

REVELATIONS OF AN EX-MEDIUM.

COMMUNICATED BY THE EDITOR.

Some years ago while investigating some of the secrets of spiritualism I met a fervent spiritualist in the person of Miss Abby A. Judson, daughter of the famous missionary to Tibet, Dr. Adoniram Judson, and in talking of frauds she called my attention to a book which was written as she told me by one of the most successful mediums of the United States, who, however, after eighteen years of mediumistic experiences had given up the profession and entered practical life. In doing so he had deemed it proper to unburden his conscience and make a general confession of his frauds which appeared in 1891 under the title *Revelations of a Spirit Medium or Spiritual Mysteries Exposed, A Detailed Explanation of the Methods Used by Fraudulent Mediums.* By A. Medium.

As soon as the book appeared the former colleagues of our ex-medium made such urgent remonstrances, backing them at the same time by sufficient payment, that he withdrew the book from the market, and they had the whole edition, so far as it was in their power, destroyed.

Nevertheless there were some copies of these *Revelations of a Spirit Medium* still to be had which they had been unable to lay hands on, but these could only be procured secretly, and Miss Judson had a friend who was willing to sell them for \$5.00 a piece, the original price of this paper-bound volume printed on cheap paper having been 50 cents.

I procured the book and discovered that it had been copyrighted. At the Library of Congress I found the entry made by a certain Mr. Charles F. Pidgeon, who accordingly must have been the author of the book. This is corroborated by the fact that that same gentleman was indeed a medium of high repute in the seventies and eighties of the last century, but in 1891 had withdrawn from this rather dubitable profession and settled down in business. I have been unable to ascertain any further facts concerning him, but I learn that the remainder of the edition of this book was acquired by Leo L. Williams & Co., now of Syracuse, Ind., and upon inquiry we learn that there are only six copies left which can still be had at the price of \$5.00 each.

The book does not contain any startling revelations, for to a calm observer of spiritualistic circles, it is the story of a medium as we might expect it to be. Nevertheless it is an eye-opener to those who have been puzzled by the so-called spiritualistic phenomena, for it contains many revelations which will be astonishing to believers as well as those who have come under the influence of spiritualist seances on account of the many striking successes of the tests

given out by mediums. The anonymous author of the book says in the preface:

"The author has been a working medium for the past twenty years and is not guessing or theorizing in what he has written. . . . Nothing but facts and actual experiences will be mentioned."

He speaks of himself in the course of his explanations as follows:

"The writer was, himself, under the eye, and in the pay, as medium, of a gentleman investigating for three years, not only not being detected at any tricks but making a firm Spiritualist of him. I will guarantee, too, that of all the phenomena produced in that time, the writer was the sole proprietor thereof, not being in league with the devil, as has often been said of him by ignoramuses, nor yet having any special pull in the spirit world."

He adds on page 199:

"The writer will probably bring down on his head the curses of many hundreds of mediums, for, if this work is very widely read, there will be few mediums save lecturers who can do business, with any degree of safety from exposure."

The book, as the author says, is no "literary gem." The style is frequently careless and not free from grammatical mistakes, nor is the matter divided into chapters as we ought to expect of a well-written book. But considering the fact that there are so many believers in spiritualism who think that because one or another medium is a fraud there is no reason why there may not be honest mediums whose tests and manifestations are genuine, we propose to reproduce a number of passages from Mr. Pidgeon's book. Since the book is out of print and with the exception of a few rare copies is almost inaccessible, we think to help the cause of truth in making these confessions of an ex-medium better known. We let Mr. Pidgeon tell his own story.*

THE FIRST SEANCE I ATTENDED.

The first "seance" attended by the writer was one given in his native city, by a man reputed so wonderful that he found it impossible not to go to him just once, anyway. Maledictions on that first seance, for it changed the whole course of his then honorable life and led to one of deception and adventure!

The "medium" referred to was a young man, of apparently twenty-seven years, of blonde complexion and slight build, with a prepossessing face and manners. His voice was soft and low, and pleasantly modulated. He was not, certainly, a man from whom you could expect anything resembling dishonesty, from his appearance.

The seance was held in the house of a well-known, wealthy citizen, a Spiritualist, and thorough gentleman. The writer was accompanied by his sister, and besides themselves there were present ten couples. The fee was two dollars, or three dollars per couple. His audience on that evening netted him thirty-six dollars; quite a

* All portions in the larger type are quoted from Mr. Pidgeon's book, *Revelations of a Spirit Medium*.

snug little remuneration for two hours of his time. The company numbered two "skeptics" beside the writer. At a few minutes before eight o'clock the company were ushered into the "seance-room," which was the host's dining-room. The "cabinet" was constructed in one corner of the room, by hanging across it two curtains of double-faced canton-flannel, of a dark maroon color. The curtains lapped one over the other about six inches in the middle of the front.

