The Miner's Dream

Magicians and Mystagogues in Gold Rush California

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Introduction

The origin of this extended essay was a whimsical self-imposed challenge to see if I could discover who was the first magician to have performed in California. I thought it might be possible because California, understood as anything but a remote and sparsely populated wilderness, suddenly sprang into existence in the American mind with the discovery of gold there in 1848.[1] Beginning from that moment, the entire outside world rushed in, and its day-by-day records were contained in the newspapers that were there on the ground and that rapidly multiplied. I have searched the records I could find. I arbitrarily limited my search to its first quarter century, from when gold was discovered to 1875. Even by 1855, the "rush" had slackened somewhat—although plenty of miners and prospectors were still at work and finding new deposits to work—but by 1875, the state had matured. There were plenty of families by then, not just roving prospectors and adventurers. Farmers, merchants, and industries were thriving. Roads had stretched themselves into much of the interior, and the force of law had settled in. The transcontinental railroad had been completed. California had become integrated with the rest of the country and was beginning to produce its own home-grown magicians. So I chose 1875, a quarter-century or so after the Gold Rush began, as an arbitrary cut-off date for my investigations.

Early 1848 was when gold was discovered, but it was also a moment important for magic because of another event, which occurred at practically the same time. It was ever afterwards regarded by those who came to call themselves "Spiritualists" as the opening of a great New Era of communications between Heaven and Earth, between the spirits of

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[1] It is possible that magicians performed in California before this, though I have not found a record of it. It is clear, however, that circus, theatrical, and musical troupes, of both Mexicans and Americans, performed in the mission towns, and had done so, infrequently, for years. A letter from "J. E. D.," for example ("Amusements and Celebrities of Monterey," New Orleans *Times-Picayune*, 4 August 1847), described his attending Thomas W. Tanner's small circus entertainment, in Monterey, which included a strong-man act, a wire walker, and a contortionist (all Tanner and his family), which took place "in a building formerly used as a Mexican circus." These usually consisted of trapeze and wire artists, acrobats, and clowns.

departed mortals (which they sometimes called "angels") and those still in the flesh. The date was fixed as March 1848 because of the alleged visitation of invisible, but somewhat communicative spirits to the young Fox girls in Hydesville, New York. Many people took up "investigations" of the subject and became convinced that departed spirits could communicate with us by means of telegraphic-like rappings heard on tables and under the floor, by seemingly inexplicable movements of "ponderable bodies" around a room, by the writing of messages without a seemingly visible writer, and, as the investigators persisted, by the materialization of physical objects in the dark, and by the communication of impossible knowledge of facts to entranced "mediums" by their spirit "controls." The belief spread rapidly to California, along with those who immigrated there. It challenged the assumption on which "modern magic" was (and continues to be) performed, which is that magicians only pretend to be magicians, that the illusions they perform are not the result of true magic, but of skillful and even delightful jugglery. That was a *sina qua non* of their profession, which had defined itself, in essence, as unmasking miraculous claims.

As a result of this challenge, magicians' repertoire began to include burlesques and exposés of the particular tricks behind spirit mediums' production of "empirical evidence" for belief in what amounted to *real* magic, effected by invisible spirits. That reformation of magic performance occurred during the period covered in this essay and it is evident in what magicians offered their California audiences. Stage magicians and public spirit mediums were engaged in a point-and-counterpoint struggle, and so, to tell the story of magic performance, I have also ventured to tell the story of Spiritualism and of the other "para-scientific" practices, like divination and hypnotism that relied on a manipulation of occult, invisible powers.

The year 1848 was also a signal one because European nations were shaken then in a series of attempted democratic revolutions which, incidentally, drove many European democratic agitators out of their countries and into new adventures in California, where the future was being materialized. Their convictions about man and nature would underscore those of those Americans, beholden to no one but themselves for their own fortunes, who traveled west to the Land of Gold and seemingly infinite opportunity. The proud, self-made man assumed he at liberty to create his own reality. He saw the world as governed by material, though sometimes invisible forces that could be bent to his will. It

was a world of mind over matter. This too shaped the culture in which magicians performed. The solitary gold prospector was a prime exemplar of the man in which this speculative vision of material fortune made manifest by imagination and will reigned supreme. He was deeply immured in living a dream of future fortune, of materializing his own success. California, from the very beginning of the Gold Rush, was indeed a "dream factory." And it remains so, not just as the home of Hollywood and the entertainment industry, but as an unexampled incubator and refuge of believers in psychic powers.

Finally, as I was trolling through the sources, looking for magicians who performed during the Gold Rush days, I unraveled the career of an almost completely forgotten magician, Daniel Martin, whose tale I have attempted to tell here. He intrigued me because he quite obviously did not just breeze through the gold regions on the way to playing engagements elsewhere. He made himself thoroughly at home in California and followed the trail of miners out into all the mineral strikes in the West. He thrived in the atmosphere of the mining camps. He deliberately sought out his audiences there. Behind this entire essay is a meditation on why he would have delighted in doing that.

1 Gold Fever and the Magical Imagination

Newspaper editors of the mid-nineteenth century published free-floating miniature mythic tales about America's richest magician, Signor Blitz (Antonio Van Zandt), in which he played little practical jokes on ordinary folks through ventriloquism or legerdemain. By throwing his voice, he would make a mule that was taking a beating chastise his cruel master; or would convince black stevedores that there was a man trapped inside a cotton bale; or, by legerdemain, he would produce gold rings from apples he bought from a lady fruit seller, or gold pieces from inside eggs he bought from a boy selling them on a train platform, inciting the credulous vendors to cut up all their apples or break all their eggs looking for more. Or, Blitz would pull a pack of cards and a box of dice out of the waistcoat of a minister who had been speaking against gambling, or extract an impossible stash of food out of the hat of a serious young man on a boat who had chosen to forego eating at the table with the other passengers to read a book.

In one of these stories, however, he played the role of the slick sharper who got out-sharped, the conjurer who was out-conjured. It was said to have happened out in the gold fields of California:

> In California, when the diggings were paying well, Signor Blitz visited a gulch, and, before a large audience, exhibited his legerdemain. During the performance, he took out his handkerchief, threw it into the air and caught it again, when he took a twenty-dollar gold piece out of it, asking the boys if they could do that. Old Pete, a "forty-niner," who had never changed his mining shirt since he came into the diggings, immediately went upon the platform, took off his shirt, dipped the tail of it in a bucket of water, held

it up, and wrung out $39.50 in gold dust, including fifteen pounds of subsoil. Blitz took the next mule train.[2]

In reality, Blitz never made it out to the gold fields of California, although part of the gold fields made it to him. When he was playing at P. T. Barnum's American Museum on Broadway in New York City in July 1849, Barnum had on display there "The Lump of Gold, weighing over seven pounds and brought from California by Lieut. Beale," engaged for a week.[3]

Blitz may have made magic by materializing gold out of thin air, but what could he do to impress a crowd in a land, the Golden State, where anyone, after struggling mightily with no luck for years, might all of a sudden trip in a silty stream, reach down, and pull out of the mud a gold nugget the size of his hand? A prospecting miner's fevered dream.

Many of the camps and towns built on such a dream had a magical "now you see it, now you don't" nature, appearing almost overnight, and sometimes disappearing just as fast. Over and over again, writers describing the evanescent and almost miraculous transformation of the California wilderness into towns and then cities with the trope of a great magician—or The Great Magician—touching his magic wand onto what had been a blank. The inhabitants of these places were hungry ghosts aiming to materialize wealth out of nothing, or sometimes were "made" men who pretended that nothing had happened, but who carried gold dust and nuggets in their breeches or hidden in buckskin sacks buried under rocks. The many who were weary and disappointed craved amusement and excitement to draw them away from their endless hard work; the few who were newly rich wanted it to celebrate their good fortune. In San Francisco itself, "Men suddenly rich, squandered more in a night than until within a few months they had been able to earn, or

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[2] I see this story first in the Chicago *Daily Inter Ocean*, 27 December 1870. In far West papers, see *Deseret Evening News*, 11 January 1871; *Shasta Courier*, 14 January 1871; Rocklin, California *Placer Herald*, 18 February 1871, and others. The paragraph was resurrected and used in newspapers in the summer of 1886.

[3] Ad for Barnum's American Museum, *New York Daily Herald*, 20 July 1849. Lt. Edward F. Beale, USN, carrying dispatches from California Governor Smith from San Francisco to the federal government arrived in New York City on May 28. The lump of gold he also brought with him was worth about $1,800.

to possess, in years. Dust was plentier than pleasure, pleasure more enticing than virtue. Fortune was the horse, youth in the saddle, dissipation the track, and desire the spur."[4] All around and among them were other men, whose work consisted in one way or another in transferring gold, licitly or not, from others' pockets into theirs. A magician, one might imagine, could well make his way in such a world, entertaining others by enacting their dream of materializing gold, or even picking up some of the real stuff that was floating around the place.

It is hard now to realize the state of mind that was open to believing (or hoping for) what might be found in the unfolding exploration of the golden land of California, where one might stroll down the banks of the Feather or Sacramento rivers, lay out a picnic on a cloth and after a pleasing lunch in the sunshine, roll up the spread and shake out the gold dust. Various newspapers around the country (and then abroad in England), with tongue in cheek, ran a little squib on "California Gold Grease": "A Yankee downeaster has invented this specific for the use of gold hunters. The operator is to grease himself well, lie down on top of a hill, and then roll to the bottom. The gold and 'nothing else,' will stick to him." As the story was reprinted from 1849 to 1853, the price went up from ten dollars a box to ninety-four dollars per.

Amid the open-ended speculation about the extent of the gold fields in California, the editor of the *Nottinghamshire Guardian* chastised the editor of the *Sunday Times* of London for persisting in claiming, by means of a private sort of biblical exegesis, that the Ophir of scripture, which supplied the treasure for building Solomon's Temple, was in fact none other than California.[5] And, indeed, the boomtown in Placer County that had been first named Spanish Corral changed its name to Ophir in 1850 with a nod toward that comparison. Reports from the first wave of placer miners on the Tuolumne River assured their readers that "The most credulous mind can scarcely credit the astounding assertions which have been made with regard to those placers. The romances of ancient times are at a discount; the simple statement of facts far outwits the most wondrous dreams of the

[4] Frank Soulé, John H. Gihon, and James Nisbet, *The Annals of San Francisco* (New York: D. Appleton, 1854), 666.
[5] "California the Ophir," *Nottinghamshire Guardian*, 6 June 1850.

necromancer."[6] The entire region was a kind of What-If? magnet that, during the initial rush, seemed to be pulling the populations of entire territories toward it, the attraction certainly reaching out to the East Coast and beyond, but also west across the Pacific to Hawaii, Central and South America, and into Australasia. For a while, San Francisco Bay was clogged with ghost ships that had debouched their human cargo and then had been abandoned as everyone headed upriver into the hills, as "noiseless bells [were] ringing the ingathering of the nations," as the historian Hubert Howe Bancroft put it, in a metaphor evoking the End Times. One traveler wrote back home to New Orleans in October 1848:

> Mechanics, lawyers, and doctors, have all left for the gold region. Soldiers run from their camps, sailors from their decks, and women from their nurseries; their cradles answer for machines to wash out gold. San Francisco, Sonoma, Santa Cruz, and San Jose, are deserted of their inhabitants, and the mass is beginning to move from Monterey. … The El Dorado of fiction never prompted dreams that reveled in gold like the streams which shout their way from the mountains of California. They roll with an exulting bound, as if conscious that their pathway was paved with gold.[7]

Successive gold strikes constantly shifted the epicenter of that Land of Magic, carrying entire populations from one place to another almost overnight, as if the effervescent quality of the California atmosphere forced constant motion—as well as incessant visions. Or, as Spiritualist writer Emma Hardinge, who conducted a lecture tour there in 1864, imagined it, "The wonderful transparency of the atmosphere, and the heavy charges of mineral magnetism which permeate California, seem to be amongst other causes which peculiarly favor the vision of the seer and the production of powerful supra-mundane phenomena."[8] It is no surprise that the air was also charged with speculation,

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[6] "San Joaquin and Placer Intelligence," *Daily Alta California*, 14 May 1850.
[7] "More of the El Dorado," *New Orleans Weekly Delta*, 2 October 1848
[8] Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism* (New York: The Author, 1870), 439.

risk, venture, and dreaming. Or that James W. Marshall, the man who discovered gold at Sutter's Mill, believed he was being guided by invisible spirits.[9]

Psychics were among the gold hunters who "mined" it indirectly. Others passed the metal to them, like magic. To them, the miners themselves, as the *London Daily News* put it, were "merely the wretched slaves who pick it up for the use of others; the Aladdins sent down into the magic cave to hand up the lamp to the magician."[10] Were psychics performing "magic"? No, but there in California, it was all part of the air of plausibility, part of the believing imagination, with which the professional magician works in creating his illusions, and with which, it must be said, the con artist works his trade. The instant communities of gold seekers were saturated with "extravagant hopes which seemed to float in the very atmosphere."[11] They were thick with folks who made large drafts upon their imaginations, who endured the hardest work, took extraordinary physical risks—and all in a spirit of speculation, in the remote chance of striking a fortune.

