he is holding it and looking at it, a secret "snap-shot" of it be taken; or that the artist (mortal) view it through a small telescope from some concealed position. It is evident that after a short time the canvases could be brought in for the sitter to select one, and the sitting could begin. It might be necessary to make a failure at first, and make a second trial for a portrait later, as such expedients are frequently resorted to in mediumistic work.

In case no photograph is brought, then the mediums doubtless adroitly get a good description of the departed, and the portrait looks "as the spirit does now in spirit life"; so that there is but a very faint resemblance. I know a medium who told me that he was personally acquainted with the "fine artist" who prepares these canvases. He told me the artist's name and said that he had talked with him frequently. The artist is of national fame, and could not afford to have his name known in connection with this work. Unfortunately, I neglected to write down the name, and have forgotten it.

In the aforesaid advertising matter, I saw some statement about leaving the portrait to be completed after the sitting. It will also be noticed in Mr. Ben-

nett's letter, that the portrait to which he refers was "green" or damp, and was left to dry and be called for later. How easy it would be, in such case for the artist to copy the picture in oil on another canvas, or even to go over the original canvas with a coat of oil paints. This may be done in some instances. It will be noticed that Mr. Bennett says the canvas was hung against the wall. A spraying mechanism could have been concealed in the wall as easily as in the window casing; or there might even be a sliding panel in the wall. In the case Mr. Bennett mentions, the fact that the coloring material was yet "green," would indicate the use of a spraying chemical.

The reader may rest assured that the coloring matter on the portraits was not created by any "spirit" especially for the occasion, but that it was in existence before the sitting, that it was applied to the canvas, not by a spirit, but by secret means, which are very simple and commonplace when understood. If one will but view such things without superstition, it will be much easier to realize that they are simply clever trickery.

DAVID P. ABBOTT.

OMAHA, NEB.

Mr. Bennett to Mr. Abbott.

DEAR SIR:

After writing to you the first time I heard of two other spirit pictures in this vicinity, and the weather moderating I have been able to go and see them. I tried to learn all the points you requested me to notice, and I am frank to say that, with these two there are several features your explanation to *The Open Court* will not explain. The mediums claim they do not know what the paint is, but they say a wet sponge

will wipe it all off, leaving the canvas white. If that is so(?) of course it cannot be oil. It will be tedious for me to tell you all the details, but that is the only way I can make it plain to you.

The picture I had seen when I first wrote you was owned by a Mr. M. in this city; a portrait of his mother, not as he knew her but *as she looks now,* and that left a margin, as did most of the other things, so that your "reply" would be sufficient. But now Mr. M. has a picture of a daughter that died at birth. It is not only a beautiful work of art, as I judge, but it is angelic in form and features. But the picture looks like a girl of fourteen, while the child was born little less than nine years ago. The mother sees this error, but says spirits develop faster.(?)

The child had come to M. in several sittings, I am not sure if with other mediums or not, (he and his wife and little son have all developed as rapping, writing and planchett mediums within the past year), but think it did. It told them they could get its picture. So he went to Chicago again this winter, taking a well-known business man with him. At the hotel M. took four leaves from a common note-sized tablet that lay on the office table, folded them and put them in an envelope with hotel card on the top corner, sealed it, put a one cent stamp over the seal, and then ran a pin through the corner so as to mark the sheets. I will say here that two of the sheets have no pinhole, and M. says he presumes he did not fold them exactly even, and the hole was made very near the corner edges and so missed two. He put the envelope in his pocket and the two men went to the mediums where, by their directions, he put the envelope on a slate that lay on the table, then put another slate over it, and held

them together about ten minutes, the mediums not being near, and conversing on other topics in the mean time. Then one told him his message was ready. He took the envelope and put it in his pocket, without opening, though the mediums protested, wanting to know themselves what was in it. But he said he was not going to open it until he got home, as his wife was skeptical, and if there was anything in it worth while he wanted her to see it.

M. then told them he wanted a picture of his dead daughter taken by the side of his living son, now about twelve years old. They told him they could not include the boy without having his photo or having him present; but the photo need not be shown but kept in his pocket—only so it was in the room. So they agreed on a less price for that picture, and later he is going with his son to have both painted together at a reduced rate. Now mark the frailties of human testimony: M. says his friend selected at random the canvas from a large pile lying in a corner of an adjoining room, all stretched on frames of different sizes, each person selecting the size he wants to pay for; and that his friend put the canvas on a window sill, and then they both sat down, and in ten minutes the picture was completed, the mediums not being near them. His friend tells me (separately) that M. selected the canvas himself and put it in the window. He did not say anything about the mediums, but when I asked him if they did not sit on each side of the picture, he at first said, "No," and then he said, "Perhaps they did!" Now in the other picture to be described later they sat on each side of the canvas, each holding it by one side, and the window shade was pulled down to the top of the canvas, "so as not to blind the eyes

of the observers." And this is the way they picture it out in their catalogue which illustrates and explains their methods and terms.

When M. told me about his mother's picture he said they hung it on the wall, and that caused you to ask me several questions. But now M. tells me they put it in the window, and they sat one on each side holding it. See how he varies.

In the former case they kept the picture a few days to dry, and that gave you an idea that they could repaint it. But in this case they immediately delivered it to M. and he brought it home. He had requested that a flower be included in the hair of the girl, and that her name that has been given her since she passed over, be on the picture. Neither were on it and he complained. They told him it would be all right when he got home; and sure enough when he unwrapped it at home two white spots were in the hair, (golden locks hanging in curls, the flower being just over the right forehead), and about two days afterwards as the mother was looking at it the name gradually developed, in capitals about a quarter inch tall, *Jesemine*. Note the spelling. When he arrived, M. was surprised to find his son lying on a couch, not well enough to go to school. He gave the envelope to the boy to open, and all the four sheets were written full on one side *with ink*. (I forgot to say that they put a small tin cover on top of the top slate with a little ink in it.) The first sheet was signed "Jesimine." (Two i's.) Among other things she said, "Do not worry about Ira's sickness, (the boy's name) he will have a short run of fever, but get well soon if you take good care of him." Now when M. left home the boy was well, and he did not know he was sick until his return—

hence he says the mediums could not have learned it from him by mind-reading. And he had not told them the boy's name. Next followed a longer letter from one signed "Fulton," who told him several things about his business and patents. M. has invented a drying kiln, and made several patented improvements, and not having sufficient money to do it all and manufacture, took in some partners in Cleveland, where it is manufactured. He is having some trouble with these partners and this Fulton gave advice about that. He says this Fulton (he believes it to be the steamboat man) has told him all he knew about his invention from first to all the improvements. He says he has never told the mediums about his business nor about this Fulton. A third letter was from his mother, but signed "Per E. D. G." as all her letters are, but he does not know himself who E. D. G. is. They say the girl has taken the name of the flower, Jasmine, but the mother noticed that it was spelled differently in the letter from the picture, and *neither* right if meant for that flower. There are only two spires of the flower in the picture, just two white leaflets pointing outwards from each other. But the picture is very handsome, and an ornament to the room, even though fictitious. The difficulties in my mind in this case that you do not explain are that the canvas is selected at random, so they could not prepare it in advance; they delivered it at once, so they did not have a chance to paint it afterwards; and the things told in the letter about the boy's sickness, etc., which M. says he kept in his pocket all the time.

