

## HALF HOURS WITH MEDIUMS.

BY DAVID P. ABBOTT.

### 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 elements—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 even 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 pitiful, 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 loved 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. Madam 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 a few 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 the 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."

They 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 message. The moment the sitter sees the message, the excitement of reading it 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 his 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 busi-

ness, 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 of 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 of the room, 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 the 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 very 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 like 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 lecturing 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 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, ges-

ticulate 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 these, which the sitter did. 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 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 a 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 skilled 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. Schlossenger, (the medium described in my article "Some Mediumistic Phenomena," which appeared in *The Open Court* of August, 1905,) in regard to reducing his flesh.

Dr. Schlossenger 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 article, 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 on 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 on 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 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 was 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 questions. 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 even to 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 article, 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.

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 movement 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

\* 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.

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 pressure 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 paper will remember the "Light and Heavy Chest" of the old-time conjurers. 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 who was 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 additional 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 just referred to was a variation of this 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 carried a second assistant who was a telegraph operator. When giving the reading the lady 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 strangers 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.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]