That taste for speculation was not peculiar to the prospectors and miners, but extended out into the larger region, where stock jobbers dealt with mining shares, and bankers and politicians were part of the machinery of making something from nothing, realities from dreams. It exhibited itself as a restless disposition: "the mind seems all the time to be intently engaged upon something in another place, and the body is always pushing forward to overtake it."[12] If the fortune did not materialize then and there, then it would somewhere and sometime in the future. The "hard luck miner who moved from hardship to misery with the ease of an experienced practitioner in the art of trouble," was, it has been said, "nothing if not an optimist. As each new claim petered out, he moved on to the next, always hopeful, always sure that fortune rested at the bottom of the next pan."[13] If

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[9] Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of California*, vol. 6 (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890), 31-32 and n11. For Marshall's later enthrallment to an itinerant Spiritualist medium named Lucas, see "Reader's" letter to the editor of the *Georgetown News*, 13 December 1855.
[10] *London Daily News*, 13 January 1849.
[11] Hinton Rowan Helper, *The Land of Gold; Reality versus Fiction* (Baltimore: The Author, 1855), 148.
[12] Helper, 58-59.
[13] Irwin Silber and Earl Robinson, *Songs of the American West* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), 100

this describes an "optimist," it shows how wide a meaning the word encompasses, for it also describes the glazed-eyed addicts of games of chance.

However, if the miners were driven by the dream of making a "strike," they contended against the earth itself—or against the goddess of fortune; their struggle was not with one another. Generally speaking, they were taken as "a plain, straight-forward, hard-working set of men, who attend to their own business without meddling in the affairs of others." One of their brethren, returned from the gold fields in 1855, declared that "I have found as guileless hearts amongst them as ever throbbed in mortal bosom. Genuine magnanimity or nobleness of soul, when found at all in California, must be sought among the miners."[14] These men he distinguished from the rapacious idlers, blacklegs, sharpers, robbers, and ne'er-do-wells who formed a shadow corps around them, whose struggle for fortune was neither against the earth nor *Fortuna* herself, but against the miners who did the work of gleaning the gold from the surface, panning it out of the placers, or bringing it out of the ground.

Among both groups, the miners and the miners-of-miners, there was a concentration of "the most robust, active, energetic, ambitious, enterprising and talented men" for good or for ill.[15] Yet all of them lived in a future world of fortune, a grand speculation, relatively unloosed from the influences and conditions of their former lives. The miners might live and work in the most dismal conditions, but they projected themselves into a dream of future wealth, ease, and happiness. They were enthusiasts, "adventurers" in the strict sense of the word—venturing or pointing their sights into the future, which, in the present, was the not-yet-real. They risked themselves to be the one miracle man out of the many more who failed. They had already "seen the elephant," as the saying went, but were still following its tracks deeper into the wilderness.[16] Each man had

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[14] Helper, 153.
[15] Simeon Henry West, *Life and Times of S. H. West* (Leroy, Illinois: The Author, 1908), 25.
[16] The phrase "seeing the elephant," which gained currency as early as 1840, ultimately referred to a story about a farmer who had never seen an elephant, but who wished to see one, so, hearing that a circus was coming to town, he loaded his wagon with eggs and vegetables and started for the market, thinking he might encounter the circus parade along the way. He did, but when his horses saw the elephants, they were spooked and overturned the wagon, scattering his eggs and vegetables. But, "I don't give a hang," the farmer said in an effort to console himself, "I have seen the elephant." The phrase came to be popular

more than half his head immersed in the world of golden fortune, beyond the mundane realities of the present, as one correspondent wrote in jest from Sacramento to the *New York Times* in 1849:

> Agricultur in Californy is purty much left to natur. It sticks in folks' crop to be soeing corn when they can dig gold, and so they all go to the placers to make hay while the sun shines. This is the monster deposit bank of the unervarsal world, and we're all casheres and directers. Bring yer 'taters here if you want 'em dug, we can't take the trubble to raise 'em. The only wegetable we cultyvate is the root of all evil, and if you'll send us the frutes of the airth, you can have that in exchange.[17]

Yet, if one were so disposed (and had had fairy dust blown into one's eyes), these same groups of men working the placers in the noonday sun, having abandoned their former homes and ties, might seem to be harbingers of a new era, with invisible golden threads of affinity reaching around the globe into the minds of the leaders of the European revolutions of 1848, whose purpose was avowedly to storm the old monarchies and religions and replace them with a new materialized world filled with sovereign individualists and radical progressives. As Spiritualist Eliza Farnham put it, when writing about the men who worked the diggings:

> To extract their treasures, no capital is required but perseverance and industry; and the thousands of men who have singly applied themselves to it since 1848, have aided

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among veterans of the war with Mexico and then among settlers in the West — especially during the California Gold Rush — to signify having experienced some humiliation or disappointment during their grandly hopeful adventures, e. g., not finding any gold. "When a man is disappointed in anything he undertakes, when he has seen enough, when he gets sick and tired of any job he may have set himself about, he has *'seen the elephant,'*" wrote one traveler through Texas; George Wilkins Kendall, *Narrative of the Texan Santa Fé Expedition* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1847), 109-110. (Bartlett's 1848 *Dictionary of Americanisms* says it was also used by or of girls to refer to their losing their virginity.) Physician and songwriter D. G. Robinson's "vaudeville" called, *Seeing the Elephant*, opened at the New Phoenix Theatre in San Francisco on March 23, 1850.

[17] "Another Humorous Letter," *Daily Alta California*, 10 December 1849.

> throughout the world, more powerfully than any contemporary laboring class, the growth of that republican sentiment whose rugged justice threatens the throne and smiles upon the hovel. Success to them, not only in their gold quest, but may true manhood, with all its honor, purity, and faithfulness, be among them, and abide with them, whether success or failure await them in it.[18]

She was referring to the ideal "new man" of revolutionary democracy. That self-sovereign individual was answerable to no higher authority than himself, all others being brought up or down to his level. It was certainly a "Protestant" sort of "new man" at liberty, the very type of the typical American. Rev. Walter Colton (1797-1851) was a Congregationalist minister, a graduate of the Andover-Harvard Seminary, the co-founder of California's first newspaper, *The Californian*, and a friend of Andrew Jackson. His memoirs about the earliest miners of the California Gold Rush display a mix of contradictory observations. He had been in California since 1846 and had been the alcalde of Monterey at the time gold was first discovered. In one memoir entry, for September 16, 1848, he wrote:

> The gold mines are producing one good result; every creditor who has gone there is paying his debts. … All distinction indicative of means have vanished; the only capital required is muscle and an honest purpose. I met a man to-day from the mines in patched buckskins, rough as a badger from his hole, who had fifteen thousand dollars in yellow dust, swung at his back. Talk to him of brooches, gold-headed canes, and Carpenter's coats![19] Why he can unpack a lump of gold that would throw all Chestnut-street [in Philadelphia] into spasms. And there is more where this came from. *His* rights in the great domain are equal to yours, and his prospects of getting it out vastly better. With these advantages, he bends the knee to no man, but strides along in his buckskins,

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[18] Eliza W. Farnham, *California, In-doors and Out* (New York: Dix, Edwards & Company, 1856), 353.

[19] "… the Evening Mirror, in the city of New York. … is particularly devoted to light, elegant literature, and fashionable what-nots, such as the opera, paintings, Carpenter's coats, dinner parties, Broadway, and the habits of a do-nothing, eat-all, self-illustrating kind of life, which certain people, with means, visible or invisible, contrive to pass." "Fashion," *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, 17 December 1844.

> a lord of earth by a higher prescriptive privilege than what emanates from the partiality of kings. His patent is medallioned with rivers which roll over golden sands, and embossed with mountains which have lifted for ages their golden coronets to heaven. Clear out of the way with your crests, and crowns, and pedigree trees and let this democrat pass. Every drop of blood in his veins tells that it flows from a great heart, which God has made and which man shall never enslave. Such are the genuine sons of California; such may they live and die.
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> "They will not be the tyrant's slaves,
> While heaven has light, or earth has graves."[20]

The Rev. Colton, on good Congregationalist principles, declares here that kings' privileges and authorities are false "partialities," and that the buckskinned prospector gained his thoroughly democratic self-sovereignty directly from God. This was California's "new man," now that it had been freed from Spanish nobles and priests. Yet, Colton perhaps fails to see that, according to his paeon, the patent of that rough badger of a man's sovereign dignity lay entirely in the prospector's wealth in the form of gold slung on his back. Is wealth God's sign of election? The idea surely would not have been alien to a Congregationalist's Calvinist theology.

Colton, however, despite his assessment of the kingly prospector in patched buckskin, could nevertheless recognize an intimation that the Gold Rush was the dark advent, not of God's sovereign people, but rather, as the months rolled on, of a fevered hope in one's own "special election," the hope in a "strike," an enthrallment, not to God, but to the goddess Fortune. He wrote:

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[20] Rev. Walter Colton, *Three Years in California* (New York: A. S. Barnes & Co., 1850), 255-56. The last two lines are a paraphrase from Thomas Moore's 1817 poem, "The Fire-Worshippers," in *Lalla Rookh: An Oriental Romance*, in which Moore declares that the ancient Zoroastrians will never submit to Islamic rule.