The other case is a Mrs. B., whose son, sixteen years old, died last April from measles, followed by pneumonia. She is a Baptist and had no belief in spirits,

but was so grieved about her loss that some friends advised her to consult a medium, which she did. Among them was the one from Chicago, that I mentioned to you before, and who I believe is a "runner" for the artist mediums. Some one advised her to go and get his picture and *in one sitting the boy told her he would go with her so she could get an exact likeness.* She arrived in Chicago on Saturday and told them what she had come for. They told her there were so many ahead of her that if she did not have objections to come *next day, Sunday.* She consented, and then *they suggested that she ask for a letter from the boy,* and she tore two leaves from a blank tablet they had, and they gave her an envelope in which she placed them, and then she placed them between the two slates, and they had her put two large rubber bands around them, one each way. She asked why they did that, and they replied so that if she were a skeptic she could see that they did not do the work. On Sunday she went as agreed, but they were still having more that were ahead of her (she says), and after visiting some time she left. She assures me that she did not tell them anything about her boy, his name, description, etc., at any of these interviews. On Monday she went and they not only got the picture but also gave her another long letter, (I think six note sheets written on one side) the paper being taken from a tablet as before, and put into an envelope, sealed, put between two slates, etc., as before. I have seen both letters. The penmanship in each is the same, and very similar to that in M.'s letter signed "Fulton." In these letters he says, among other things, "Do not mourn because I did not see sister before I died. I immediately went and saw her after I passed out of

the body. And I am near you all and see you every day. I am also pursuing my studies just the same as when in school, only it is not so hard now for me to learn my lessons." Now, just before he died he asked to see his sister who was also dangerously sick in another room, but the doctor forbade their carrying her to him, and he died without seeing her. How did the mediums know of this incident? Again he says, "Goldie is past suffering now. She is here with me all the time; we are soul-mates now and very happy together." Now Goldie was a little girl sweetheart of his when the family lived in another state some years before. The day before the boy died the girl got burned, and after much suffering died in June; the boy died in April. The mother assures me that not even any of the neighbors knew of this girl friend, nor of her tragic death—much less could these mediums have known it. Again, "Do not worry over that money. Use it for something that will be useful to you, and remember it as a present from me." Now, for several days before his sickness he left school to work for a neighboring farmer, and the mother thinks that work helped to cause his death. So she has kept the money he earned in his pocket book just as he left it. She says none of the neighbors knew she was keeping it, much less the mediums. These are the most peculiar features of these letters.

When the picture was finished she told them she was sorry that he did not write his name on it, and immediately the name "Harry" appeared on his coat sleeve. Then she was sorry that she did not ask that some pin or jewel be put on his neck-tie, and immediately a little yellow crescent developed in the knot of his tie. She says the tie, collar and clothing are just

like what he wore when in best dress. She tells me that the picture is a good likeness of her boy, and that all the neighbors think so too. She carried to Chicago a photo of this boy with his sister and brother, a group of three, Harry being the oldest, but all taken when he was twelve; but she did not take that photo from her pocket, she says. I noticed that in that on the photo Harry had his hair parted on the left side, while in the spirit picture it is parted in the middle. His mother said that for the last four years he had practiced parting it in the middle. So the mediums did not imitate the photo she had with her, whether they saw it or not. Now "Harry" was the name that developed on the picture and it was the name signed on both the letters written before the picture was made. She is positive she did not tell his name.

I will not longer weary you, but do not see how I could describe what I have seen much briefer. To be more explicit in replying to your questions: The canvas is selected by the applicant, and so it does not seem apparent how they can be prepared in advance for each applicant, as in these cases one was for a child that died at birth, and the other a boy at sixteen. If the canvases were prepared with chemicals beforehand, the applicant might select one that was prepared for an old person, etc. The canvas is set in a window, the mediums sitting on each side, each holding to one side of it. The window shade is turned down to the top of the canvas. The canvases are not dampened before the sitting. How do these mediums find out names and conditions so as to make them appear in letters and on pictures, and tell such things as about the sweetheart Goldie?

These people here tell me that scientists and chem-

ists have tested those pictures, and analyzed the paints, and been unable to find what they are. The mediums of course tell them this;—they do not know it from chemists themselves. The mediums say they do not know what the paints are themselves. It is done by the spirits, of course, and how should they know what material the spirits use(?)!

I really hope you will succeed in exposing this feature of spiritism, and that I shall be able to give the results to my readers not far in the future. If I can in any way be of farther aid to you command me.

Yours for truth,

COLDWATER, MICH. C. W. BENNETT.

* * *

In a subsequent letter, in referring to a trumpet medium, Mr. Bennett says:

"I want to call your attention to the fact that it was the same B. of Chicago that I had mentioned as the one I believed was a "runner" for the portrait mediums. This helps to confirm my suspicions. This man has been here several times since that time M. met him, and had ample opportunities to get all the information he needed about M. to enable the mediums to make his two pictures. It was B. also that first suggested (by spirit talk, of course) to that woman to get a picture of her boy."

Second Letter from Mr. Abbott.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE OPEN COURT:

I am in receipt of this second letter from Mr. Bennet, and I can but say that it only confirms me more strongly in my opinion that my explanation is the correct one. This letter introduces some new features to be explained. One is the slate and billet test. An-

other is the means by which the mediums secured the secret information. These I will treat separately.

Now first in regard to the portraits. I am now quite certain that a spraying mechanism is used and that it is concealed in the window casing. Believers will acknowledge that the coloring matter is applied while the canvas is in the window. I agree with them. The difference is this, the believers think that it is created for the especial purpose and applied by an invisible, immaterial, spirit artist, who devotes most of his time to the business so as to enable some mediums to make a living, and also to convince more strongly than ever good believers. I think the coloring matter is manufactured by mortal man, and that a portion of it is applied to the canvas in an invisible spray while in the window. I think that part of it is applied beforehand by a mortal artist in secret, and that it is invisible until developed.

The portraits furnished Mr. M., who did not have pictures to be reproduced, do not resemble the spirits when in life. These canvases could be selected from the stock canvases, which are always on hand ready prepared. He would not have to wait for his sitting. The canvases from which he selected need not all have the same picture on them. Each one of the stock from which he selected could have on it an invisible portrait of a girl of about the right age, and it would make little difference which one he should select; for he could not tell, anyway, how his daughter would look when nine years old. Doubtless, the stock canvases contain portraits of girls of varying age, and the confederate in placing a number of them in the adjoining room, would naturally use some bearing portraits of girls of not quite the right age. This evi-

dently took place, and the gentleman happened to choose one of a girl of about fourteen years of age. This made little difference, for the credulity of believers always supplies a ready explanation for such variations. The same explanation will apply to the gentleman's selection of a canvas for the portrait of his mother.

In the lady's case, the portrait must resemble a boy who recently died, and must resemble him nearly enough to be recognized. In this case a picture must be taken to the medium's house with the sitter. Now notice that this lady is not given a sitting until her third visit. I am quite sure that the "special canvases" had to be prepared for her, and that the artist had not completed them when she made her second visit. Also notice, that when the portrait for the lady was finished, she expressed regret that her son's name was not on the picture; after which it appeared. Then she regretted that there was no pin in his tie, whereupon one immediately appeared. Notice also that in the case of the gentleman, he had requested that a flower appear in the hair of the girl, and that her name appear on the picture. He was disappointed that they were not there, and they also subsequently made their appearance. Thus in each case these sitters were given special "after effects" in response to their spoken wishes.

