The Open Court

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Editor: Dr. Paul Carus

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CHICAGO

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Gustav Theodor Fechner was a professor of physics, but he took great interest in psychology and by combining the two sciences became one of the founders of the science of "psychophysics," based upon the obvious interrelation between sensation and nerve activity. While he did much creditable work in the line of exact psychology, he devoted himself with preference to those problems of the soul which touch upon its religious and moral life and its fate after death. His little book On Life After Death is his most important publication in this line.

Fechner believes in the immortality of the soul, but his treatment is of especial interest because he uses a distinctive scientific method in dealing with the subject. Though the thoughtful reader may often find the ideas expressed at variance with his preconceived notions of the after life, he cannot fail to be impressed with the importance and suggestiveness of Professor Fechner's thought.

"I wish to congratulate you and the translator upon the beautiful translation of Fechner. It did not seem possible that such a translation, breathing as it did the entire spirit of the original, could have been made by a German. I have seldom seen a more successful bit of translating."—DAVID EUGENE SMITH, Ph. D., LL. D., Professor of Mathematics, Teachers' College, New York City.

"The essay of which this little book is a translation was first published in German in 1855. Its author held that 'the spirits of the dead continue to exist as individuals in the living,' and has worked out this idea in quaint suggestions and meditations which will interest many and perhaps will add somewhat of illumination to their eager gaze into the world beyond death. It is devout, hopeful and confident of a kind of a personal immortality."—THE CONGREGATIONALIST AND CHRISTIAN WORLD.

"A volume that will greatly interest if not influence lovers of philosophical writings."—THE BURLINGTON HAWK EYE.

THE OPEN COURT PUBLISHING CO.
1322 WABASH AVENUE, CHICAGO.
HALF HOURS WITH MEDIUMS.

BY DAVID P. ABBOTT.

[CONCLUSION.]

VII.

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

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

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

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

I determined at once to call on this renowned personage, and try to secure a little information from the unseen world. Accordingly, one Sunday afternoon I took the car that crossed the river,
and in due time arrived at the apartments of this wonderful doctor.

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

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

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

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

After a time he seemed to finish his calculation, and this seer condescended to leave the realms of the stars wherein dwelt the spirits that rule the universe and the destinies of men, and to descend to earth and for a time direct his gaze towards this humble mortal. He turned around and observed me for the first time. He was a large, portly, fine-looking gentleman of middle age, with very long black hair which gave him a strange appearance. He wore a pair of glasses low down on his nose; and from over these he con-
descended to direct his gaze at me 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 three 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 both ways with the writing inside. I did so while he walked to his bowl of water apparently paying no attention to me, and then returned.

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

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

There was no doubt that he did not exchange envelopes and that he burned all 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 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 directions placed my arms and hands over this. He walked to the bowl of water on the side table, and gazed into it. I watched him; and I saw a rather large flame appear on the surface of the water, dance about, and disappear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

He thus held the envelope in his left hand, flap open wide, with the back side of the envelope later to be sealed, facing me. Now he really inserted my paper in this envelope with his right hand as he took it from me; but in fact, he pushed it down just behind the hidden slip of paper within the envelope. I mean that he inserted it between the concealed slip and the face or slit side of the envelope; and as he did this he caused the lower end of my slip of
paper to pass through the slit in the center of the front of the envelope. The lower portion of my slip was thus out of the envelope on its rear side, between the front of the envelope and the fingers of his left hand; although I could see nothing of this. He pushed it down so that the top still remained in view with the bent corner exposed, and then sealed the flap over it.

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

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

Now with his right hand he moved a small vessel on the table towards himself. Then taking the envelope in his right hand, slit side downward, he held it close to this vessel; at the same time with his left hand he took a match from his pocket and proceeded to burn the envelope. This move concealed the trick; and it was very deceiving and cleverly done. As he took the envelope from his left hand with his right hand, he, with his left fingers touching the protruding portion of my slip, caused it to remain in his left hand and to be drawn entirely out of the slit. His eyes followed the envelope as his right hand took it; which naturally caused my eyes to follow it, as his attention seemed centered on the envelope and it appeared to occupy the stage of action. This move was executed in a moment, not requiring any time worth mentioning, although it takes so long to describe it on paper intelligibly. Now while his eyes (and of course mine) followed the envelope, without pause his left hand went into his left pocket in a natural manner to get the match. He, of course, left my slip in his pocket with his surplus matches; and when he retired for the drink of water, he read my question.