A thorough inspection of the cabinet was desired, and with several of the others present the writer did his utmost to discover the "nigger in the fence," but, after a thorough inspection was forced to admit that there was nothing suspicious in or about it. Another gentleman and himself then had the pleasure of taking the medium into an adjoining room and exploring his pockets, which they did most thoroughly. All they contained was a few letters, a breast pocket book, his handkerchief, pocket-knife and a few coins. As the breast pocket book could not contain any great amount of apparatus, they passed it without opening. They were satisfied that there was nothing about his person that could aid him in deception, and so reported to the audience on their return to the seance-room.

Everything now being in readiness, the medium seated himself in a chair, after first bringing a tambourine, guitar, tea bell, tin trumpet and pair of castanets and depositing them inside the cabinet. After being seated he proffered some pieces of rope and stated that any one was at liberty to bind his hands and feet or secure him in any way they saw fit, in order to preclude the possibility of his having the use of any of his members during the continuance of the seance. Again did the writer, in company with the only other skeptical gentleman in the company, exert all his ingenuity in binding the medium so that he felt positively assured that he would still be in the chair when the seance closed.

After the tying was finished the writer would have wagered any amount, that it was an utter impossibility for the medium to free himself. He would not take those chances with his money to-day. He has learned better. Medium and chair was now picked up and deposited in the cabinet and the curtains drawn.

We had no more than reached our seats when the guitar was seen gyrating around in space over the top of the cabinet, with no visible contact with anything. The light had been shaded until you could just distinguish the forms of the sitters, without being able to discern their features. After a few seconds the guitar was joined by the tin trumpet, and out of it came a voice, saying:

"I am the spirit father of Mr. B——, and my name is J—— B——," giving his name in full.

This "test" was instantly recognized by one of the gentlemen, and there followed a common-place message to his daughter-in-law, the wife of Mr. B., who was present. While this was transpiring the guitar had disappeared into the cabinet again.

As soon as the speaking had ceased and the trumpet fallen to the floor, we were requested to examine the condition of things in the cabinet. Again the skeptics were permitted to do the investigating. We found the medium in precisely the condition in which we had left him at the beginning, it not appearing that he had stirred.

We had not reached our seats, which were distant about eight feet from the cabinet, when the guitar again made its appearance, and began playing an air of great beauty, the entire instrument being visible, but the hands that created the music upon it could not be seen. The music produced was subdued, soft and sweet, as though the strings were being manipulated by very gentle, soft finger-tips. The skeptics were now very much interested. Again the horn joined the guitar, and when the latter had ceased its music, announced that its name was W—— E——, son of Mr. and Mrs. E——. The horn was correct again, and after giving a message, in which he gave some instructions concerning his pony that the parents still kept, the horn fell to the floor of the cabinet, and an examination disclosed everything as we had last seen it.

The medium appeared to be in a trance, or sleep, his eyes closed, teeth set and breathing heavily. We had just turned our back on the cabinet after our examination when a shapely white hand protruded through the opening in the curtains. Before we had seated ourselves there were two, three, four, all of different sizes, and doing considerable finger-snapping, thus doing away with the idea of rubber hands or stuffed gloves. Then came a bare foot at the bottom of the curtain, and in response to a request, by one of the circle the toes were wiggled.

No one was allowed to touch the hands or feet that appeared; but it was evident to any one in possession of one of his five senses that they were human hands and feet and not rubber or wax, even did we not know that nothing of the kind had been carried in by the medium. After a few moments of these "manifestations," another examination of the cabinet and medium was made, and everything found satisfactory.

Now, the tea-bell began ringing and was joined by the castanets and the tambourine. Ever and anon one or the other of the in-

struments would swoop around above the cabinet and disappear again. They seemed to be flying about in all parts of the cabinet and to be traveling with great swiftness and force; and it appeared as though the medium's eyes stood a fair chance of being decorated in black. Another examination and everything found satisfactory.

The writer was wavering, and was most intensely interested, to the great delight of his sister. The horn now requested that the company sing "Sweet Bye and Bye." Whilst the company were singing they were joined by the horn in a deep and powerful voice, which claimed afterward that it was at the time, John King, the medium's main "control."

After the song was finished a rustling noise was heard from the cabinet and presently the curtains were agitated, and slowly a face presented itself at the opening. Plainly, it was a face, but it was not recognized. Then other faces appeared, but without recognition. Once more the guitar strikes up its music, and during its continuance the curtains opened sufficiently to reveal to our astonished gaze a form, draped from head to foot in a dazzling white robe, in which there appeared to be a great many yards of material used. The face, in this instance was much plainer, and in fact, was recognized by one of our number, who, however, said nothing until the form announced its name as "Mrs. E— L—, mother of the lady sitting next our host."

The form spoke in a loud whisper, and no movement of the lips were visible. It stood stock still, and might have been mistaken for a dummy were it not that the face was so absolutely identified by the lady it claimed as daughter, and the full name it gave being entirely correct. The form remained in sight for a period of about twenty seconds, and after it had disappeared, the horn announced that the daughter carried the mother's watch, and that it contained the photo of her father. This the lady declared to be correct, and after the seance exhibited the watch with the photo inside, and the name given by the spirit graven on the inside of the back lid.

The lady declared that she had never before met the medium. The props were knocked from under the writer's materialism in beautiful shape. Other forms now presented themselves and four of them were recognized.