How very obliging this spirit artist is! How very convincing is his work! Is it not strange that he will not permit a subject to bring his own canvas? Does not this similarity in the mode of procedure in each case tell a story to the rational reader? Did any of my readers ever see the same sleight-of-hand trick performed over a few times, and note the absolute simi-

larity in the mode of operation? Is it not a fact, in the language of the profession, that "this is in the game"? It is just such little improvements to a trick performed by a medium that, in the language of the profession, "makes the work strong." For myself, I am quite sure that these special effects were prepared on the canvases in advance, with a more slowly acting chemical; that by *suggestion* in the conversation, the mediums adroitly caused their subjects to request these little after effects. In performing tricks myself I have frequently resorted to just such expedients, and have thus sometimes made my work appear almost supernatural.

In the case of the gentleman, he requested these effects in advance before the sitting. His canvas was a stock picture, but the assistant in the adjoining room quickly applied the special effects to the canvas with the slow chemical. On reaching home the flower was found to have developed, but later the wife of the sitter saw the name appear before her. Possibly it was visible as soon as the flower was, but that she overlooked its location. Then when she did discover it, the psychological effect was as though it had suddenly developed before her eyes.

In the case of the lady, I think the conversation was so manipulated as to cause her to express her desire, a short time before the chemicals had time to develop. I am quite sure that two persons from the same town would not each, independently, if uninfluenced by suggestion, have asked for *special after effects of such similarity* to appear on the portraits. This feature is evidently considered pretty "strong" by these mediums and is "worked in" very frequently.

It will be noticed that the gentleman selected a can-

vas and got his picture very readily; but that when he requested his living son's portrait to be made on the same canvas, this could not be done without *a second sitting, and the presence of the boy or his photograph.*

Next in regard to the means by which the mediums secured the secret information. When high grade mediums do a big business, it is very common for them to employ a "traveling person" as I have stated elsewhere. Is it not natural to suppose that these mediums do this, and that the medium B., who solicits (or has his spirit voices solicit) trade for them, receives part of the proceeds? Would this not partly explain the high prices charged? Honest spiritualists will tell most any one, that mediums as a class always greatly depreciate the work of other mediums, and are continually crying "fraud" against them. Many believers have expressed their regret to me of this frailty in the character of this class of persons. It is very unusual for a medium to advise a sitter to visit and spend money with another medium. To me it is as plain as day. The medium B. had been in the home city of these sitters many times. All believers, and those who were on the way to become believers, evidently had sittings. One of this medium's voices advised this lady to get this portrait. This proves that the lady discussed the matter either with this medium or his voices. Evidently, this lady in her conversation and questions (written or otherwise), revealed to these spirit voices or this medium, all of the secrets (including the manner in which her son had lately worn his hair, etc.), which afterwards were used to such telling advantage. She has no doubt forgotten most of her conversations with this medium, and could not relate one thing in ten that passed between them. But

it is a medium's business to write down and remember these things. It is also a very prevalent custom for mediums to exchange information thus secured.

I feel sure that this medium secured the lady's son's photograph, either with her consent for the purpose of "magnetizing it," or of getting *en rapport* with her son; or else that he secured it at some gallery secretly, and that he copied it with a kodak. How frequently do subjects take some memento as a lock of hair or a photograph of the dear one to a medium! How easily can a medium manage to have this done long before his voices ever advise a spirit portrait!

There can be no doubt that he furnished the lady mediums all of the vital information, names, etc., which these mediums afterwards used to such telling advantage. The reader need not doubt the fact that mediums obtain a complete knowledge of the little secrets, connected with the dead of their sitters. These things prey on the minds of those who are in grief, and are revealed to mediums in one way or another in private sittings.

I wish my readers could see a collection of written and signed questions which is in my possession. These were written by many persons who thought that they saw them burned before their eyes. They reveal all of the innermost secrets of their writers. Each writer believed that the medium never saw his writing, and in some instances report that he never touched the cards on which it was. If another medium were to appear and reveal this same information to these persons, they would undoubtedly certify that no one at all knew of these secrets. These were presented to me by a medium of my acquaintance, who is quite friendly with me.

As to the sickness of the boy, (whose name was probably furnished by B.), I should think this a mere prediction which would apply to any growing child; that, had the boy not been sick on the father's arrival, like most children he would at some later time have had an unimportant sickness; and that in such a case this prediction would have been applied by the gentleman to the event. On arriving home the boy happened to be sick, which accidentally made an immediate fulfilment of the prediction.

And now in regard to the slate test. I have elsewhere dealt very completely with these tests. I will not take up space here in doing so. In an article of mine appearing in the *Journal* of the Society for Psychical Research I explain a test where, from some slates, possession is secretly obtained of a sealed envelope. This could be opened with steam, and the writing done, after which the envelope could be again sealed. In *Suggestion,* of September, 1901, there is an exposure of this same trick, or nearly the same trick, as that which these mediums performed.

It is quite evident that these sitters received information or instructions from some source in advance, which caused them to prepare the sealed envelopes. In the gentleman's case he prepared his at the hotel. Now the lady did not come with one prepared, so the mediums had her prepare a sealed envelope *in exactly the same manner.* What a strange coincidence! This shows that this is a stock trick of theirs and is performed for most subjects. The *mode of operation is exactly the same in each case.* This fact alone shows that it is a trick.

It will be noted that one letter was signed, "per E. D. G." The recipient does not know any one whom

these initials would indicate. Had the mediums' notes of information been more complete, or had they accidentally hit upon other initials, this might have been cited as a most convincing test.

I will not take up further space with my explanations; but I simply assure my readers that if any of them will take their own canvas with them, and *never let it out of their hands or sight,* they will get no picture.

DAVID P. ABBOTT.

OMAHA, NEBRASKA.

ADDENDA.

ANOTHER BILLET TEST.

I WILL add to this work a description of a splendid billet test which I have witnessed since the appearance of the first edition. The spectators are given small white cards on which to write their questions and names. They are also given envelopes in which to seal the cards after first folding them. These envelopes have been previously numbered by the medium.

After the questions are prepared, the medium collects them in a velvet bag which is fastened on the end of a stick. He carries this article by the stick or handle, and the spectators drop their sealed envelopes into the bag. When all are collected, he holds the bag aloft so all can see that there is no exchange, and then proceeds to empty the billets upon his center table. The billets lie there in full view while the performer goes on with some other matter for a time.

Next the performer takes a pair of double or hinged slates, and, going to the table, opens them and places the sealed envelopes between them. He now gives these slates to any spectator to hold, and he takes a seat facing the spectators.

Next he requests the spectator holding the slates to take one envelope at a time from them, to read its number and to give it back unopened to its writer.

Upon his doing this the medium proceeds to answer the subject's questions in detail, to tell his name, etc., as in the other various billet tests that I have described. After each test is given the writer is requested to open his envelope and to see that his folded card is still within it undisturbed.