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

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

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

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

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

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

I am sure that the nickeled tube that carried the dripping water into the space over the glass bowl, had a second tube within it; through which his assistant from the adjoining room either blew, or sent by some mechanism, the chemicals (probably potassium) that would take fire and burn on striking the water.
When I perform the slate trick described above, after writing the "automatic" message, apparently erasing it, and replacing the slates, I do not scatter the slates around on the table as this medium did. Instead, I proceed as I will now describe.

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

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

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

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

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

There is a variation of this slate trick which I consider much superior to it. In the form referred to the automatic writing is done away with entirely. It is really one of the best slate tricks extant for a private sitting, and is being used by a few of the most up-to-date mediums of to-day.

The medium uses nine small slates with padded edges. He also uses one large slate as in the preceding trick. On one of the small slates is a message prepared in advance and written with a soapstone pencil, as this looks more white and startling.

The medium seats the sitter at a small table, and then enters with the slates. He carries them on his left hand and arm arranged as follows: At the bottom, message side down, is the prepared small slate, and on top of it is the large slate. On top of the large slate are eight small unprepared slates. The medium stands at the left of the sitter, with the slates on his left hand and arm, and slightly tilted towards the sitter so as to conceal the message slate underneath from his view. The existence of a concealed slate is not suspected. The medium now gives the sitter the small slates one at a time to examine, and as the sitter returns them, the medium places them on the table in a stack in front of the sitter.

Just as the eighth small slate is placed on top of the stack, the medium brings the large slate in front of the sitter, right over the stack, allowing the edge next the sitter to tilt downward at an angle of 45 degrees and rest on the front edge of the stack. At the same time he attracts the attention of the sitter by giving him a pencil with his right hand, and requesting the sitter to write his name and the date of his birth on the large slate. The medium says, "Write it right there," pointing with his right fingers to the center of the large slate which he still holds with his left hand. Of course, he has meanwhile allowed the prepared slate underneath to quietly take its position on top of the stack of small slates. When the medium first enters, the slates being rather heavy, are supported partly on the left arm. As soon as enough of them have been removed to make what remains light enough, they are allowed to slip more completely into the left hand, and be grasped by the fingers. This enables the medium to press the concealed slate up against the under surface of the large slate firmly, and makes it also easier to drop it onto the stack when the large slate pauses over it for an instant.
As soon as the sitter writes as requested, the medium places the large slate in the sitter's lap for him to hold; and taking a large rubber band, he snaps it around the stack of small slates and places them in the sitter's lap upon the large slate. When the stack is on the table before placing the band around it, the top slate has the message on its under side; and the fact can not be noticed that among so many slates one has been added to the stack. The stack is turned on edge to even it up, and as the band is placed in position, the stack is allowed to finish turning over. This must be done gradually as the band is put on and as the stack is placed on the large slate now in the sitter's lap. This "turning" of the stack brings the message slate to the bottom, message side upwards. The sitter is now requested to place his palms on the stack and in due time he finds his message. This is very effective and easy to perform. The slates must not be placed on the table before they are examined, but must be held in the left hand during the examination and cleaning of the slates by the sitter. Should they be laid on the table the effect of the lower slate can be seen.

When the sitter is examining the eight small slates in the beginning, the medium should not stack them up too evenly; for if the stack is very neat, and the message slate should be dropped onto the stack out of position, it would attract notice.

VIII.

There is a lady medium in Omaha who is the wife of a prominent citizen. She is afflicted, being nearly blind. This lady, in her seances, produces large quantities of cut flowers, which she claims to materialize from their "astral forms." Most persons would think that a lady of her standing, and afflicted in the manner she is, would not deceive.

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

An honorary member of the "Society for Psychical Research" photographed her cabinet and flowers, and presented two of the photographs to me. It is from these that the two accompanying illustrations were made. This lady also wrote up the case of this medium, and with the write-up, forwarded the photographs to the society.