> All live on drafts upon the future, and though disappointed a hundred times, still believe the results of to-morrow will more than redeem the broken pledges of to-day. Though all else may end in failure, hope is not bankrupt here.[21]

Colton's singular self-sovereign democratic prospector revealed himself, when considered in the aggregate, as something like a mote in a swarm of locusts moving over the land:

> A locality where an ounce a day can be obtained by patient labor is constantly left for another, which rumor has enriched with more generous deposits. They who decry this instability in others, may hold out for a time, but yield at last to the phrensied fickleness. I have never met with one who had the strength of purpose to resist these roving temptations. He will not swing a pick for an ounce a day, with the rumor of pounds ringing in his ears. He shoulders his implements to chase this phantom of hope.[22]

On another occasion, he described this group-minded perpetual migration as the movement of wild, insentient things, cast about upon the whim of invisible forces of nature:

> Some fifty thousand persons are drifting up and down these slopes of the Sierra, of every hue, language, and clime, tumultuous and confused as a flock of wild geese taking wing at the crack of a gun, or autumnal leaves strown on the atmospheric tides by the breath of the whirlwind. All are in quest of gold; and, with eyes dilated to the circle of the moon, rush this way and that, as some new discovery, or fictitious tale of success may suggest.[23]

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[21] Colton, 313.
[22] Colton, 292-93.
[23] Colton, 314. See also, John David Bothwick, *Three Years in California* (Edinburgh: William Blackwood & Sons, 1857), 256: "Few miners located themselves permanently in any place, and there was a large proportion of the population continually on the move."

On yet another occasion, he wrote that the fever had driven everyone out to the gold fields, and that any attempt to compel them (his servants, for example) to stay at their posts was "like attempting to drive fish into a net with the ocean before them."[24] The miners, considered *en masse*, acted neither as sovereign individuals, nor even as the birds and insects of the air, or even as mere leaves tossed about by the wind, but as inert piles of iron dust, inexorably moved by the force of magnetism. "Gold among hunters," he wrote, like a magnet in the midst of ferruginous bodies, attracts every thing to itself."[25] His self-sovereign individuals, he found, could not be kept to their honest toil, but pursued their own highest vision of where their wealth might lie. For the most part, they were gamblers and speculators. They would leave a place where a day's work would reliably pan out a *mere* half-dollar's worth of gold and wander off to try their fortune at some other place where rumors had recounted the possibility of much more. "Such is human nature," he wrote, "and a miserable thing it is, too, especially when touched with the gold fever."[26]

Such was that fever's effect. Those who had it were not elevated to the high privileges of the imagined democratic self-sovereign, but instead were made the debased slaves of speculation and chance. As Colton's years in California drew to a close, he yielded less, in his letters to Eastern newspapers, to the grandiose metaphors of praise of the region's limitless wonders with which he had earlier tried to boost immigration to the state. He pleaded for more schoolteachers, preachers, farmers, ranchers, fishermen, merchants and mechanics to come. He wanted stable families. He wanted to see the lineaments of a settled society. He attempted to warn off more gold-seekers:

> … no man should come to California under the impression that he can in a few months pick a fortune out of its mines. He may here and there light on a more productive deposit, but the chances are a hundred to one that his gains will be slenderly and laboriously acquired. He is made giddy with the reports of sudden

[24] Colton, 347.
[25] Colton, 292.
[26] Colton, 276.

> wealth; these are the rare *prizes*, while the silence of the grave hangs over the multitudinous *blanks*.[27]

What he had seen in the gold camps had dampened his enthusiasm. He had seen and admired the new settlers who had come to farm and build up the new land. But he had also seen masses of men and women who had come to plunder its gold, either to never return or, to wander endlessly in a speculative dream, so much so that in many camps, the miners spent each day merely accumulating little piles of gold dust and then each night losing them in games of Faro and Monte. Shortly before he left California to return East, he wrote of "California as she was, before gold had cankered her barbaric bliss," and scanned in his memory the camps that had gone bust, deserted by the democratic flash mobs that had once populated them:

> The bullfrog in his croaking pond, and the owl in his hooting tree, remain; but the spectator, like a ghost at the glimmer of day, hath fled. You can only dimly remember the phantom's shape and where he walked, and half doubt the dream in which he denizened and dissolved from sight. But still the gulf of vision swarms with realities—with beings where the play of life and death, joy and grief, wealth and want, are the portion of the living and the legacy of the dead.[28]

By the time he left California in 1850, the city of San Francisco, the point through which all the gold mined in California collected and dispersed, with its mass of buildings thrown up "almost as by the wand of some potent magician," was rapidly becoming the most crime-ridden city on Earth.[29] All of this he had dimly intuited, even at the very start of the Gold Rush back East, when he wrote to the *United States Gazette* in Philadelphia a letter that had indeed inflamed the gold fever. He had enthused about the riches of California compared to the meager triflings back East. But he had caught himself toward the end of the letter and added, "We are gathering the elements of a great and influential

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[27] Colton, 394.
[28] Colton, 397, 401-402.
[29] The quoted phrase is from "Improvement," *Weekly Alta California*, 31 August 1849.

community—if we are not ruined by this gold excitement. There never was yet a people strong in wealth and sound in morals, in the midst of gold and silver mines.[30]

Another example: In 1857, twenty-six-year-old John Swett, who had immigrated to California from New Hampshire several years before to look for gold, but who was now entering upon a career of teaching children and tending a vineyard, penned the lyrics to "The Miner's Song," which was set to music and published. The miner's life he depicts is one of honest, merry yeoman's work, performed out in the beautiful bosom of nature, where at night one dreams of home and loved ones far away, and where by day one needs no magic, wizardry, or sorcery to find gold, but only one's tools and one's strength:

The mountain air is fresh and cold,
    Unclouded skies bend o'er us;
Broad placers, rich in hidden gold,
    Lie temptingly before us.
We need no Midas' magic wand,
    Nor wizard rod divining;
The pickaxe, space and brawny hand
    Are sorcerers in mining.[31]

But perhaps Swett wrote this with his new young students in mind, those for whom he preferred to picture mining encampments as bucolic recreation camps. Was it true that all one needed to find gold was a pickaxe, a brawny hand, and a willingness to work? No. There were many, many men who had all these and more and yet came up with nothing, having seen the elephant. Swett himself had failed to make a strike and had finally turned

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[30] Walter Colton, "Gold in California, [letter to the *United States Gazette*, dated Monterey, Upper California, July 2d, 1848]," reprinted *Boston Courier*, 19 September 1848.
[31] John Swett and James C. Kemp, "The Miner's Song," *Hutching's California Magazine* 2.3 (September 1857): 110. Swett contributed letters about camp life to the nationally popular *Knickerbocker Magazine*. He became the father of California's public school system. The transient mining camp "Swett's Bar," on the Tuolumne River was named after him, as its founder. Evidently, he did not strike it rich there; Prentice Mulford, *Life by Land and Sea* (New York: F. J. Needham, 1889), 100.

to teaching. Something more was needed, surely, to make a "strike"—some luck, some secret knowledge, the cooperation of some chthonic power beyond one's control. One might feel one had to make a sorcerer's bargain with it. If Swett had forgotten that secret by 1857 (or was suppressing it), he was certainly still acutely aware of it back in 1854, when he was still sweating it out on the Feather River and penned this earlier version of "The Miner's Song":

A golden life is this life of mine,
Digging for dust where the gold-grains shine!
Delving deep with the pick and spade,
Where the hidden wealth of a world is laid,
And has slept for ages, in dark vaults locked,
Since earthquakes the mountain-cradles rocked!

Fools prize virtue higher than gold:
Both alike are bartered and sold:
Souls are bought by the finest dust:
Purest gold is the surest trust:
Brighter far in its dazzling dyes,
Than soul-lit glance of a maiden's eyes!

Lulled to sleep by the golden streams,
Nightly I revel in golden dreams:
Plutus binds me with burnished chains;
Fills my pockets with precious grain;
Till a 'trade' is made, and my soul is sold,
To a yellow demon, with horns of gold![32]

[32] J. Swett, "The Miner's Song," *The Knickerbocker* 43.6 (June 1854): 573. It is not surprising that this version was never set to music.

Individual miners were engaged in a grand lottery against indeterminable odds: They saw the few among them who made strikes—getting something for "nothing"—and projected themselves as one of those few. Their trials, drudgery, and degradation faded, and, in their imaginations, they lived instead in an "afterlife" of perfect ease and happiness. They lived in a romance, a community of dreams, a mass mania, as one of them described it:

> An humble citizen of an Eastern metropolis, when first the astonishing, and almost incredible tales of the gold discoveries electrified our people, I had never suffered the even tenor of my quiet pursuit in life to be disturbed by a thought of separation from the home of my infancy, but the brilliant prospects of boundless wealth in California, and a share in the great lottery crowded thick upon my fancy, and at length seized with the all prevailing mania I no longer hesitated to echo the cry of *gold—more gold*, and joined in the general rush for California.[33]

California was not filled just with gold. What it was filled with was the *dream* of gold, which is something more "magical" than the mere metal. J. Frank Dobie, the renowned tale teller of lost gold mines, described that dream, in approving tones, as being what was spiritually imperishable among the mortal dross:

> And this dream, based on facts, or based on mere hope, imagination, hallucination, aye, plain fertility in lying—who can say?—this dream will still be a reality long after the mountain trails its questers now follow have been eroded into gullies and the critical infidels of their credulity have gone to dusty oblivion. … [Of all the gold stored at Fort Knox, the gold that has already been found,] the mass lies there as inert as a chunk of lead sunk into the fathomless depths of a sunless cavern. It is the gold not yet found that draws and lifts the human spirit. Surely the root of all evil lies not in the love for this kind of money stuff.
>
> And the dreamer lives on forever,

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[33] Letter from the South Fork Feather River, (Sacramento) *Placer Times*, 2 June 1849.

While the toiler dies in a day.[34]

That dream of gold *not yet found* does draw men. It does "lift the human spirit" out of the mortal flesh. But, as with other dreams that "lift" and etherealize the spirit above the body, the spirit is thereby rendered, not immortal, but captive to a fantasy in which the spirit's obligation to the material world disappears. It is no vindication of mind over matter, of spirit over body. It is a fever, highly contagious. It could become a spiritual sickness, an unending fascination with a wraith that exacts a deep payment from its thralls.

These were men whose spiritual vision promised freedom from the material world, transcendence over it, disdain of it, the subjugation of it by the sovereign individual at liberty, beholden to no one and to nothing. As writer Prentice Mulford put it, when reminiscing later in mellowed memory about his time in the mining camps:

> What glorious old times they were! What independence! What freedom from the trammels and conventionalities of fashion! Who cared or commented if we did turn up the bottoms of our pantaloons, or wear, for coolness' sake, our flannel shirts outside the trousers? Who then was so much better than anybody else, when any man might strike it rich to-morrow? Who would beg for work or truckle and fawn and curry favor of any employer for the mere sake of retaining a situation and help that same man to make money, when he could shoulder pick, shovel and rocker, go down to the river's edge and make his two or three dollars per day? Though even at that time this reputed three dollars was oftener one dollar and a half.[35]

Mulford the adventure seeker, proudly independent, deliberately disdainful of the conventionalities of the world to the point of being well known as a "Bohemian," is really speaking of bondage to the spirit of Fortune, and to her daughter, Speculation.

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[34] J. Frank Dobie, *Apache Gold and Yaqui Silver* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1928), 147; the two lines of verse are a paraphrase of John Boyle O'Reilly's "The Cry of the Dreamer."
[35] Prentice Mulford, *Life by Land and Sea* (New York: F. J. Needham, 1889), 98.

Not everyone hailed the discovery of gold in California as a boon; there was foreboding as well, as a poem published in England, "On Speculation," put it:

Oh! Speculation, restless power!
How many thy seductions rue,
While thou with copious hand dost shower
Capricious favors on the few.
Thy golden visions quickly fail,
Leaving the bankrupt to bewail
Thy treacherous smiles, and promised gain,
In hopeless misery, and pain.[36]

2 Spiritualists in the Gold Rush and Beyond

California just after the Gold Rush began was a paradise of speculation in materializing fortunes, a near perfect field for the magical imagination, as it was for fortune tellers and spirit mediums who offered to open a window, not just into the earthly future, but also into the happy afterlife. To understand fully the efforts of professional magicians who performed in the early days of California, it is necessary to consider the expectations and beliefs of their audiences, and so, to understand to some extent the culture in which they unfolded their wonders. One important part of this was the sudden growth at the time of Spiritualism, professional magic's spectral self. Spiritualism presented, as genuine, what professional magic challenged as false. The art of Magic was a kind of burlesque and wholesale exposé of the powers and accomplishments of spirit mediums and those who alleged they possessed "real" magical powers. To understand the early performances of magic in California, therefore, we need to look first, at least briefly, at the history of Spiritualism in the state as well. It has been little explored.