I find this test very effective when properly "worked up," and fully equal to the billet work of Chicago's best mediums. First, the velvet bag contains a deception and is about the same as the one described on page 148 of this volume, with the exception that it is larger. The stick or handle is a hollow tin tube painted black. On the end of this tube is soldered one side of a circle of stiff wire eight or ten inches in diameter. From this wire circle is suspended the open velvet bag some twelve inches deep and properly ornamented. There is a secret velvet partition in the bag which is sewed at the top to a half circle of wire, which has a straight projection or piston running up through the handle. This piston is fastened at the handle end to a short piece of tin tubing which matches the handle. By turning this short tube, the piston is turned, moving the cloth partition from side to side in the bag. The one I use has a window-curtain roller-spring within it, which causes the partition to "switch" when I release my grip on it. In one side are secretly placed "dummy" envelopes.

Now after the performer gathers up the original numbered envelopes, he allows the piston to revolve. He then apparently empties the bag on his center table. It is the dummy envelopes that fall out, and the originals are secretly retained in the bag in its other compartment. The performer now carelessly tosses the bag into the wings, or adjoining room, where is

his assistant. I will mention that the conjuring depots supply these bags minus the springs in rather smaller sizes. I think if the performer requests it, that they would make this kind for him. However, I made my own. A good medium recently told me that this bag was his greatest help.

Now, while the performer continues some other matter, and while the sealed envelopes lie apparently untouched on his center table, the assistant opens, reads, copies, and again seals in previously numbered envelopes, the various questions and names. The envelopes, after being again sealed, are placed between a pair of large double, or hinged slates. When the performer is ready to proceed with the tests, he steps to his adjoining room or the wings, and brings out these slates.

He then steps to his center table and gathers up the envelopes, like a pack of cards, and lays them on the center of his table. He now takes up the hinged slate (still closed) *with its hinge facing the spectators,* and lays it flat on the stack of dummy envelopes, and presses downwards as if trying to cover them up. This he can not do as the package is too thick. He therefore takes up the envelopes with one hand and while doing so lays the slates flat on the table with the hinged edge still facing the spectators. Next he lifts the rear edge of the upper slate, opening it up towards the spectators, and with his other hand from behind apparently inserts the envelopes between the slates, immediately lowering the upper slate and thus closing them. He then gives these slates to a spectator to hold.

Now he does not place the dummies between the slates, as he apears to do. In fact, he merely slips

them under both slates and they fall into an opening in the table. The originals are already in the slates as before stated.

I will give a brief description of this table. It is a light center table covered with black velvet, and this extends over the sides some eight inches, forming a drape. A fancy design is laid off on the table top, by tacking on silver braid so as to form figures such as squares, circles, etc. This appears to be for the purpose of ornamentation. However, it conceals the trick. Just back of the center of the table one square is really a hole in the table, into which is sewed a black velvet pocket six inches deep. This pocket is absolutely invisible if its margin be bordered with bright silver braid, and if bright lights be behind the table and above it. A spectator can stand within two feet of this table and can only discover the pocket by feeling. It is absolutely invisible. This is called a "Black Art Table." Into this opening the dummy envelopes fall when shoved under the slates. The slates being placed well back over the opening, the envelopes have to be shoved forward horizontally into it, and the motion is deceptive, as the envelopes appear from the front to be going into the slates. This is surely a most excellent "switch," as is also that of the "Velvet Changing Bag."

The performer now seats himself and gives the tests, while the spectator returns to each writer his unopened (?) envelope. How does the medium get the questions? It is simplicity itself. He has a small book made of white celluloid. The leaves are about eight in number, and are about half the size of playing cards. The leaves are fastened together by punching two holes on one side of each leaf, and then putting

in these holes a small ring. This book can be held in the palm; and after reading each leaf, it is allowed to fall open in the palm whereupon the question on its other side can be read.

The assistant copies the questions on these leaves and numbers them the same as the envelopes. When the performer gets the double slates, he places this book in his pocket with his handkerchief. When he gives the tests, he takes out the handkerchief and conceals the book secretly in his palm. The hands hold the handkerchief and he frequently mops his brow during the "trying ordeal." The handkerchief is held in the hands in his lap when it is not in use, and this helps conceal the tiny book and the motions of dropping its leaves. The performer thus reads the questions in his hands, and gives the most marvelous tests under the very eyes of his spectators. I consider this one of the best billet tricks extant.

THE SWINGING PENDULUMS AGAIN.

Since the first edition of this volume appeared I have developed the "Mystic Oracle of the Swinging Pendulums" described on page 29, into a much better trick. I think best to give the reader the benefit of my experiments so that he can work it more successfully; as it is surely a most mystifying effect. Any person can learn this in an hour, and he does not have to be a performer in order to work it well.

I use a small mahogony center table, about twenty inches square on top, with four legs, one at each corner. The table is not rickety or creaky, neither is it more solid than any new table of that style. The top can be displaced possibly one inch, by a slight pressure of the hands.

When the hands are placed on the table, it is pushed possibly one-half inch, so as to be slightly under tension. I use no cover on the table. Now at first, I actually made perceptible pushes or vibrations; but after an hour or so of practice, I found that by merely watching a pendulum it would strike, and I could not detect that I was making motions. My subconscious mind does the work involuntarily, so that all I have to do is to look at a pendulum; and once striking, it will continue to strike as long as I look at it, and will only cease when I look elsewhere. It seems to me that I do it by my mere will-power. However, I know that I must make involuntary vibrations. I recently permitted Mrs.. Powell, the wife of the famous magician, to place her hands on the table, and I placed my hands on top of hers. The vibrations were so slight that she could detect nothing, and she was completely mystified, much to the amusement of her celebrated husband who knew the trick.

The pendulum weights are hung on hair wire. They must be much heavier than bullets. Neither must the amplitude of their swing be very great. Each pendulum must be experimented with separately until it is just right, and until it will strike from the slightest vibrations. The stand or rack, upon which the longer ones are hung, must be solid and not springy. I use a magician's "Crystal Clock" base, with a heavy brass tree rising out of its top. I suspend pendulums from the latter's branches. The base resembles the base of a tall brass lamp. Two pendulums are metal balls one-half inch in diameter, and two are wooden balls one inch in diameter. The latter have large holes bored in their bottoms reaching nearly through, and these are filled with melted lead. The metal balls

swing in wine glasses, and the larger balls swing in the regular size glasses, as their diameter reduces their swing. These pendulums are sixteen, eighteen, twenty and twenty-two inches long. The other pendulums I suspend in circular bottles from the lower ends of their corks. I use two bottles such as originally contain olive oil in the large grocery stores. They are about fifteen inches tall and very slender. One stands on each corner of the side of the table opposite me. Between these, grouped symmetrically, are other slender circular bottles, six, eight, and ten inches tall. The pendulums in them are of varying lengths and are quite heavy. In the center of this group I also set a wide bottle containing two lead dolls seated in swings, suspended from a cross stick. The shortest pendulum is about four inches long.

Each pendulum wire has a tiny ring at its top, and this is hung in a little staple that is pushed up into the cork's bottom. The staple should *sit edgewise to the spectator in all cases.* Each pendulum must be adjusted until it responds and strikes under the most delicate pressure. This is so that heavy vibrations are unnecessary. Light pendulums can not be controlled like heavy ones. The operator must *have great patience, get in no hurry,* and take plenty of time in bringing the pendulums to a striking amplitude of vibration.