I have never witnessed one of her seances myself, but I have talked to several who have done so. They are almost all firm believers. The flowers are nature's own production, and have nature's
sap within them. They are composed of cells formed by growth, the same as other plants. All of this can be verified under the microscope. The spirits claim to dematerialize these flowers and bring

the "astral forms" of them through space; and then through the occult powers of the medium, they are enabled to materialize them again for the benefit of unbelieving mortals.
I have good reason to believe that her flowers are furnished by a greenhouse in Council Bluffs. Some years ago before the medium was afflicted by failing eyesight, and when she was a widow,
She would allow her clothing to be examined by the ladies, and would then, after the lights were lowered, walk about within the circle and produce flowers, presenting them to different individuals with a suitable message. My friend, the advertising agent, attended some of these seances. He noticed that the medium, after producing a number of flowers, would invariably return to a certain position in the room; after which she would produce some more flowers. She always did this in the same manner; so he began to notice who sat in the position to which she always returned.

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

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

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

One day this friend was in the medium's rooms when a messenger boy arrived with a basket of the regulation flowers. They were from Council Bluffs. My friend looked at the medium and smiled. She returned the smile and remarked, "Can you keep a secret?" She was evidently going to confide in him; but just then there appeared a caller for a private reading, and the opportunity passed. When she returned to the room, she seemed to have changed her mind, and nothing was said.

I think she uses no confederate in her present home, as she now works in full light; but I feel confident that a trap could be found in the walls or base board behind her cabinet. It is probably constructed something like the one I described in my article in The Open Court of August, 1905, through which the spirits were mate-
rialized. If this be the case and it be well made, it might be difficult to locate the secret latch that opens it.

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

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

IX.

In the spiritualistic part of the realm of trickery, fashion has played a not unimportant rôle. As soon as the first mediums could induce the spirits of the departed to return to this earth and rap on tables and furniture, the fashion rapidly spread and mediums all over the country sprang up with exactly these same powers. The fashion remains to this day; although there is a book on the market, being a confession of one of the founders of this religion, to the effect that her work was fraudulent. As soon as a leading medium spoke of his magnetic powers, all of the mediums in the country had magnetic powers, which, strange to say, could act on wood and could also act in ways in which magnetism was never known to act.

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

The next fashion was the dark seance. This always seemed so unreasonable to me, and such evidence of trickery, that I have always been surprised that otherwise intelligent persons could give credence to such performances. I have refrained from describing any of the tricks of this class heretofore, as I did not consider them of sufficient importance to justify any attention. However, a recent occurrence of this kind came under my notice, and I found the effect so great on persons of some education, that I have decided to give my experience of the case to the readers of this article.
One evening, not so very long ago, just as I was about to retire for the night, my door bell rang; and I found some ladies at my door. I knew one of them, and she explained the lateness of the call by saying that a party of friends and herself had been discussing occult phenomena, and that she had mentioned the fact that I possessed a crystal globe for crystal gazing. Immediately all of the ladies were full of enthusiasm, and she could get no peace until she brought them to me.

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

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

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

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

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

Soon after the lights were put out, the medium passed into a trance state, while the sitter securely held her. Soon the sitter felt a breeze pass over her face as if an invisible hand had passed in front of it; and then she heard raps on her chair, on an adjoining piece of furniture, and in fact all around her. Next, something touched her on the head and person lightly, and almost frightened her to death. Meanwhile the medium was talking and describing, for the sitter’s identification, certain spirits that were present.

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

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

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

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

She insisted that the inexplicable part of it all was how the medium had discovered her secret. She said, "It must be spirits, or else it is mind-reading." I said I will show you something, myself, if you will step into an adjoining room." I handed her a sheet of paper with six lines drawn across it, and requested her to write a name in each space; all to be names of living persons but one, which was to be the name of a dead person. As soon as she did this, I cut them apart, as described in my article in the August Open Court of 1905, and folded them into billets.

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

I describe this here for the benefit of readers who may not have read my former article. I also had her write down a number of places and diseases, among which was the place of her friend's death and the disease of which she died. I then told her the correct ones, where and of which, her friend died, this trick being the same as performed by the great medium Schlossenger.