[36] St. Winnow, "On Speculation," *Royal Cornwall Gazette*, 9 March 1849.

California was a magic kingdom, even then. The Spiritualists' "New Era," however, was a "New Light" that they reckoned had dawned in March 1848 and was echoed in the discovery of gold in California. The breaking forth of that new light was a new beginning, an initiation of Heaven on Earth.

California was teeming with Spiritualist believers, spirit mediums, lecturers, and those who faked the physical phenomena of Spiritualism, practically from the very beginning of the Gold Rush. The *Nevada City Journal*, for example, reported on July 8, 1853, that the spirit "rappers" were "rusticating" in Tuolumne, "moving tables and cutting up other capers." In the mining town of Gold Hill, a correspondent to the *Sacramento Daily Union* wrote that, "A great many of our people are almost running wild on the subject of Spiritualism" and that a nightly séance met there at the United States Hotel.[37] In 1871, as a summary retrospective of those early days, the Spiritualist writer Hannah F. M. Brown (who had immigrated to California), wrote:

> When California was yet a Territory, when men lived in mining-camps and canvas-tents, they were recipients of angels' visits. In many of the mining-districts there were men who saw visions, who dreamed pleasant and prophetic dreams—men who communicated by means of table-tipping and raps, and spoke in "new tongues." Not a few faint hearts gathered strength from the good words the angels spoke. Wandering souls heard and heeded the spirit's gentle warning; the sorrowing were made glad, the mourner was comforted. Rough miners have many a time gathered under the friendly branches of a forest-tree to listen while some one of their number read from a well-worn newspaper tidings from the land of souls, or to the inspired words of one of their own number.[38]

Most immigrants, having just come from the East, were already well aware of Spiritualism as it had been developing. The first formal lectures on Spiritualism in California may have been those given by Maine-born phrenologist and Spiritualist Charles

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[37] Letter from "Ticklepinch," 29 March 1856.
[38] Mrs. H. F. M. Brown, "California—Its Ways and Wonders," *The Year-Book of Spiritualism for 1871* (Boston: William White and Company, 1871), 121-22.

Pinkham in San Francisco in July 1852, based on "rapping circles" with spirit medium John T. Bonnel at which were present Spiritualists Eliza Woodson Farnham and Jesse Hutchinson (of the Hutchinson Family Singers, who had come to California to manage a tour there of a singing group, the Alleghanians, and who would die shortly, on his way back to Massachusetts).[39] Pinkham went on to spend decades of mantic activity in California and elsewhere "guided by spirits," eventually writing *The New Bible*, in which he, as the combined personality of Charles Pinkham and George Washington ("C. P.-G. Washington") prophesied the Millennium and strongly hinted that he was the messiah, chosen by a band of exceedingly grand spirits, associated in the afterlife in a kind of great Apostolic Circle. His "call" for a grand convention of all mediums and Spiritualists on the Pacific Coast on January 1, 1860, "for the purpose of completing the formation of the Apostolic Central Council of the World, that God may set up His kingdom on Earth and govern hereafter," was in several San Francisco papers.[40]

In August 1853, the *Spiritual Telegraph*, a Spiritualist newspaper edited and published in New York City, and the *American Phrenological Journal*, published in Philadelphia, reported that a "Hindoo priest" with the improbably un-Indian name of "Lehantaka" had been giving lectures and instructions to private classes in the cities of California. These reports were probably the result of a hoax, perhaps not even originating from California, perpetrated on the editors of these journals. Both reports relied on letters allegedly summarizing notes of the lectures composed by a Dr. A. B. Pope. No genuine

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[39] "The Spiritual Lecture Thursday Evening," *Daily Alta California*, 31 July 1852. This humorous account contains an internal hint that either it was written by George Horatio Kirby, then known under the *nom de plume* of "John Phoenix," or that he was in attendance as one of the sitters. Bonnel had just published *Phenomena of Spirit Manifestations* (San Francisco: Alta California Steam Printing Establishment, 1852), a compilation of selections from other Spiritualist writers back East. For Pinkham's phrenological business, see "Phrenology," *Daily Alta California*, 24 May 1852. James Anthony wrote a series of three articles about visiting the séances conducted at Pinkham's establishment: "Evenings with the Spirit Rappers in San Francisco," *Daily Alta California*, 24 and 30 December 1852, and 9 January 1853. Eliza Farnham had originally come to California in 1840 with her husband, the explorer and adventurer Thomas Jefferson Farnham, who published *Travels in the Californias* in 1844 and died in San Francisco in 1848. Eliza would publish *California, In-doors and Out* in 1856, return East to familiarize herself with the Spiritualists there, and return to California as a Spiritualist lecturer.

[40] His "call" was reprinted in the *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 1 January 1860.

source from California, however, ever mentioned such a Hindu teacher, and even the evidence for the existence of a Dr. Pope is lacking. But the mysterious Lehanteka, at the end of his lectures, according to the description in the letter quoted, appears to have given his audiences what magicians would recognize as a mentalist act:

> In illustrating the force of the will in controlling and projecting the nervous circulation, he requested us to retire to the adjacent room, and there exert volition on a piece of money or some other object, and promised that he would immediately point it out. Accordingly we presented him with a dollar, in a sack containing about twenty other coins; he immediately pointed out the identical dollar. After testing him in various ways, we concluded to present him with a sack of dollars, without exerting volition on any one of them. On examination he said we did not exert volition on any of the dollars; "But," says he, "I can determine that by examining the faculties of your minds." Accordingly he presently pointed out a man, and observed, "You proposed to exert no volition upon the money, and your companions agreed to it." His answers were all correct. "According to this power of the will," said he, "our priests perform their miracles, and they are performed on the same principles upon which rest the experiments of converting water into wine, preparing sweet bread, and causing the room to present the appearance of birds flying from wall to wall, and chirping, etc., with which I entertained and amused you."[41]

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[41] "Hindoo Mysteries in California," *Spiritual Telegraph* 2.11 (16 July 1853): 41. [Purported letter written from Los Angeles dated 4 May 1853, by S. W. Halsted. Refers to Dr. A. B. Pope's "collection of notes taken during the course of lectures delivered by Lehanteka."]; W. F., "Psychological Mysteries of the Hindoos," *American Phrenological Journal* 18.2 (August 1853): 32-33, seemingly referring to correspondence from Dr. Pope, which was used as a definitive source in Louis Figuier, *Histoire du Merveilleux dans les Temps Modernes*, 2d ed. (Paris: Librairie de L. Hachette et Cie., 1861), vol. 4, 265-266. But see Joseph Rodes Buchanan, "Hindoo Philosophy," *Spiritual Telegraph* 2.15 (13 August 1852): 58 ("As to Lehanteka, if he be in reality a Hindoo priest, and not a shrewd American or English imposter, such as we have had in the older States …"). I am more inclined to see the mysterious Hindu wizard with the inexplicably non-Indian name as a pure fiction, rather than a mere imposter. I can find no record of a W. S. Halsted or a Dr. A. B. Pope in California during these years. (Thanks here to Pat Deveney and Marc Demarest)

It would have been a nice little act for small intimate audiences, if it had been more than a fiction.

In the first issue of *The Overland Monthly*, in July 1868, editor Bret Harte included a story by Noah Brooks about another early Spiritualist lecturer, Dr. Nelson J. Underwood, a physician with a large medical practice and an even larger openness to dreamy inspirations. Brooks called him "Dr. Barnard" in the article, but it was all about Underwood. Brooks wrote:

> I have said that he was frank and direct in his manner, and so he was; yet there was with all his frankness an undefined and dreamy abstraction at times that seemed very much like the air of a mystic. You felt that there was a vein of the supernatural running through all his beliefs.[42]

One hardly needed to catch him only "at times," however, to find him in such an abstracted state. In April 1856, he began giving public "demonstrations" of Spiritualism. He was being advertised as "the best Speaking Medium in the world, entirely and unconsciously controlled by high and happy spirits" in the manner of public trance lectures in San Francisco and Sacramento.[43] By May 1857, a reporter for the *Sacramento Daily Bee* could speak of a Spiritualist "congregation" formed around Underwood, who gathered to hear his spirit lectures twice every Sunday. The group was "composed of very respectable and intelligent people" and equaled in size the congregation of any other denomination in the city. Like almost all Spiritualist lecturers, he preached the gospel of individualism and "rational religion," but he relied explicitly on the direct intervention of spirits to instruct him, to give him their thoughts, even to mouth their words, while he was in a trance state.

The spirits indeed appealed to his "practical" and "scientific" mind. He began receiving from them guidance for machining a device for compressing carbon into diamonds. He worked on the idea for several years, investing more and more of his time

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[42] Noah Brooks, "The Diamond Maker of Sacramento," *Overland Monthly* 1.1 (July 1868): 46.
[43] "Demonstrated Spiritualism," *San Francisco Daily California Chronicle*, 11 April 1856; "A Lecture Communicated from the Spirit Land, through Nelson J. Underwood, Medium," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 12 May 1857; "Spiritualism," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 12 May 1857.

and money into the project, and then began a joint stock company, the California Diamond Crystallization Company, to finance his increasingly spectacular attempts to build rigid chambers into which he would pack ground carbon mixed with a spirit-formulated mixture, which he would ignite with a battery. As his experiments "progressed," his containers—bombs, really—created ever increasing devastation in his neighborhood, leveling his neighbor's barn, for example. He and his financial backers went deeply in debt, but he persisted, finally finishing a large iron sphere, three and a half feet in diameter, weighing almost five thousand pounds, into the center of which was bored a cavity to contain the carbon powder mixed with his igniting formula. Underwood and his strongest backers transported the globe by night to an isolated spot in Yolo county and, the following day, applied an electrical spark to it via a long wire connected to a huge battery. The explosion blew Underwood into the air and broke his bones. His group of shareholders were blown off a fence on which they sat at a distance of more than a hundred yards. No diamonds were ever found in the wreckage. That was the end of diamond manufacturing, and, by necessity, the termination of Underwood's spirit-inspired experiments. He died insolvent in February 1863.[44]

As early as 1854, Los Angeles had a bookstore devoted solely to books on the "Spiritual Manifestations" and by 1856, a very substantial store was opened by Thomas Bishop Valentine and his brother in San Francisco. The Valentines' store sold books, copies of Spiritualist newspapers from the Eastern states, the "clairvoyant" medicines of Eastern mediums Semantha Mettler and Elizabeth French, "spiritual telegraph dials," and also arranged appointments and bookings for spirit mediums and their clients, looking to join spirit circles.[45] Previous to that, as far back as 1850, Spiritualist and "Progressive" periodicals and newspapers were offered for sale, incidentally, at the San Francisco stationery store of W. B. Cooke and J. J. LeCount.

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[44] "An Iron Ball—Its History," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 30 March 1871; "About Diamonds," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 27 August 1872; "To Be Exploded," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 20 December 1872.