Short pendulums do not require vibrations every swing, to operate them, but a vibration every second or third swing will do. In case of laughing or talking, I manage to slightly shake or jar my chest in time with the motions of the selected pendulum; as any jar, if in time, helps to accelerate the motions. But it must also be remembered that a jar out of time

retards them. I keep continually cautioning the sitter not to jar the table, explaining that "this would cause all the pendulums to go to swinging and would thus mar the experiment." This makes him a trifle nervous so that he can not detect a slight vibration. It also prevents the correct idea from entering his mind.

I request him to watch the selected pendulum intently, and this also helps the experiment along; for in watching it, he naturally exerts his will-power also. I generally place my palms on the back of the sitter's hands which rest upon the table, while he sits beside me on a slightly elevated seat. This is one of the few tricks that will bear indefinite repetition.

A BILLET TEST IMPROVED.

There is probably no more effective trick than the one described in Number III of "Half Hours with Mediums," on page 14 of this volume. Since the volume was first published I have improved my method somewhat, and this makes it much more effective.

I first prepare the message for my subject, addressing him by name, and signing the name of some one who is dead that he knows, if it be possible to secure the name secretly. This message I write on one sheet of a quite small tablet, and fold it in the middle. I place this between the two backs of the envelope, and then seal the outer flap carefully to the inner one.

I have several tablets and envelopes in a small box of stationery. I ask the subject to select a sheet from one of the tablets, which he does. I next ask him to take an envelope; but I have the prepared one on top of the others, and I say, "Just take an envelope, please." He invariably takes the first one. I now ask him to place his folded sheet in the center of this

envelope, as nearly as he can, and to seal the latter. This he does; and in placing it in so carefully, he naturally sees that the envelope is empty, without having his suspicion aroused by my suggesting such a thing. He does as directed.

I next ask him to hold his sealed envelope on its lower edge on the table, and not to let it leave his hands, but to permit me to grasp it with my right fingers, which I proceed to do. After a time I cause the table to rap three times, by slightly moving my foot, with my shoe pressing against the table leg. This makes splendid raps. I then show him that my hands are empty; and taking his envelope, I say, "Let me see if you have a message." I tear off the end carefully, and insert my fingers in the back compartment, removing and handing him his message before his very eyes. As he reads it, my left hand secretly exchanges the envelope just used for a duplicate ordinary one, torn open in the same manner. This has been placed in my left coat pocket in advance for this purpose, and I silently drop the original into my pocket and withdraw the dummy. As he finishes reading, I am fingering the dummy, and I hand this to him asking him to keep all as a souvenir. Really this is as effective as any slate or billet test I have ever seen.

THE DOCTOR SCHLESSINGER ACT IMPROVED.

There is quite an improvement in the manner of working the trick performed by Dr. Schlessinger, and which is described in the chapter entitled, "Some Unusual Mediumistic Phenomena." In this, the subject places the folded billets (which are contained in a hollow skull or hat) under the table. There he selects them, one at a time, at random, and places them in the

hands of the performer, which are also held under the table. Neither the performer nor the subject sees the billets; yet the performer selects the one containing the name of the dead person, and hands it back to the subject, without bringing it from under the table, stating that this is the name of the person who is dead. He also requests the subject to hold it below the table, so that he (the performer) can not see it, and to there examine it and see if the performer be correct. When the subject does this, then the performer proceeds to read the name without seeing the paper. The performer also hands other billets back to the hand of the subject under the table, telling him that these are the names of living persons, and at the same time reading the names, with his clairvoyant power.

The method is simple. The name of the dead person is secretly selected, as I previously described in the chapter mentioned, and it is memorized. This billet the performer folds in a way slightly different from the others, so that he can tell by feeling when it is placed in his hands. Generally I make the last fold, and then quickly and secretly crimp or fold over one corner of the billet. I also select a second choice, as previously described, and memorize this name, and this time crimp two of the corners. Then I select and memorize a third choice, and this time do not crimp either corner; but on making the last fold of the billet, I do so in such a manner that one fold of the paper does not extend to the end of the other fold, but falls short a quarter of an inch. Now, under the table, I can quickly tell these names by feeling. This, however, requires a good memory and considerable care.

Now, most of the time I am right; and after selecting and reading the correct name, I select and read

the other living names that I have crimped. However, should I miss my guess at first, as sometimes happens, just as the subject starts to say I am wrong, and as soon as I can see that I have failed, I interrupt him before he can finish his sentence, just as if I had discovered my own error, and say, "No, that is not the dead one, either. That is so-and-so (giving the name). Of course he (or she) is alive." Then I proceed to my second choice, which in most cases is correct; and in rare cases I am compelled to go to the third choice, before getting the dead person's name; but the subject thinks nothing of these errors, and they are completely overshadowed by my reading of the names in so mysterious a manner.

Of course, on rare occasions, I must give up the experiment, saying conditions are not right, and that I will do something else; but I have become so certain in working the experiment that I never consider the possibility of failure. I am indebted to Mr. James Louis Kellogg of New York City for this improvement. He had the good fortune to witness an experiment of Dr. Schlessinger's where this improvement was used.

WIRELESS ELECTRICITY FOR MEDIUMISTIC TRICKS.

I must also make mention here of a talking table, that a person of whom I know is completing at this writing. The table may be taken apart and put together by the investigator, and nothing suspicious will be found. He then asks questions of the spirits, and holds his ear to the table for the reply. The table replies in human language, but the sounds are quite indistinct and ghostly.

The table may be taken to any room, and everything

searched and examined; yet it will work just the same. It may be lifted from the floor and held in the air, but this makes no difference. Now this is certainly quite interesting.

All of my readers may not know that if a coil of wire be run secretly around a room, either under the floor or in any other concealed position; and if a telephone transmitter be attached to it from some other building; that a telephone which is not connected by any wires whatever, but that is simply located anywhere within the coil, will repeat all words spoken into the transmitter. This is not wireless telephony, as many may suppose, but is simply a case of induction. It is the same thing that frequently causes a wire to transmit words over another wire running parallel to it, if the latter have a ground return. Mr. Charles Robbins, Electrical Engineer, mentioned elsewhere in this volume, informs me that this thing has been exhibited at several electrical shows.

Now, the man who is making this table to which I have referred, uses this principle. He runs a secret coil around each room, and puts the receiver in the top board of the table, the center portions of which are hollow. In fact, the top of the table appears to be veneered, and is quite thin. He pours melted paraffine in the hollow around the apparatus, so as to hold it steady and make all parts sound alike. Electricians can easily work out the details. He conceals two or three transmitters behind ornaments in each room, and any words spoken in the rooms are carried to the distant confederate.

I have contemplated making a talking trumpet on this plan. The trumpet should be a couple of inches in diameter at the middle, and taper to a half inch at

each end. Ear-pieces should also be put on the ends to cover the ears, or else old-time phonograph ear tubes should be used. The trumpet would be something like the one used by Mrs. Blake, the medium, and which is pictured and described in my pamphlet, *The History of a Strange Case.*

The same man I have just mentioned, is also experimenting with a view to using the Hertzian waves of wireless telegraphy, for moving distant objects without mechanical contact; and for controlling the motions of distant objects. Of course these objects must have a preparation that can not be discovered. At this writing I can not say just how he will succeed. He has also stated that he will produce in a room what he calls "Whispering or Echoing Voices," which will be voices in the very air of the room. He also says he thinks it possible to cause a sheet of paper or card held in the operator's hand, to speak and act like a telephone diaphragm. He expects to wire the operator in some manner, but this part will be secret, of course. He thinks a subject can then carry on a conversation with this sheet of paper. In such case I would think that the sheet of paper must be double, and have within it a very thin sheet of iron. I would also think the operator must palm a secret coil in the hand holding the sheet, and that this must be connected with the wires on his person. I must say, however, that I doubt the feasibility of these last experiments; but I desire to call such things to the attention of experimenters.