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

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

The mediums arrived at my home in due time, and in looking over my paintings and pictures, ran across a couple of photographs of myself performing a decapitation act. This was their first inkling that I was a performer. Next, they happened to mention the name of a certain dealer in tricks for mediums, but they did not speak of him in this capacity, but in the capacity of a medium instead. I did not know that this gentleman ever traveled as a medium himself, and so stated; but they insisted that he had. Whether they be right or not as to this, I do not know; but I showed my knowledge of him, and the address of his firm, whereupon the gentleman asked me if I had seen his catalogue. I replied that I had it and that I was a performer of many tricks and could give him some valuable instruction if he desired. This put him entirely at his ease and he seemed to regard me as a member of the profession; and from this time on he talked openly of the work, the various tricks, and the tricks of the many mediums over the country whom he knew quite well. He spoke of the "Camp" in Indiana and of the mediums he met there, and told many amusing anecdotes.
We put in the afternoon instructing each other, and he showed me a neat billet and slate test that he and his wife used, and also described his materializing work in a laughable manner. He seemed to have a thorough knowledge of the methods by which two of Chicago's most celebrated mediums produce their spirit paintings, etc., etc. He however all along insisted that although he had this knowledge of trickery, (which he could not well avoid, traveling around in this business as he did), that his wife was a genuine medium. He openly acknowledged his materializing was a smooth trick, but said that to make a living in this business, certain tricks were a necessity. He insisted on the marvelous powers of his wife, however, and it was evident that they intended to perform for me and leave me in the dark on this part of the question.

As soon as it was dark I repaired to a dark room and took a seat with the lady. She placed a slate on her lap for me to place my palms on, and asked me to place the two palms closely together allowing my thumbs to contact each other their entire length. She now said, "Mr. Abbott I will place my hands on yours in this manner." As she said this she placed a palm on each of my hands, and then she said, "If I should lift either hand you could tell it, could you not?" She illustrated this by alternately lifting either hand. I was sure I could tell if either were removed, and I informed her to that effect.

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

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

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

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

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

Sometimes I decided to humor her and I made a reply. When such was the case I found that the raps would answer so quickly, with me, or rather after me, as to appear to be simultaneous with me. However, I saw plainly that they followed my own answers: but so very quickly that to the uninitiated they would have appeared to be simultaneous with, or even ahead of one's own answers. This effect is due to the way the answers attract the attention so strongly, coming in such a mysterious manner, that I was tempted to forget I had answered the questions. I am sure persons in general would have forgotten this fact, for they would have been so much more impressed with the performance and startled, that they would have been laboring under strong excitement; whereas I was perfectly cool, knowing it was a trick. There is much difference in the effect when one knows such a thing is a trick, and does not think some supernatural agency is at work.

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

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

I knew that she was touching me, and making the raps with her free hand; and that she did the talking in the trumpet; and also that the lights were a piece of gauzy silk dyed with a preparation containing "Balmain's Luminous Paint." I was surprised at the illusion to the sense of touch, for it felt precisely as if both her hands rested on mine. If any of my readers will try this on any of their friends in the dark and not explain the secret to them, they will find the illusion is perfect. It only requires boldness. There is no one to whom this is unknown, who can tell in the dark that two hands do not rest on the backs of his hands. The subject must of course place the two palms very closely together, allowing his thumbs to contact each other their entire length.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I may mention that Mrs. C— had a sitting with this medium again on the same evening that I did; and that she insisted to me afterwards, that two hands touched her, one on each side of her face, at the same instant. This shows the average person's lack of memory when describing little details. I asked her if her face were not first touched on one side, and then quickly afterwards on the other; and she admitted that such might have been the case. I will say that when my wife had a sitting with this medium, there was a very dim light in an adjoining hall; and as my wife faced a transom she could dimly see the medium manipulating her free arm. The medium was unaware of the slight light shining through the transom and of the fact that she was between my wife and this light.

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

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

Truly, not much reliance can be put in miraculous tales related second-hand of such performances. One can only test such things by seeing the details oneself.

X.

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

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

The medium to whom I just referred uses none of these traps, neither does he submit himself to any of the various “rope ties”
which are so numerous. He says that doing so only creates suspicion. He trusts entirely to the loyalty of a few confederates and ardent believers, who are seated in the front row and who see to it that "conditions" are not disturbed.