[45] California Spiritualist editor W. N. Slocum in "The Progress of Spiritualism in California," *Carrier Dove* 4.1 (January 1887): 25-29, has much useful information, but his treatment of the pre-Civil War period is scanty and ill-informed.

Itinerant women lecturers on the subject included Eliza Farnham, beginning in March 1856, and, coming from Boston where she had advertised as a "clairvoyant healer," Maryetta Munson (later Wiggins) in the fall of 1859. The "Spirit Postmaster," James Valentine Mansfield, who specialized in reading what was inside sealed envelopes, arrived in San Francisco in 1862 and plied his unadmitted legerdemain there for nearly four years.[46] The same techniques of legerdemain, especially the use of "ballot tests," also appeared in the work of other Spiritualist mediums. Magicians used "ballots" (or "billets" or "pellets") to simulate mind reading. They shuffled around pieces of paper, written on by others and folded or wadded up; then, without seeming to be able to know what had been written on them, managed to give information about the question written or the subject described. Spirit mediums claimed the knowledge was conveyed to them by the spirits.

The notorious professional medium and billet reader Charles H. Foster travelled through California in 1873-74, exhibiting sometimes to the public in halls, but spending most of his time in his hotel suites offering private consultations. Of his visit, the editor of the *California Mail Bag*, Frederick Marriott, wrote: "The road to the bottomless depths of humbug is well greased. Drawn hither by the familiar odor of dead and decaying Common Sense—poor Common Sense, killed as much by rough usage as shameful neglect, and left unburied by her murderers—Charles Vulture Foster came swooping down on the poor city, heavy in his flight from overmuch feeding on the fat things of the Foolish."[47]

Ada (Hoyt) Coan Foye, a "rapping and writing test medium" with a long history of conducting séances back East, arrived in California in January 1866 and similarly mixed public exhibitions with private appointments. She remained in San Francisco and made a long career for herself there (though often exposed as a fraud) as a professional clairvoyant medium and giving "tests" of spirit power, mostly through communicating messages from the spirits to members of her audiences, but mainly through the more quotidian means of advertising walk-in appointments with the public.[48] Mark Twain attended her séances a

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[46] "Singular Phenomena," *San Jose Weekly Mercury*, 5 June 1862. For more national lecturers, see Julia Schlesinger, *Workers in the Vineyard* (San Francisco: Carrier Dove, 1896), 23-28.
[47] "Facilis descensus Averni," *California Mail Bag* (January 1874): 71.
[48] Thomas Upright [pseud.], "Among the Mediums," *San Francisco News Letter*, 21 September 1878.

few times,; this last was written after Twain had continued to attend séances. Although the pieces he wrote about them were humorous, he finished the last one by musing that he has concluded that séances are interesting and amusing: "Very well; the [San Francisco] *Bulletin* may abuse spiritualism as much as it pleases, but whenever I can get a chance to take a dead and damned Smith by the hand and pass a joke or swap a lie with him, I am going to do it. I am not afraid of such pleasant corpses as these ever running me crazy. I find them better company than a good many live people."[49]

Perhaps the early medium who worked longest in the vineyard of California Spiritualism was Mary Jane (Lovejoy) Upham Hendee Rogers. In a biographical article about her appearing in 1886, she was said to have given the "first advertised public spiritual séance in San Francisco" in 1859 perhaps (by 1886, later Spiritualists had forgotten—or were ignoring—the ignominious Charles Pinkham's seances).[50] She was born in Maine, and married a farmer who set out to California in 1850, at the beginning of the Gold Rush. As far back as 1847, her young daughter had died and, during Mary Jane's seemingly endless battle with grief, was converted to the reality of "spirit return" when the daughter's spirit, she was convinced, made herself present to her and whispered words of comfort to her. After Mary Jane followed her husband out to the gold fields in 1858, she spent more than forty-five years in California, in Sacramento, Petaluma, Oroville, San Francisco, and San Jose, working as a spirit medium, clairvoyant, "electropathist" and magnetic healer; woman's rights activist, business medium (spirit advice on investment opportunities, which is to say, as a fortune teller); lecturer; author of books written allegedly under the control of spirits, and ending up as a practitioner of Mental Cure.[51]

The erratic but often brilliant Spiritualist and Occultist Pascal Beverly Randolph made it to California in 1861 and gave a series of lectures on "Human Soul" in San Francisco and Sacramento. After the Civil War and the completion of the transcontinental railroad,

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[49] See "San Francisco Letter: Among the Spiritualists," *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, letter dated 24 January 1866; "Mark Twain a Committee Man," *Territorial Enterprise*, February 1866; and "More Spiritual Investigations," *Golden Era*, 11 March 1866.
[50] "Mediumistic Experience," *Carrier Dove* 3.2 (February 1886): 22-25.
[51] For example, the spirit of Martha Washington, using Mrs. Hendee as her amanuensis, dictated, *Heavenly Spheres; Character of Residents in Each, and Their Occupations* (San Francisco, 1877).

many of the other old-line Spiritualists and radicals from New England, such as John Murray Spear, Herman Snow, James Steven Loveland, and Warren Chase, headed out to the Golden State, some of them to visit there for a few years, but some to settle permanently. Other nationally known Spiritualist lecturers began touring California, including the mining towns on their tours: Hannah F. M. Brown, Benjamin Todd, Victoria Woodhull and her sister Tennessee Claflin, Laura de Force Gordon, and Laura Eliza (Steele) Stennett McAlpin Cuppy.

The first Spiritualist newspaper in California was the *Weekly Spiritualist*, published by Marysville newspaperman Lyman William Ransom at the beginning of 1857. It lasted for a few months.[52] After the *Weekly Spiritualist* dissolved, he moved to San Francisco and started another Spiritualist paper, *The Family Circle*, in August 1859. It too lasted only through several issues. Fanny H. Green McDougall's *The Golden Gate*, a weekly literary journal of Spiritualist leaning, began in May 1864 and also lasted only briefly. *The Banner of Progress*, a large format and well-produced Spiritualist newspaper, which began in January 1867 in San Francisco under the editorship of the controversial and decidedly anti-Christian Benjamin Todd and William H. Manning (Ransom's erstwhile publishing partner) lasted until about the end of 1868.

Simply listing the avowedly "Spiritualist" newspapers, however, minimizes how much writing favorable to the magical worldview came before the public because a number of the editors of secular newspapers were either Spiritualist "investigators" or believers, including, for example, the old-line abolitionist and early Spiritualist John Anderson Collins, who kept his radical views more or less to himself after arriving in San Francisco in 1849, where he set up an auction business, then pioneered a quartz vein mining operation in Grass Valley in 1851, took an active role in Whig politics in California, and briefly edited the *Sacramento Union* in 1853.

James Jerome Owen, who came to California from Upstate New York in 1850, was a devoted Spiritualist and took over the *San Jose Mercury* in 1861. He would later edit and publish the San Francisco-based Spiritualist newspaper, *The Golden Gate*, which ran from

[52] L. W. Ransom (1809-1894) had come to California from New York City in 1850. He had been the proprietor of the *Marysville Journal* in 1854.

1885 to 1891, but while he was in charge of the *San Jose Mercury*, he devoted considerable space to Spiritualist activities in the state, including, for example, those of the "medical and business clairvoyant," writer, and lecturer Catherine M. (Harbaugh) Stowe and her husband, "magnetic healer" Anson Carley Stowe. Mrs. Stowe, for a while, made a specialty of psychometric analyses of ores, touching samples and giving psychic information about their value and the opportunities for finding gold around where they had been collected. One of Owen's editors at the *San Jose Mercury* was William Neill Slocum, who, during the rest of his long career in California, would publish the *Santa Cruz News*, the short-lived San Francisco *Common Sense*, and the *Pacific Greenbacker*. He was a Free Thought advocate, a socialist, moral reformer, and a strong Spiritualist who contributed articles to the Spiritualist journal *The Carrier Dove*, published in San Francisco by Julia and Louis Schlesinger in the 1880s. Accompanying Slocum in publishing *Common Sense* was William Henry Chaney, the father (out of wedlock) of writer Jack London. Chaney was another Free Thought advocate and Spiritualist, who broke with Slocum to publish his own short-lived journal in 1875, *Philomathean*, focusing more on astrology and what he called "astro-theology."

Another example of a Spiritualist editor of a secular paper was William Henry Rhodes, an immigrant to California from North Carolina. He was a lawyer and, for a while, the private secretary of Governor J. Neely Johnson. He established a newspaper in San Francisco, the *True Californian*, in May 1856, and was forced out his job with the governor after he published an editorial urging the secession of California from the Union and the establishment of a Pacific Republic (based on his convictions about states' rights). The *True Californian* only lasted until October, but Rhodes expended many columns of ink on stories about poltergeist activity and mysterious séances being held in the homes of some of the city's wealthiest families. In 1857, he gave a well-publicized, well-attended, and widely reported lecture on his belief in Spiritualism. He continued his career as a lawyer, and, during his later years, devoted himself to writing what we can recognize today as supernatural science fiction, under the pen name of "Caxton."[53]

[53] Daniel O'Connell, ed., *Caxton's Book* (San Francisco: A. L. Bancroft and Company, 1876).

Rollin Daggett, Joseph Goodman, and Alfred Doten, editors and writers for California newspapers and for the *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, consulted the Spiritualist medium Ada Hoyt Foye when she was in Virginia City in October 1867. In 1852, Daggett had co-founded and edited the *Golden Era* in San Francisco. In 1860, he had started the *Territorial Enterprise*. In 1871, Daggett and Goodman co-wrote and produced a play at Piper's Opera House in Virginia City, called *The Psychoscope*.[54]

Percy, the young hero of the melodrama, was the inventor of a mind-reading machine, escapes from prison where he had been incarcerated for having been wrongly convicted on circumstantial evidence of having murdered his betrothed's father. In Act 5, Scene 1, Percy maneuvers the real murderer into a demonstration of the psychoscope, which read's the real murderer's memory of the scene of the killing and projects it onto a screen. But Percy cries out:

> A power infallible as that which inspired the words of Holy Writ has blazoned the record of his guilt in living flame. … This subtile analyzer—this bodiless intelligence—that makes a pastime of earth's abstrusest problems; that calls down the stars, and plays with them as toys; and writes the mysteries of the universe in language simple as a school-boy's primer;—this potential and all-scrutinizing power, is not limited to physical creation, but extends its wonderful dominion over mind—grasping and transfixing in visible presentment the unsubstantial lineaments of thought. Under other circumstances, I might exult; now, I am simply cast down by a useless revelation. To me, the demonstration of Robert Fairbanks' guilt is conclusive as that which establishes the motion of the spheres; but the law—hedged in a narrow circle of antique bigotries—will not accept these words of flame as evidence, though uttered by the unimpeachable lips of Science. O most enlightened and righteous tribunals, where stocks and stones may lift up their voices, while luminous messengers from heaven stand dumb!

[54] Reprinted in 2006, with notes by Lawrence I Berkove; R. M. Daggett and J. T. Goodman, *The Psychoscope: A Sensational Drama in Five Acts* (Charleston: Mark Twain Journal).

The hero's sentiments here are perfectly parallel to those of Spiritualist believers who thought they had plentiful "scientific" evidence for spirit communications and strived to drag those who still clung to "antique bigotries"—i. e., Christianity—into the light of Free Thought. Daggett's *The Golden Era* was where Prentice Mulford, another writer, like Mark Twain, who specialized in humorous tales about the mining camps, got a leg up in literary renown. Like other writers considered here, in his quest for intellectual freedom from oppressive conventionalities, when he drifted back East after mostly failing at finding gold or silver, he turned himself into a literary preacher of the New Thought movement, and of Spiritualism and Occultism. He turned the phrase "Thoughts are Things" into a kind of circulating medium among those who believed in mind over matter. Like other writers of what literary critics label as belonging to the "realist" school and who made their career in California journalism—most notably, Ambrose Bierce—Mulford drew his "realism" from a repudiated Puritan family background, strongly agnostic (if not atheistic) convictions, and a sensation-seeking cynicism with a penchant for writing fiction about the "supernatural"; in Bierce's case, that turned into horror and ghost stories. No sunny Summerland of the afterlife for him.