INDEX.

Abbott, David P., 280; correspondence in *Open Court*, 266; Father's test, 217, 221; reply to Dr. O. O. Burgess, 283; Tests given, 9, 39, 59, 218.

Abbott, James Asahel, name used in test, 221.

Accordion sealed, 286.

Actor, Magician an, 115.

Alcohol, Odorless, 101, 105, 177, 194.

Aluminum trumpets, 288.

Apparition of a voice, 270.

Apparitions, 267.

Artificial hand, 33, 57, 277.

Assistant acts as another sitter, 38; as porter, 38; concealed by draperies, 36.

Astrology, The relation of mediumship to, 245 ff.

Attention, Control of, 153, 182.

Bag with two compartments, 148.

Balmain's Luminous Paint, 63, 71.

Base-board, Trap in, 183.

Basket, Billet-changing, 206, 209.

Believer moves into a block near a medium for purposes of investigation, 186.

Believers' billets collected by mediums, 247, 317; Jest of medium at expense of, 238.

Benedict, Mr. Edward, a magician, 163, 165, 265.

Best patrons of mediums, 85.

Bible service tests, 199, 205; adapted for double parlors, 209.

Billet-changing basket, 206, 209.

Billet tests: Bible service tests, 199, 205; The same adapted for double parlors, 209; City Directory used, 167; Impression of writing secretly obtained, 106; List of names to include a dead person, 57, 218; Medium answers questions without touching them: (1) while they are held aloft by his manager, 195, 200, (2) while they are suspended from the ceiling in a bag, 198, 204, (3) while they lie on a table and he walks about the room, 199, 207; while in a double parlor, 209, (4) with Card *Servante* and blackboard in the wings of the stage, 212; Method of obtaining a secret impression of writing, 164; Odorless alcohol used, 101; Prepared book used, 169; Prepared clip-board used, 170; Prepared table, 80; Question transferred to slate held by sitter, 81; Questions written and retained by spectators and answered by blindfolded lady on stage, 253 ff.: (1) questions answered which are written on spectator's own paper and retained in their pockets, 257, (2) questions answered which are thought of by spectators but not written, 258; Reading sealed billets before a company in absolute darkness, 82; Skull cap worn by medium effectively used, 177; Store room reading

with the use of wax impressions, 166; "Switch" and "One Ahead" principle employed, 174; "Switching" the billets, 171; Trick envelope with a double front, 16, 17; The same with a slot cut in its face, 41, 45; Washington Irving Bishop's sealed letter reading in a new dress, 11; The same improved, 263; Wireless telephone, 214.
Billets of believers collected by mediums, 13, 247, 317.
Bishop's, Washington Irving, sealed letter reading, 194; Improvement on, 263; In a new dress, 5, 11.
"Black chapter," 243.
Blackboard in the wings of the stage, Use of a, 213.
Blindfolded, Medium, 195; with a kid glove, 6, 11, 202.
Blotter pad, Use of a, 251.
Blue Book, The, 278; of Boston, The, 192; of Kansas City, 278; of Omaha, 14.
Blue flame on the surface of water, 41.
Bodily ailments treated by mediums, 27.
Book prepared with carbon sheet, 170.
Books of "Dope," 75.
Boston, the Blue Book of, 192.
Boulder of gold quartz materialized, 240.
Buddhist priest, Rev. Swami Mazzininanda, 242.
Burgess, Dr. O. O., submits a puzzling case, 280 ff.
Burr, Aaron, name used in test, 95.

Cabinet, 166, 179, 235.
Cage of wire, screwed to the floor, 237.
Camp of mediums in Indiana, 59.
Canvassing, Information collected while, 19.
Carbon sheet, Book prepared with, 170; White, 254.
Card *Servante,* Use of a, 212.
Cards for forcing, Pack of, 147.
Carus, Dr. Paul, *Soul of Man,* 274.
Cases, Mediums on the lookout for, 184.
Catalogue of private readings, 192; of information, 270, 271; of questions, 13.
Ceiling, Trap in, 179.
Chair, Method of preparing a trick, 110.
Chart containing impression of sitter's palm, 248.
Chemical tricks, 190.
Chest, Light and heavy, 34.
Chicago, 242; Portrait mediums in, 241, 294; War of, against mediums, 246.
Child, Materialization of a, 73.
Clip-board, Use of, 170.
Coat or hat, Information from, 38.
Cocoa butter, Use of, 168.
Collection of written and signed questions, 247, 317.
Colors, Words written in, 162.
Confederates often respectable persons, 271.
Confessions burned, 137; means of discovering, 135.
Consolation in occultism, 4.
Control of attention, 153.
Convent, Entertainment given at a, 99.
Cornell University, 285.
Corner torn from slip of paper, 155.
Cosmopolitan Magazine, 285.
Costumes of gauze, 71.
Couch used in trances, 36.
Council Bluffs, 39, 51, 52, 55.
Court plaster method, 191.
Cream, Use of, 168.
Crow, John A., name used in test, 26.
Crystal gazing, 54, 98.

Dark, Raps in the, 56; seance, 59, 266; seance, Billet work in, 82; seance evidence of trick-

ery, 54; seance losing prestige, 293.
Davenport Brothers, 284.
"D. E." (dead easy), 192.
Deadwood, 26.
Dealers in mediums' secrets, 114, 273; Geo. L. Williams & Co., 106, 154, 168; Yost & Co., 285.
Death, Life after, 2, 193.
Deceptive grip, 62.
Denver, 53.
Developing a wax impression, 108, 168; Powders for, 165, 169.
Dictionary, Spirit, 93; test, Yost's spiritualistic slate and, 90.
Directory of city used, 38, 167, 251, 257.
Disease and place of death, How to tell the, 222, 226.
"Dope," Books of, 75.
Draperies, Assistant concealed by, 36.
Dummy card burned, 250; envelopes, 201, 203; tablets, 254.

E., Rev. Madame, celebrated occultist, trance medium, clairvoyant, etc., 5.
Egyptian queen, Materialization of, 72.
Evans, Henry Ridgely, *Shaw's Magical Instructor*, 286; *The Spirit World Unmasked*, 284.
Expert medium, Mr. Abbott's call on, 39.
Exposé of spooks, 239.

Fashion in mediumship, 53.
Fay, Annie Eva, 168; Cotton bandage test of, 286; Performances of the, type, 253 ff.
Fee paid for exerting spiritual influence, 26.
Figures, Methods of forcing the selection of a sum of, 160.
Fishing for information, 60; Systems of, 66.
Flame on the surface of water, 41.
Flap, 144, 150, 154, 156, 157.
Flash light, Use of the pocket-, 84, 293.
Floor, Trap in, 179.
Flowers concealed under confederate's skirts, 52; Materialization of, 50; received with slate message, 138.
Forcing the choice of a certain page in a book, 159; of a sum of figures, 160; of a word, 147; of a word which is to appear on a slate, 157; of two slates, 131; Pack of cards for, 147.
Fortune-telling, ability required of a medium, 247; Relation of mediumship to, 245 ff.
Fraud founded on the genuine, 5.
Fulton, the steamboat man, Long letter from, 308.