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

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

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

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

The silk for his skirt and waist, is ordinary white silk. It is prepared with a most elaborate and beautiful design of vines, leaves, roses, and so forth, painted on it with the undiluted "Balmain" paint. This appears many times more brilliant than the gauze. His crown, beads, and jewels are also painted with the pure paint. They are very brilliant. All parts not painted are in perfect darkness. His face can not be seen except when he wears a beautiful mask dimly illuminated, or when he places a piece of the luminous gauze over it, allowing the gauze to shape to, and cling to his features.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The medium then worked very hard securing proper make-up material for the evening. At the proper time the “spirit” of the lady appeared dressed in a most gorgeous bridal costume of the greatest beauty. Her face was in darkness and she spoke only in whispers. She held the most beautiful lilies-of-the-valley in her hands, and her costume was covered with orange blossoms. Some of the flowers were luminous. The sight was so beautiful that the judge was deeply affected and shed tears. The “spirit” walked towards him and held out her little finger, on which the judge slipped the diamond, which the medium now wears.

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

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

XI.

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

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

There was another told me of this same medium, and he stated to me that he had bought two slates and took them with him to the medium's parlors. That these slates positively never left his hands, and yet he received a similar message.

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

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

During the time that the medium was giving the first sitter the verbal reading, the concealed assistant was writing the message on subjects which the medium adroitly hit upon in his conversation, and which he cunningly caused the sitter to admit and discuss with him. Naturally the sitter said many things which he forgot immediately; and the operator being very expert in this mental work, even secured his name in the conversation, by properly exciting the sitter in a certain description of an important event then in the process of occurring in his life. Of course the assistant, hearing all this information, was able to elaborate a message in which all this information was used to very telling advantage.

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

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

The medium, it must be understood, was directly in front of the sitter with his arms extending forward towards the sitter, and his fingers grasping the ends of the slates by their frames. The sitter’s arms were extended towards the medium, passing under the lower edge of the slates which were held edgewise in a vertical position, and his palms were pressed against the surface of the slate next to the medium. The sitter’s palms thus faced himself, and the slates were held vertically, in a position between his palms and his own face. They were supported at the ends by pressure from the medium’s fingers on their edges. It is very important that the reader form a good mental picture of this, if he desires to understand the trick thoroughly.

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

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

The medium now began a very interesting talk to the sitter; and as his assistant quietly slipped out from behind the bed with the prepared slate, the medium’s conversation became very animated and almost violent. He also applied most of the pressure of his fingers to the forward slate; and relaxing the pressure on the upper side of the edge of the rear slate, he allowed it to tilt back an inch at the top. The assistant took hold of it from behind the sitter, lifted it out and substituted the prepared slate in its place, immediately retiring behind the bed with the discarded slate. The medium now grew more calm; and bringing the slates forward from the head of the sitter into the sitter’s lap, he placed his own palms on them for a time and then asked the sitter to examine them for a message. When the sitter remarked that he did not believe the writing was his mother’s, the medium stated that his guide did the writing at the dictation of the sitter’s mother.
In the second case I described, wherein the sitter purchased and brought his own slates with him, the same tactics were followed except that the assistant could not prepare the message in advance of the writing experiment. He, of course, gathered the information and had a rather short message mentally prepared. It took considerably more time to perform the trick, but the operator made it so interesting for the sitter that this was not noticed. The assistant had to slip out at the proper time, take the rear slate, retire and write the message, bring it back and replace it, and then again retire.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XII.

I can not better bring this paper to a close than by describing a very novel seance which I attended recently. It was a dark seance; but the most unusual part was that the work was really billet work, and it was performed in the most complete darkness.

This trick is but little known at present and the effect is simply beyond description. We called at the medium's parlors, and were each given a small white card and an envelope. We were instructed to write on the cards the questions we desired answered, to address them to our spirit friends, and to sign our own names, as is usual in such cases. We were also advised to let no one know what we had written, and to seal the cards in the envelopes. Wax was furnished, so that those who desired could seal their envelopes in this
manner as an extra precaution. A number of the guests took advantage of this offer.

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

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

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

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

These tests were all given in the most complete darkness; after which the medium requested that some committee come to her and receive the unopened envelopes in the darkness, before the lights were lighted. This was done.

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

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

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

She now takes the flash-light out of her pocket and proceeds under cover of the sack to read the questions and give the tests. The room being in total darkness, the subjects never know what the medium has done or is doing, but consider that she is in a partial trance.

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

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

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

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

He said that really mediums do not care for performing for spiritualists so much, as they expect so much for their money; and if given a fine piece of work, they accept it as a matter of course. Mystery, he said, has become commonplace to such people. It is the more intelligent class, who call themselves "investigators," that are willing and able to pay "good money" for a medium's services.

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

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

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

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