The most prominent California newspapers' editorial positions and reporting on Spiritualism generally ranged from skeptical to antagonistic during these years: the *Alta California*, the *San Francisco Examiner* (especially under Benjamin F. Washington), the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the *Los Angeles Herald.* These papers regarded Spiritualism as a fraud and a humbug; or, they regarded its "philosophy" as anti-Christian, socially fractious, and antinomian, leading many of its adherents to the practice of "free love," if not to outright psychotic delusions. The *San Francisco Chronicle*, for example, when reporting on a lecture at Mercantile Library Hall in September 1872 by the nationally known Spiritualist, James Martin Peebles, began its article this way:

> In this city of free and independent thought, free speech, free action, free everything, it would be singular if some of the many curious vagaries of intellect did not take a firm and everlasting hold. Spiritualism is a plant that thrives in the hot-bed of unbelief, and in it, it is nurtured by the moisture of untrammeled thought. People who believe in nothing else believe in Spiritualism. When the mind becomes so warped and twisted by

> the natural bent of sinful desires and becomes filled with what may be called A SATANIC DETERMINATION to believe in nothing as taught on the mother's knee, then it becomes fit to receive and embrace the "doctrine of progression"—the science of Spiritualism.[55]

When the Spiritualists called a state convention in 1866 to organize into an association, which seems to have been the pet project of J. J. Owen, the *San Francisco Examiner* published a long editorial on the convention's resolutions defining the basic beliefs of Spiritualism. The editorial hit Spiritualism's pretensions to being a purely "rational" religion particularly hard:

> It will be seen that the foundation of this parody of religion, is the entire removal of all responsibility, and the erection of as many standards of truth as there are Spiritualists. … It is a suicidal belief altogether, for as it professes to be based on reason alone, and ignores any higher standard than individual judgment, it is manifest that the people who are not Spiritualists from moral conviction, are at least as right as those who are; and so far from its being a progressive doctrine, it is probably the most fatally stagnant of any that has ever been promulgated.[56]

Californians were so well informed about Spiritualism, even during California's early years, that Ferdinand Cartwright Ewer, the editor of the San Francisco literary journal, *The Pioneer*, was able to invent and publish a long hoaxed fable about spirits from the beyond communicating with people in San Francisco, "Eventful Nights of August Twentieth and Twenty-First," in September and October 1854, and have it taken as a veritable account of "Spiritualism in California," thereby entangling the Spiritualist leader back in New York, retired judge William Worth Edmonds, when he reprinted it as genuine in his journal, *The Sacred Circle*.[57]

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[55] "Spiritualism," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 9 September 1872.
[56] "Our Social and Moral Condition. Spiritualism," *San Francisco Examiner*, 9 June 1866.
[57] Ewer's story originally appeared in *The Pioneer* 2.3 and 2.4 (September and October 1854): 129-139, 193-205; Edmonds' notice and republication of it was "Spiritualism in

It is therefore not surprising that the influx of gold hunters included folks who sought the metal in the earth by means of divination, real magic, and the counsel of spirits consulted by trance mediums and table rappings for a fee. Or flimflammers who used legerdemain and fraud to separate gold or mining claims from others. Or, later, who purported to assay ore by means of "psychometric" reading of a sample. "I once knew a clairvoyant who could distinguish the gold of California from any other gold by simply taking it into her hand," wrote Spiritualist editor Samuel Byron Brittan, "and the California gold would bring her *en rapport* with the 'diggins' whence it was taken, and she would go on to describe them in detail."[58]

As early as 1852, an "old timer" of the diggings reminisced about one of his early acquaintances who was guided by the stars and his cards to get a lay on where he should dig—"It would be for me to deny a well-known fact, (though not a public one,) to say that the old miners did not all slightly believe in witchcraft;—luck, dreams, or in other words, a kind of *root chewing* system, for the discovery of rich placers, where piles were to be made in a short time."[59] Spiritualist chronicler Emma Hardinge mentioned miners' reliance on seers and mediums to locate silver "leads." Some used a divining plumb bob "contrivance made of two pieces of whalebone and a metal box" in locating gold ore. This was a device consisting essentially of a rod of tellurium, which has a chemical affinity for gold, and so, supposedly, would "turn" toward it when the rod "sensed" it nearby.[60]

California," *The Sacred Circle* 1 (1855): 340-353, 384-406; Ewer's response to the brouhaha the article created: "Republication of The Eventful Nights of August Twentieth and Twenty-First, the Edmonds Correspondence Relating Thereto, Etc." *The Pioneer* 3.5 (May 1855): 258-290; and Edmonds' reaction to having been taken in: "The San Francisco Fraud," *The Sacred Circle* 1 (1855): 585-58.

[58] Samuel Byron Brittan, "Clairvoyance and Psychometry," *Spiritual Telegraph*, 17 December 1853.

[59] James H. Carson, "Early Recollections of the Mines," *San Joaquin Republican*, 7 February 1852; see also "Spiritualistic Triumph," *San Francisco Examiner*, 21 October 1871; and "News from Carson City Utah Territory," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 18 October 1859.

[60] Emma Hardinge, *Modern American Spiritualism*, 477-479; "A Sensation," *Grass Valley Morning Union*, 26 October 1870; William Ralston Balch, *The Miners and Mining Interests of the United States in 1882* (Philadelphia: Mining Industrial Publishing Bureau, 1882), 784-85.

The ads for diviners and "business clairvoyants" appeared, not only in the papers of San Francisco and Sacramento, but also in the small, feisty newspapers of the mining settlements. David E. Gordon, the editor of the *Trinity Journal* in Weaverville dropped this notice into an issue of May 1858:

> G'HOSTS!—The editor of the Marysville *News* is terrified with the prophetic powers of Madam Swett, the clairvoyant. In presence of the female necromancer, his mouth flew open and the ensuing dropped out:
>
> 'Be she woman, or be she devil, she holds a key to mysteries which no mortals, since the days of the Rosicrucians, have been able to unlock. If you wish to know who you really are, whence you came, whither you are going, and what part of the great play of humanity you are to act on this little ball of earth, go to Madam Swett. She will tell you, to the ninth part of a hair, all your past history and all your future lot.'[61]

It was Gordon's little jab at James Allen, his fellow editor in Marysville, ostensibly aimed at his gullibility, but also suggesting that he had been mesmerized by Madam Swett and had written his notice acting as her psychic puppet—which is to say, that Gordon was jibing Allen for running a little puff piece amounting to an advertisement as if it were a news item or an independent editorial comment.

New Hampshire-born Abby M. Swett operated under a mesmeric trance induced by her husband Daniel. Her fee was five dollars per sitting. They were skilled at working the press for favorable mention. Madam Swett would open a business and medical clairvoyance office in San Francisco, which also included "medicated and vapor baths"; and she and her husband would manufacture and sell "Swett's Grape Bitters, or Restorative Wine." After her death in 1869, her husband Daniel would go into the brokerage and real estate business in San Francisco and become wealthy.[62]

The mystery mongers, it is plain to see, had a wide field in which to cultivate believers, but by no means were they universally accepted. In the larger world, it was not

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[61] "G'HOSTS!" *Trinity Journal*, 1 May 1858.
[62] See, "Clairvoyant Interview," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 18 November 1857, but also, "Humbuggery Exposed—Visit to a Clairvoyant," *San Francisco Bulletin*, 13 June 1857.

uncommon to find Spiritualist mediums and seers, prognosticating the futures and fortunes of others, and producing wondrous phenomena using techniques and equipment ordinarily used by magicians. It was also not uncommon to find professional magicians around this time challenging and exposing such mediumistic pretenders to genuine psychic powers.

The first time the newspaper record allows us to see something like this on stage in California occurred on January 2-4, 1855, at Musical Hall in San Francisco, when a man named Isaac Cox delivered lectures on Spiritualism and Spirit Rappings. Cox promised to account for them "on Natural Principles" and to demonstrate how "light bodies, such as sticks, are made to Stand, Crawl, and Dance, with experiments."[63] He then opened a repeat series of performances in Sacramento several days later. Perhaps it should be counted as a magician's performance, though it seems apparent that his skills were rudimentary at best. He first gave a long and obscure lecture to his audiences, arguing that spirit mediums had diseased brains, that spirits had no communications with humans, and that spiritualistic phenomena could be accounted for by "an imponderable fluid," the *od* or *odic* force "discovered" by Baron Von Reichenbach. At this point, he turned to demonstrate his control over this force, and, at his first performance in Sacramento, things went sideways from there:

> A stick was set up on end slightly declining from him, and made to oscillate to and fro—the lecturer meantime being apparently convulsed, and pointing his finger in that direction. The next experiment was with a piece of lead which he threw behind a table and with which he elicited a succession of raps. He was then requested by a gentleman in the audience to bring the lead within view—to place it in the draw or produce the raps upon the table. This he declined doing, alleging that the waves of light would interrupt the electricity in the air and that his animal magnetism would "operate better were the object permitted to remain in dark—that he was not sufficiently proficient in the science to be able to move the table, &c. At this stage of the proceedings, Mr. Cox evinced considerable nervousness and the audience proportionate excitement—the former declaring that the proceedings of the latter had destroyed his influence, and the

[63] Ad for Cox's Lectures, *Daily Alta California*, 1 January 1855.

> latter insisting that the experiments should be made full in sight. Two or three gentlemen, intent on a close examination, advanced and discovered a line of silk thread attached to the pellet of lead, and raised it in full view of the audience. The bubble had bursted. Mr. Cox forthwith gathered up his sticks and books and sloped. The prosecution of a further examination by the audience enabled him to secure his retreat, leaving $28.50, the proceeds of the house, in the possession of the proprietor of the building. The distinguished lecturer, in the course of his remarks, asserted that he had repeatedly lectured successfully before intelligent audiences at San Francisco. Will some of our bay contemporaries enlighten us on this subject? The absorbing question now is, where is Mr. Cox?[64]

The report of the lecture in the *Sacramento Journal* provided the details that the string attached to the lead pellet ran across the side of the hall to the doorkeeper, who was seen to have been the "moving power." And that when the trick was thus exposed, cries of "Tar and feather him!" arose. "But the great enlightener and his satellite had flown … the gulled ones looked foolish, the wise ones indignant."[65]

William Bovee Dods, the son of the renowned New York lecturer and writer on Spiritualism and "demonstrator" of mesmerism John Bovee Dods, also moved to California. In 1857 he opened an office in San Francisco on Dupont Street for "psychological and mesmeric examinations" and set out from there on lecture tours of the inland settlements.[66] Like his father, he saw hypnotism as the application of an invisible, "psychic" power to his subjects, and he illustrated his talks on mesmerism ("Electro-Psychology") with demonstrations, advertised as "amusing" and "astonishing" which "kept the audience in roars of laughter." He "magnetized" volunteers (?) on stage and (purportedly) had them believe they were odd characters in ludicrous situations. Although mesmeric clairvoyants who were consulted privately (for a fee) were plying their trade in San Francisco and elsewhere at least as early as 1853, and perhaps earlier, Dods' demonstrations were likely

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[64] "Lecture of Mr. Isaac Cox on Spiritualism," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 10 January 1855.
[65] Reprinted in the *Daily Alta California*, 12 January 1855.
[66] See his ad in *Hutching's California Magazine* 3.11 (May 1859).