Gauze, Costumes of, 71.
Girdle, Magic, 186.
Glass plate, Impression transferred to, 169.
Glove, Blindfolding with a kid, 6, 11, 195, 202.
Gold quartz materialized, Boulder of, 240.
Grave stones, Information from, 19, 192, 270.
Guesswork, Information given by, 177.
Guide writing from dictation, 17.
Guides, 54.

H—, Dr. Lee, pugilist, preacher and medium, 20.
Half Hours with Mediums, 1 ff.
Hamlet, 5.
Hand, Artificial, 57, 277; A rapping, 33.
Hangtown, 222.
Hardin, Mr. Henry, pseud. of E. A. Parsons, of New Haven, Conn., 85.
Hat or coat, Information from, 38.
Head telephone, Use of a, 207, 256.
Heaven, Treasury of, 241.
Hermann the conjurer, 285.
Hoffman's *Later Magic*, 85.

Holt, Cora, name used in test, 219.
Hotel room, Tests in a, 76.
House, fitted with mechanical rappers, 292; questions, Reading of, 256.
Hyslop, Professor, name used in test, 44.

Immortality, 217, 267, 280, 283; Proof required of, 1.
Impromptu or extempore manner in which mediums must frequently work, 184.
Indian chief, Materialization of, 72; conjurers, 86; guides, 54; magic, 116.
Indiana, Camp of mediums in, 59.
Influence, Fee paid for exerting spiritual, 26.
Information, Catalogued, 270, 271; Fishing for, 60; from the city directory, 167; from the daily papers, 192, 270; from graveyards, 19, 192, 270; from hat or coat, 38; from local confederate, 36; from other mediums collected in books, 75; from speaking tubes, 191; from writing, 178; given by guesswork, 177; inferred from writing, 177; Means of getting, 19, 192, 270, 316; obtained by a secret confederate, 38; through rubber tube, 37.
Irish spirit, 266, 268.
Ithaca, N. Y., 285.

Jest of medium and confederates at the expense of believers, 238.
Jesus Christ, Dr. Schlossenger's vision of, 233.

Kansas City, 266, 277; Blue Book of, 278.
Kellar, the magician, Spirit tie of, 284.
Kid glove, Blindfolded with help of, 6, 11, 202.
Krishna, Spirit of the Master, 244.

Late call, 54.
Letter, from medium at a distance, 15; filched from sitter's pocket, 20; replaced in sitter's pocket, 24.
Levi, Dr. Schlossenger's spirit guide, 229, 232.
Life after death, 2, 193.
Light, Pocket electric, 84, 293.
Lincoln, Neb., 15, 268, 277, 293.
Local confederate, Information from, 36.
Los Angeles, 242.
Luminous cheese cloth, 243; costumes, Method of using, 72; costumes, Preparation of, 71; forms secretly secured from under the coat of a confederate, 235; gauze concealed in a belt under a lady medium's clothing, 236; letters, 56, 67.

Magic girdle, 186.
Magician an actor, 115.
Magnetism, 54.
Mahatma, 85; wearing a turban, 200, 208.
Mantel used in slatewriting tests, 123.
Materialization, 70, 235 ff.
Materializing a trick, 59.
Mazzininanda, Rev. Swami, a Buddhist priest, 242.
Mechanical rappers, 190; House fitted with, 292.
Mechanism of sympathy, The, 33n.
Medium at a distance, Letter from, 15; forfeits $25, 181.
Mediumistic phenomena, Some unusual, 215 ff.; reading of sealed writings, 87 ff.
Mediums, Chicago's war against, 246; Los Angeles *Herald's* war against, 244.
Mediumship, Palmistry combined with, 246, 249; teaching, a fraud, 242; Relation of, to palmistry, astrology, and fortune-telling, 245 ff.
Memory poor for details, 67.
Mental tests, 63.

Mind-reading, 57.
Mine, Spirit, 241.
Misdirection, Art of, 115, 135.
Modern sorcery, 193 ff.

Name appears on spirit portrait on demand, 310; of a dead person from among those of the living, How to select, 223; Medium tells sitter's, 25.
Names, List of, to include a dead person, 57, 215, 218, 220.
Newspaper used in slatewriting, 122, 139, 151, 157, 163.
Newspapers, Information from, 192, 270.
Nut-galls, Solution of, 190.

Occultism, Consolation of, 4.
Odorless alcohol, Sponge saturated with, 177.
Oldtown, Kentucky, 291.
Omaha, 26, 39, 55, 237, 239, 274, 276; "Blue Book" of, 14.
Open Court, The, 33n., 274; correspondence with Abbott, 266.

Pack of cards for forcing, 147.
Paint, Luminous, 56.
Palm, Chart containing impression of sitter's, 248; reading, 169.
Palming, 168.
Palmistry combined with mediumship, 246, 249; Relation of mediumship to, 245 ff.
Paper writing, Independent, 153.
Paraffin wax, Use of, 164, 254.
Parsons, E. A., of New Haven, Conn., (Mr. Henry Hardin), 85.
Pass of slates, 124, 127, 130, 141.
Pendulums, Mystic oracle of the swinging, 29, 31.
Personal affairs, Medium tells sitter's, 25.
Phelps, Celestina Redexilana, name used in test, 221.
Piper, Mrs., name used in test, 44.
Place of death, How to tell the disease and, 222, 226.
Places, List of, 216.
Platform production, Slate tricks suitable for, 156, 161, 162.
Plumbago, 255.
Pocket, electric light, 84, 293; Letter filched from sitter's, 20; Letter replaced in sitter's, 24.
Pockets in skirts, 190.
Porter, Assistant as, 38.
Portrait mediums in Chicago, 241, 294; of a spirit appears gradually on canvas, 295, 300.
Portraits, After effects on spirit, 307, 310; developed from invisible chemicals by spraying, Spirit, 299; produced from a cabinet, Spirit, 297.
Portraiture, Mr. C. W. Bennett on spirit, 294; History of spirit, 296.
Powders for developing an invisible impression, 165, 169.
Price asked for secrets, 88.
Private readings, Catalogue of, 192.
Progressive Thinker, 142.
Psychic phenomena, 193.
Psychics: Facts and Theories, 215.
Psychological, the most essential part of trick, 114.
Psychometric tests, 183.
Puzzling case, Dr. O. O. Burgess submits a, 280.

Queen Oriana, Materialization of, 72.
Questions answered which are "thought of" but not written, 258; catalogued, 13; Collection of written and signed, 317; written on spectator's own paper, and retained in their own pockets secretly read, 257; written and retained by spectators answered by a blindfolded lady on the stage, 253.

Rappers, Mechanical, 190; House fitted with, 292.
Rapping hand, 33.
Raps, 216, 282; in the dark, 56, 61; Production of, 220.
Rasgorshek, Mr. Gabriel, a magician, 166.

