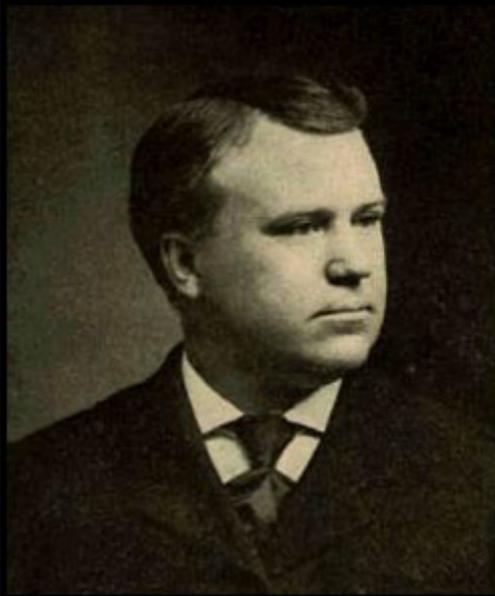


Short stories by David Phelps Abbott



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How The Tricks Succeeded



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 halfway 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 toward 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 toward 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 toward 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 downward; 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 nicked 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.

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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 downward 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 superhuman power.



The Methods Of A “Doctor Of The Occult”



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 among 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 toward 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 toward 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 toward 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 everyone. 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.



Mind Reading In Public



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 bygone 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 everyone 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 toward 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 lawsuit 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 envelopes 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.

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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 drawstring 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 runway 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 cannot 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.



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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 nervously, 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.

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 anyone.

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.



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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 runway 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.

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 anyone 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 stake 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.



The Name Of The Dead



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 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. Schlossenger, 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, farther 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 instructions. I will describe what was reported to me of this test, farther 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 farther 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.

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After thinking the matter over, I decided that, while I was uncertain as to the manner in which Dr. Schlossenger 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 the 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 cannot say positively that Dr. Schlossenger 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 subject 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. Schlossenger 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. Schlossenger. On the other hand, if it were trickery in one case, it probably was in both.



Some Famous Exposures



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 dreamed 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.

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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 he 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. Everyone 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 earnestness, 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 cannot 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 toward 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.