California's first performances of stage hypnotism.[67] Dods undoubtedly made money from his lecture performances and his consulting work, but he also faced opposition and ridicule, as evident in an anonymously-composed poem, first printed in the *Daily Alta California* and then reprinted, at least in part, by several other newspapers around the state:

A Psychological Ballad
"I'm not the exponent of tricks, of frauds,"
Says Dr. W. Bovee Dods.

Oh! Ye Gods!
    What's the odds!
With the public
    And Bovee Dods!

A hoosier's a hero,
    In the sods;
Paddy is king
    Among the hods.

A Yankee's "pumkins"
    Fishing for cods!
Magic is mistress
    To Bovee Dods!

See him drilling
    His winking squads;

[67] The contest for being the first may have been close: "Barnard the Wizzard," who did "Psychology and Mesmerism," was on the bill of the Leviathan Troupe of entertainers in April 1859 at the Empire Hotel in Placer, along with "Signor Monte Verde, the only India Rubber man now living," and "C. Ironmonger, the Great Snake Charmer," *Placer Herald*, 9 April 1859.

Who in the —
    Is Bovee Dods?

In his sire's footsteps
    He treads and he plods,
The son of his father,
    Is Bovee Dods!

Aaron made serpents
    Out of rods;
Men are made wizzards
    By Bovee Dods!

Topers get tipsy,
    On brandy tods!
Water's made brandy!
    By Bovee Dods.

A prince's subjects
    Obey his nods.
So do the *subjects*
    Of Bovee Dods!

Hods and sods!
    Tods and cods!
A — of a fellow,
    Is Bovee Dods!![68]

[68] *North San Juan Hydraulic Press*, 7 May 1859.

Dods moved back East, to Brooklyn, by 1861, and advertised his serves as a physician and electro-psychologist and helped his father manufacture and sell "J. Bovee Dods Imperial Wine Bitters," a "tonic" that was mostly alcohol; but a few years later, he moved out West again with his own family and settled in Tooele, Utah.

Another exhibitor of mysteries who gained some notoriety in the early days of California was Samuel Baird Collins. He was a stone mason from La Porte, Indiana, who "developed" himself as a Spiritualist "test" medium—that is, a medium who demonstrated seemingly impossible stunts, representing them as being effected by spirit aid. He began these exhibitions at the beginning of 1858, traveling through Indiana.

He chose to perform in the manner of the Davenport brothers, who, during their dark séances, from 1856, had themselves thoroughly tied to their chairs using bed cord to show that they could not have been responsible for the floating, phosphorescent objects and other eerie movements and sounds in the dark. Collins clearly followed the progress of the Davenports' evolving modus operandi, as described in the Spiritualist press, for he got up his own "test" demonstrations of rope untying and tying that he alleged were accomplish by the spirits:

> He allows the audience to select a committee of three or five, and they tie him with a rope (usually a clothes-line or bed-cord) in such a manner that they acknowledge to the audience that he can not get loose without help. If one hundred feet of cord is not sufficient, he tells them to use another entire bed-cord, or five of them if they wish. He is now carried and laid in a dark room, and the committee, after examining and seeing that all is right, guard the door until the signal is given to come in. He is then found entirely free from the rope, and it (the rope) usually rolled up into a tight ball, with each end in the center, and extremely hard to unravel This occupies, according to conditions, from ten to fifty minutes.[69]

In December 1859, Collins showed up in California, performing his "wonderful manifestations of spirit power" in San Francisco, Marysville, Stockton, and probably

[69] "Facts in Mediumship," *Spiritual Telegraph*, 17 April 1858.

elsewhere. By this time, his locked-room mystery had evolved into a two-stage demonstration in which "the spirits" first freed him from his windings, then, after examination by a "committee," he was closed again in the dark room and, after twenty minutes or so, a rap signaled the committee to open the door and enter again, finding him trussed up again with the same hundred feet of bed cord. The committee at his performance in San Francisco found him "lying on the floor, with his face down, his legs bent backward at an acute angle, at the knees, and his arms and legs tied most securely, with his feet and hands very close together."[70]

Collins used these demonstrations in locked rooms monitored by small committees as publicity for public performances where an admission fee was charged. For these, he again followed the way the Davenport brothers had worked out their procedures, by doing the tying, untying, and re-tying of the ropes inside a "pine box on trestles, with doors opening toward the audience of thin boards, not over tight," set on the stage.[71] For at least some of these performances, he was joined by a renowned Philadelphia Spiritualist "healer," freethinker, and political radical, "Dr." Charles Henry De Wolfe, who first preached to the audience.[72] At one performance in early January, he was far from successful, struggling for two hours to untie himself and finally giving up. "He accounted for the failure," it was reported, "by saying that the spirits were offended by the disturbance in the crowd, and refused to untie him."[73]

Collins left California on February 20 on board the steamer *Champion* headed for Panama and was back in La Porte by April. He left a lasting impression on Californians, however. His shows ran at the same time that magician John Henry Anderson's California

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[70] "Spirits and Knots," *Daily Alta California*, 22 December 1859; see also, "Spirits and Bed Cords in San Francisco," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 26 December 1859; and "The Rope Medium," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 21 January 1860 ("The Spiritualists were in ecstacies …").
[71] "Mr. Collins, the Spiritualist …" *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 4 January 1860.
[72] "Spiritualism Demonstrated," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 18 December 1859. For Collins' demonstration at Philharmonic Hall in Sacramento, see "Wonderful Manifestations of Spirit Power, *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 31 December 1859; for his performance at the City Hall in Stockton, see "Wonderful Manifestations of Spirit Power, *San Joaquin Republican*, 5 January 1860.
[73] "Legerdemain," *Nevada Democrat*, 11 January 1860.

tour took place, and Anderson's pointed public challenge to duplicate any spirit medium's demonstration were probably directed at Collins. The month after Collins left California, we find Anderson's son performing solo shows, "giving rope-tying performances similar to those of the Spiritualist Collins. He can be tied with any length of rope and will not only untie himself, but will tie himself up again in an equally secure manner, without any assistance."[74]

Back in La Porte, Collins returned to work as a stonemason, but he also "practiced medicine" by receiving instructions from the spirit of a "Dr. Wiley." After serving in the Civil War as a corporal in the Union medical corps, "Dr. Wiley" invented a formula for the cure of opium addiction, which Collins manufactured and nationally adverted under the brand name of "Theriaki." It made a fortune for Collins, "the Great Narcologist of the Age," and he became the richest citizen of La Porte. In 1876, "Theriaki" was analyzed by a chemical laboratory and this opium "antidote" and "cure" was found to be a solution of morphine.[75]

The Davenport Brothers, Ira and William, were from Buffalo, New York. They had perfected a spiritualistic cabinet demonstration in 1854, in which they were tied up, sitting in a large box and, after being closed up in it, orchestrated the levitation of spirit-played musical instruments and such, which they presented cagily as genuine interventions of spirits. They finally came on tour to California and the Pacific Coast starting in spring 1870, more than a decade after Collins, their imitator, had created an excitement there, performing in San Francisco at the Mercantile Library at the same time magician Carl Herrmann was at the Metropolitan Theatre. (This was during the time that the young but later revered magician Harry Kellar worked as the Davenports' assistant.) The brothers were shadowed practically along their entire Pacific Coast tour by the young Austrian magician Carl Bosco (Charles Isaac), who performed by duplicating their demonstrations and showing how they were done. When Bosco reached Portland, he paused there for a few years, operating a photography business, but then set out again touring a magic act into Montana before returning East.[76]

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[74] "J. H. Anderson, Jr." *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 10 March 1860.
[75] "An Opium Eater Cured by Spirit Direction," *Banner of Light*, 13 March 1869; "Opium Antidotes Exposed," *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* 95 (1876): 500-501.
[76] He died on tour in Louisiana, during the yellow fever epidemic of 1878.

The far-famed world-travelling American magician Samri Baldwin (Samuel Spencer Baldwin), who called himself "The White Mahatma," would also breeze through California, doing a Davenports-exposé act, in 1876. Baldwin's performances, which included a second sight act with his wife, typically muddled the line between exposing the psychic claims of Spiritualists and espousing them for himself, very much as the Davenports did. Historians of magic have never felt comfortable with how to classify the Davenports, and to a lesser extent, Samri Baldwin. In different ways, they tried to have it both ways. They were accomplishing their stage performances with jugglery, but, especially with the Davenports, they wished the public to understand them as genuine spirit mediums. Some magic historians have strained at the point that the Davenports themselves did not verbally insist to their audiences that their feats were done with the aid of the spirits, but their advertisements all but claimed as much and they typically traveled with an assistant who would precede their act with a lecture on the truths of Spiritualism. The brothers themselves went to court more than once to make the case that their performances should be exempted from the need to pay for a license as entertainments because what they were doing was practicing their religion. From the time they first began conducting séances, Spiritualists undoubtedly understood the "phenomena" produced in their presence as genuine manifestations of spirits.

Baldwin, too, walked a thin line, wandering from one side to the other. He was a very skilled magician, and would insist in his autobiography that, of course, he was merely an entertainer, distancing himself from the witch doctors and fakirs he met and traded secrets with all over the world. And he incorporated in his act exposés of the tricks used by certain Spiritualist mediums, such as Charles H. Foster. Yet, he presented these exposés as if they were meant to show that others were only faking what he was truly capable of accomplishing via his superior psychic powers.

William Bovee Dods was not the only stage hypnotist at work in California. Llewellyn Bushell, born in Worcester, England in 1831, began exhibiting "Electro-Biology" (hypnotism) by 1854.[77] Bushell was the son of Henry Bushell (alias Bush'ea), a phrenologist, bigamist, Spiritualist, and intermittent lunatic (sent to various asylums

[77] "Three Nights More!!" *Isle of Wight Observer*, 14 January 1854.

several times), who impersonated the Bishop of Armagh and, in 1860, called a public meeting to declare himself "Emperor of All Religions." In 1858, Llewellyn sailed to Australia and performed to appreciative audiences there and in New Zealand until 1861. His shows were the usual sort of stage hypnotism, using volunteers from the audiences whom he mesmerized and made to perform ludicrous stunts.

From Australia, "Professor Bushell" left for California in 1861, where he performed his act around the state for the next couple of years. For these exhibitions, he added a new section in which he exposed spirit mediums' pretensions of "spirit rapping" and kindred phenomena and had himself bound to a chair by knotted ropes from which he escaped, in the manner of the Davenports.[78]

During a portion of Bushell's travels through California from 1861-63, he engaged a magician named "Prof. Valentine" to supply a legerdemain segment to his performances. Valentine ordinarily traveled with circuses, such as Dr. S. S. Foster's Magic Circus, with whom he appeared in San Francisco in 1861.[79] He dropped out of view for almost a decade, but appeared again in 1871-73, when his act, now including "muscle reading," was attached to traveling circuses in Oregon and Washington, playing fairs and agricultural exhibitions, and skipping out of bills for printing his posters. After the circus folded its stand in Salem, Oregon in October 1871, leaving behind unpaid debts, a reporter walked over the deserted grounds, finding only "Prof Valentine, a magician, forsooth, who is trying to expose his

[78] For example, "Metropolitan Theater," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 8 August 1861, in which he combined a mesmeric act with a "Grand Expose of Spiritualism.' Bushell returned to Australia to tour in 1863 and went back to England in 1868. He continued to tour abroad afterwards. He died in South Africa in 1877.