Reaching rod, Telescopic, 278, 287.
Reading, Ability of a medium to give, 245; question written on a slate by a sitter, 132.
Readings of one medium and palmist, 249.
Residence, Medium tells sitter's, 25.
Respectable persons, Confederates often, 271.
Ring, Message written with a gold, 131; presented to spirit, 74.
Robbins, Mr. Charles W., electrical engineer, 214.
Rope and tape-tying, 70, 237, 281, 284, 287.
Rubber stamp used to produce a message, 188; tube, Information through, 37; tube, Voices conducted to a trumpet by a concealed, 289.

Sacramento, 222.
San Francisco, 282; *Examiner*, 242.
Savage, Rev. Minot J., 227; His report of a strange case, 215.
Schlessinger, Dr. C. S., 27, 58, 95, 178, 216, 222, 225, 226, 227; C. S. Weller's report of mental tests given by, 228; his spirit guide Levi, 229; his vision of Jesus Christ, 233.
School teacher, Questions of, 247.
Scientific persons best subjects, 85.
Seance, a fraud, 279n.
Sealed letter reading, Washington Irving Bishop's, 194; in a new dress ,5, 11; Improvement on, 263.
Sealed writings, Mediumistic reading of, 210; Methods of reading, 87, 94, 100, 194; Preparation of, 91.
Seating spectators, Method of, 71.
Secrets, Family, 56, 68; means of discovering, 135; of mediums jealously guarded, 87.
Selected word appears on slate, 147.
Selection of slates, 150; of a sum of figures, Methods of forcing the, 160; of a word which is to appear on a slate, Forcing the 157.
"Shall We Gather at the River," 238.
Silicate slate flap, 154.
Sioux City, 230.
Skeptics seated well back, 71.
Skirts, Pockets in, 190.
Skull cap with sponge saturated with odorless alcohol, 177.
Slade's slate performance, Report of, 68.
Slate and dictionary test, Yost's Spiritualistic, 90.
Slate leaving sitter's sight, 182.
Slate writing tests: Chemical tricks, 190; flower or other token received with a message, 138; How to force the selection of the desired slates, 131; How to pass the slates from hand to hand, 124; How to secretly read a question written on a slate by a sitter, when a stack of slates is used, 132; Medium prepares message on slates in investigator's room, 186, 187; Message on sitter's own slates held on his own head, 76, 80; Message on a slate in colors chosen by the spectators and in answer to spoken questions, 162; Message on a slate resting in a chandelier, 23; Message produced by an adroit exchange of slates, 189; Message received without slates leaving sitter's hands, 186; Message written in sitter's presence, 43, 47, 49; Message written with a gold ring belonging to the sitter, 131; Message written with toes of medium, 191; Reporter mystified, 181; Rubber stamp to produce a message, 188; Sitter's own slates wrapped in pa-

per in which they were purchased, 185; Slade's slate performance, Report of, 68; Slate tricks suitable for platform production: (1) With one slate and a flap, 156, (2) With two slates and a flap, 161, (3) With three slates and a flap, 162; Slate tricks where sitter brings his own slates, 179: (1) where medium does not touch them, 179; (2) Slates wrapped in paper in which they were purchased, 185, (3) Without slates leaving sitter's hands, 186; Slates belong to sitter and medium does not touch them, 179; Slates secretly removed from sitter's shoulder by a confederate, 82; Some expert maneuvering, 127; Trap in baseboard, 181; Trap in ceiling or floor, 179; Use of a prepared chair, 97, 110; Where message slate is passed to stack from mantel, 122; With a double or hinged slate, and a flap, 150; With one slate and a flap, 156; With several small slates and one large one, 117, 132, 135; the same with expert maneuvering, 129; With stack of small slates and a rug or newspaper, 121; With three slates and a flap, 142, 147, 149, 162; With two slates and a flap, 161; With two slates and a silicate flap, 153; With two slates, one being held under the table by the sitter, 138; With two slates, using the "pass," 125.

Slates, Means of openig, 187; Selection of, 150.

Soul of Man, by Dr. Carus, 274.

Soul-mates, 310; Materialization of, 73.

"Soul-travel," 243.

Spectators, Method of seating, 71.

Spelling, Spirits poor at, 307.

Spermaceti wax, 255; Use of, 164.

Sphinx, The, 181.

Spirit communion, 293; paintings, 59; poor at spelling, 307; portrait, Name appears on, on demand, 310; portraits, After effects on, 307, 310; portraits developed from invisible chemicals by spraying, 299; portraits produced from a cabinet, 297; portraiture, Mr. C. W. Bennett on, 294; portraiture, History of, 296; slate-writing and billet tests, 114 ff.; tie of Kellar, the magician, 284; voices, lights, and raps, 62.

Spirits poor at spelling, 307.

Spooks, Exposé of, 239.

Spraying mechanism concealed in window casing, 313.

Steel ring passed upon a sitter's arm, 69.

Stockton, California, Swindle perpetrated in, 240.

Store room tests, 35, 37, 166.

Swindle of a judge of a supreme court, 74; of a lady by a medium, 28; in Stockton, California, 240.

Switch of billets, 171; Another method of, 172; Tricks dependent on, 173.

Switch of slates. *See* Pass.

Table rapping, 53.

Tablet, A prepared, 107, 164, 254.

Tacoma, 241, 300.

Telegraph information to assistant, 37.

Telegraphy tests, Touch, 37.

Telephone, Use of a head, 207, 256; Wireless, 214.

Telescopic reaching rod, 278, 287; trumpet, 289.

Tide is low, When the, 3.

Token received with a slate message, 138.

Topeka, 266.

Touch telegraphy tests, 37.

Touches in the dark, 61.

Trance vision in Mahatma, 85.

Trap in base-board, 183, 239; in ceiling and floor, 179.

Traps, Various, 70, 237.
Treasury of Heaven, 241.
Trickery verified, 269.
Trumpet moved into a tree, 291; seance, 266, 277; seance explained, 268; seance with the medium securely tied, 280; Telescopic, 289; Voices from, 56, 62, 289.
Trumpets, Aluminum, 288.
Tube, Information through rubber, 37; Reaching, 237; Small cloth, 167; Voices conducted to a trumpet by a concealed rubber, 289.
Tubes, Information from speaking, 191.
Turban, Mahatma wearing a, 200, 208.

Ultramarine blue, Use of, 169.

Vapor materialization, 75.
Vest, Turning another's, 260; Turning one's own, 262.
Vision of Jesus Christ, Dr. Schlossenger's, 233.
Voices from trumpet, 56, 62, 289; in the open air, Independent, 290; through concealed speaking tubes, 290.

War against mediums, Chicago's, 246; Los Angeles *Herald's*, 244.
Water, Blue flame on surface of, 41.
Wax impression, Developing a, 168; Use of paraffin, 164, 254; Use of spermaceti, 164.
Williams, George L., & Co., dealers in secrets, 106, 154, 168.
Wilson, Dr. A. M., of Kansas City, Mo., editor of *The Sphinx*, 181, 183.
Wings of a stage, Use of a blackboard in the, 213.
Wire cage screwed to the floor, 237.
Wireless telephone, 214.
Wooldridge, Report of Clifton R., of the Chicago Police Department, 238, 246.
Word which is to appear on a slate, Forcing the selection of a, 157.
Writing, Impression of, developed, 255.

Yost & Company of Philadelphia, dealers in magical apparatus, spiritualistic secrets, etc., 285.
Yost's spiritualistic slate and dictionary test, 90.

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