One of the faces was in exact likeness to an uncle of the writer's, and he was almost paralyzed with astonishment, and ready to throw up his hands in surrender, when his sister, addressing the spirit, said: "Uncle L—," for she, too, had recognized the face,

"have you anything to say to brother? Tell him something to convince him."

The writer was just about to say that it required no more evidence to convince him of the possibilities of spirit return, when the apparition spoke, saying: "Indeed, I should be pleased to grant the lady's request, but not being the spirit I am mistaken for, I cannot do so. I am the spirit of S— W— and the cousin of Mrs. D—." The lady named said she had never seen him in life; but there was a resemblance to a photograph of him, in their family album.

None of the forms or faces remained more than from five to twenty seconds.

Now, if this was the work of the medium, why did he not take the opportunity presented of palming off one of his dummies on one, who had already accepted it as an uncle, and make an absolute test of it, instead of denying that it was the spirit supposed to be, and make an uncertain test of it? This thought also struck the gentleman skeptic who assisted the writer in the examinations.

Occurring as it did, it certainly went far toward sustaining the medium as honest, and having no part in the presentation of the phenomenon. *Both* skeptics were by this time pretty well *hors du combat*. All that was now required was that some spirit friend or message present itself that could be recognized, and the turn was made.

The horn now made itself heard again and began announcing the names of the spirits present. In all, about twenty were given, and eleven of them recognized. Among them were four full names of the author's deceased relatives, two of them giving date of death and the cause thereof and sending messages of love to members of the family not present, in each case giving the name of the one the message was for.

My sister informed me that she had never even heard of this particular medium before that week, and this was the first visit of any member of the family to him. The writer struck his arms and capitulated.

After another examination of the condition of things in the cabinet, which resulted satisfactorily, there was a regular bedlam of noises, begun, made by each one of the instruments, setting out on an erratic aerial excursion about the confines of the cabinet. Occasionally one or two of the instruments would dart up out of the top of the cabinet, and after executing a few fantastic movements, go below and join the general rumpus on the inside. It was, apparently,

impossible for the medium, even were he free, to put the instruments where they were seen, and besides this, the entire instrument was visible, and it was impossible to detect anything in connection with them, they seeming to float about the atmosphere as a balloon. Certain it was that the guitar could not perform on itself, and there was no human hand visible, to cause the vibration of the strings. The only thing appearing strange, regarding the guitar, was that only one air was executed upon it.

Immediately the rumpus ceased another inspection of the cabinet was made and everything found as it had been. The trumpet now requested that a writing tablet and pencil be placed in the cabinet. This was done and in a few minutes five messages of greeting, from the "controls," were handed out. One was in English, and signed by John King; another in French; another in German; another in Spanish, and the last in Hebrew, which no one present could read. It was taken the next day, by the writer and others, to a Hebrew clothing dealer, who read and interpreted it with ease, and stated that it was elegantly written. The medium claimed to have no knowledge of any language save English and was unable to speak that correctly, which was a fact, for he did badly mangle the language every time he spoke.

While we were waiting the thrusting out of the sixth sheet, the medium was heard to moan and yawn and move uneasily. In the course of a minute and a-half he called for light, and stepped out of the cabinet, freed from the ropes that had bound him less than two minutes before.

An examination revealed the fact that the medium had not only slipped out of the ropes but that every knot had been untied, and the ropes lay in a heap in the corner. Think of it. Something had untied the knots in less than two minutes that had required ten minutes of the time of two men.

The instruments were handled and examined and found to be perfectly innocent of any mechanism not properly belonging to them with the exception of a small hole, about the eight of an inch in diameter, bored into the neck of the instrument, on the lower side and near the body of the guitar. The medium explained that it was for the purpose of attaching a music holder to the instrument, and as he was stopping with our host of the evening, he soon brought the holder and put it in position. It answered the purpose admirably, and satisfactorily explained the presence of the hole.

There, reader, is an unvarnished recital of the phenomena occurring at the first seance witnessed by the writer. In fact, it does not

sound as wonderful as it appeared. You have probably read the statements made by Spiritualists that appeared, if anything, even less wonderful than the above narrative, and pooh-poohed the idea. You said it was trickery or the Spiritualist was mesmerized, or was stretching the truth. You asserted it was trickery,—you *knew* it was; but knowing it, you could not explain the method used to produce the results, hence the conclusion is that you *knew* nothing about it. You may have *believed* it the result of legerdemain, but should have so stated. If you knew how foolish is the theory of Mesmerism; how immensely it is out of the way, you would never advance it again.

Wonderful, was it? That was the opinion of the writer, especially when he had learned that the medium had never before been in that portion of the country and had never before met any of the parties present on that evening, save the host, and he only within two days. The medium had a reputation among the Spiritualist organs as being the finest physical test medium in the country at that time, and well did he sustain that reputation.

Reader, how did he do these things? You give it up. So did the author; at that time. Since that time the writer has been a celebrated medium for a number of years, and in due time it will be his pleasure to tell you how it was all accomplished so plainly that you can do it yourself. When the writer left that room it was as a believer in spiritual phenomena.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]