[79] "Dr. S. S. Foster's Magic Circus," *Daily Alta California*, 3 June 1861, where Valentine is called "The Greatest Living Magician." For examples of Bushell and Valentine together, see the ad for the Marysville Theater, *Marysville Daily Appeal*, 28 December 1862, and the accompanying comment in which Valentine claimed to be a student of "Hendin" (sic). He drops out of view for almost a decade, but appears again in 1871-73, when his act, now including "muscle reading," is attached to traveling circuses in Oregon and Washington, playing fairs and agricultural exhibitions, and skipping out of bills for printing his posters after the circus folded its stand in Salem, Oregon in October 1871.

tricks to a stray swine, to which sad fate he is compelled until such time as his advertising bills shall be paid up, which alas! will be never."[80]

Depending on how one looks at Spiritualism during its first decades, one could say that Spiritualists were too independent or too fractious and eccentric to have been able to form organizations that were anything but transient and localized. To some Spiritualists, this was a disappointment; to other Spiritualists, however, it was a beautiful sign of their individual independence of spirit. Spiritualists in California were no different. Throughout the period we have been considering, only local associations existed. Efforts to form a state association began in the late 1860s and were only temporarily successfully well into the 1870s. J. J. Owen's efforts to organize a state association in 1866 only resulted, two years later, in the (unincorporated) organization of the San Francisco Association of Spiritualists, which lasted several years before it was then re-organized and incorporated as the San Francisco Spiritual Union. Even after a state association was set up, it was periodically riven by the formation of warring factions and frequent purges of fraudulent mediums who wished to exchange sucker lists and to hide their activities behind a front of religious respectability. By 1875, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors had issued an ordinance under which "clairvoyants, seers, fortune tellers and astrologers" were required to take out a quarterly license costing $50.[81]

Setting up communities of devoted Spiritualists, too, generally had a late start; almost all of them date no earlier than the mid 1870s. Fruit growing seems to be a thread that runs through these first spiritualist settlements. Thomas Lake Harris, originally a Spiritualist with a notorious reputation extending back to the earliest days of Spiritualism, but then self-elevated into a mystical psychopomp and what we would recognize today as an American "guru" and unabashed cult leader, moved his "Brotherhood of the New Life,"

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[80] *Weekly Oregon Statesman*, 18 October 1871. Nevertheless, he persevered. The *Olympia Washington Standard*, 26 July 1873, advertised a show in which Prof. Valentine was assisted by his children, "La Petite Fairy" and Master Willie.

[81] "Municipal Matters," *Daily Alta California*, 2 April 1875. It was challenged the following year at the trial of Clarence Mathews, whose lawyer argued that Mathews' fortune-telling practice was a form of religion, which was protected under the First Amendment; "Spiritualism in Court," *St. Louis Daily Globe-Democrat*, 22 December 1876, reprinting an article from the *San Francisco Call*.

along with its grape vine growing operations, from Brocton, New York to Santa Rosa, California in 1875 and named the settlement there "Fountain Grove." The vineyards would prosper long after he departed some years later, with his reputation as a charismatic madman intact.

At almost the same time that Harris arrived in California, in the last months of 1875, the American spirit medium Cora L. V. Scott Hatch Daniels Tappan arrived back in the United States from a lengthy stay in England and met her English acolyte George Risdale Hinde in San Francisco, with whom she had planned to establish a spiritualist colony in California. From January to March 1876, she would give public "inspirational" lectures, but she and Hinde had first traveled to Placentia, near Anaheim, where Cora's "higher guides" had directed Hinde to select a 24-acre piece of land on which he was to build the colony. She left the settlers to themselves, however, and they did not find another spiritual director until several years later, when the spirit medium Louis Schlesinger arrived, along with the notion that the residents were to dedicate themselves to an exclusive diet of raw fruits and vegetables, and to name themselves the Societas Fraternia. The settlement was probably sustained into the early 1880s, when Schlesinger and his wife Julia decamped to San Francisco and Julia began publishing the Spiritualist periodical *The Carrier Dove*.[82]

Another, better known, story that connects early California horticulture and Spiritualists concerns spirit medium Eliza Maria (Lovell) Summons Neal Tibetts. The Progressivist John Wesley North founded the Southern California Colony Association in Riverside in 1870 as a "colony" of like-minded people and was populated in its earliest days by many Spiritualists and Free Thinkers.[83] These included anti-Christian "rationalist" and Darwinian pamphleteer William Denton, his sister Annie Denton Cridge (a "psychometrist"), her husband Alfred Cridge, and Luther Calvin Tibbets and his spirit

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[82] Marc Demarest, "A Frugivorous Colony: The Societas Fraternia," http://ehbritten.blogspot.com/2014/12/a-frugivorous-colony-societas-fraterna.html; and "The Societas Fraternia: Notes on Dr Louis Schlesinger," http://ehbritten.blogspot.com/2014/12/the-societas-fraterna-notes-on-dr-louis.html; "Mrs Cora L. V. Tappan," *Daily Alta California*, 8 January 1876; "Mrs. Cora L. V. Tappan," *San Jose Mercury News*, 12 March 1876.

[83] Illustrative of North's worldview is his lecture, "Science and Some Incidents in Its History," reprinted in the Spiritualist newspaper *The Progressive Thinker*, 22 March 1890.

medium wife Eliza. Both the Cridges and the Tibbets had been residents in Washington, D. C. during the Civil War and had mixed with the Spiritualist community there, which included, among others, civil servants working under Lincoln's first Secretary of Agriculture, Isaac Newton, who was himself a Spiritualist. When the Riverside Colony was set up in 1873, the Cridges and the Tibbets moved there. In 1873, Eliza Tibbets, looking for some new varieties of fruit that might flourish in Riverside's climate, contacted her Department of Agriculture acquaintance, William Saunders, an experimental horticulturalist, and he sent her a few grafted samples of a new orange tree, the "Bahia Navel Orange," which the Department had procured from Brazil. The Tibbets planted it on their land, and it became the parent tree of the entire California navel orange industry.

Before ending this account of Spiritualism in early California, it would be well to consider one more story, not often mentioned, about an earlier utopian effort, in which two men took the leading roles, and which well illustrates some of the vicissitudes of those who did attempt to found a Spiritualist association of sorts. It, too, involved fruit growers. One of the leaders was Henderson Lewelling, the other was "Dr." E. S. Tyler.

The patriarch of the Lewelling clan was Meshach Lewelling, a Quaker of Randolph County, North Carolina.[84] He was a physician, a plantation owner and slave holder; and on his farm, he had a nursery and raised fruit trees. By 1820, however, like other Quakers, had become convinced that slaveholding was sinful. To that end, like unto Moses, he sold his land and "came out" of North Carolina, moving his family across the Ohio River, settling himself, his wife and his eight children in Henry County, Indiana, where he freed his slaves.

At least two of his sons, Henderson and John, married and moved farther west, to Salem, Iowa in 1837, where, among other Quakers, they established their own farms, married, and began raising their own children.[85] Trained well by their father, they were capable horticulturalists. The Salem Monthly Meeting, like other Quaker meetings, developed a split of opinions on the question of slavery. Though all agreed it was evil, some were convinced that it was necessary to take an active part in helping fugitive slaves

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[84] Meshach (1787-1840) was of Welsh descent: Lewelling was sometimes rendered Llewelling, Llewellen, Llewellyn, or Luelling. Meshak is also found as Meshic.
[85] Henderson William Lewelling (1809-1876), John Randolph Lewelling (1811-1883), Their younger brother, Seth Lewelling (1820-1896), would later join them.

escape. Henderson's farm was only twenty-five miles from Missouri, and he turned his place into the gathering place of an Abolition Friends Monthly Meeting, whose members were active on the Underground Railroad. In 1845, the Salem Meeting disowned the Abolition Friends, and Henderson, like his father, felt called to "come out" of that place and move further west.[86]

In March 1847, Henderson and his sons filled a large wagon with seven hundred grafted fruit tree saplings—apples, pears, peaches, and cherries—packed together in a layer of compost and set off with their families to Oregon. It was an almost impossible expedition, with all the efforts they had to make simply to keep the trees alive on the way. When they finally reached the new town of Milwaukie on the Willamette River in November, more than half the saplings had survived and Henderson planted them there, establishing the first fruit tree nursery on the Pacific Coast. His younger brother Seth followed him the following year, bringing seeds and more young trees. One of Seth's cherry trees, grown from seed, was a new variety, which Seth named for his Chinese servant, Bing. The business rapidly flourished, by selling both propagated fruit trees in the region and boxes of fresh fruit shipped as far south as San Francisco. For his effort, Henderson would come to be known as the father of Pacific horticulture.

He would nevertheless soon become a very troubled soul. His wife Jane, the mother of his many children, died in childbirth in 1851. He was devastated. He quickly remarried, but his new wife almost immediately died. He tried again, but this third wife also passed away shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile, his brother John had come west to California in 1850 to search for gold around Placerville, but had met with little luck, and had decided then to travel up to Henderson's nursey in Oregon and bring back a load of fruit trees to begin a nursery in Alameda County, west of Oakland. John, too, prospered, and he became a legend over the following years for his orchards and nurseries in San Lorenzo and then in St. Helena in Napa County. By 1853, Henderson, deeply brooding over the loss of his wives, sold off his estate in Oregon and moved to California, and bought land near his brother John in

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[86] "Henderson Luelling and Seth Lewelling, Pioneers of Horticulture in Oregon," *Eighth Biennial Report of the Board of Horticulture of the State of Oregon* (Salem, Oregon: J. H. Whitney, 1905), 103-106.

Alameda County, where he established another orchard and nursery and remarried again. His business again flourished, but during this time, he seems to have turned to Spiritualism to reconcile himself with his deceased wives. Perhaps Spiritualism also provided him the imaginative possibility that earth-bound marriages were inevitably prone to sighs and sorrows and convinced him to that this life should be modelled on the afterlife, where departed souls "neither marry nor are given in marriage."

In the early spring of 1859, an itinerant visionary named "Dr." E. S. Tyler arrived in San Francisco with a utopian project in mind. "The Doctor is a middle-aged, benevolent-looking man, with a ferocious head of hair and a patriarchal pair of whiskers," wrote *The Golden Era*.[87] The project, it reported, was based on Tyler's Spiritualist and Free-Love convictions that the institution of marriage was itself a corrupt kind of slavery that had to be abandoned:

> He believes the world is all wrong, and that upon him devolves the labor of righting it. He is convinced that our whole social fabric is rotten—that society is organized upon a false and unnatural basis—that the privileges it recognizes and the proprieties it sanctions, are in conflict with every natural law and manifestation of the Divine will—and that the Free-love societies are about to demonstrate its absurdities and inaugurate a reform.

Tyler had come to San Francisco with the goal of organizing a "Harmonial Brotherhood" among its Spiritualists and enrolling them in a proposed expedition to Central America where they would establish a perfect Free-Love community in the wilderness.

It is unclear how much the San Franciscans knew about Tyler's past. In the early 1840s, he had been a Methodist preacher in Michigan, but had been expelled from the Michigan Conference (and from the Odd Fellows) for having improper relations with an "adopted daughter." He moved his wife and four children to Farmington, Illinois, by the early 1850s, where he set up a blacksmithing establishment, but piled up a list of creditors

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[87] Reprinted in the *Shasta Courier*, 23 July 1859.

in the community. He had boarded a young woman of ill repute in his family's house—against their objections—whom he said he was intent on "reforming," but when she became pregnant, he left his family and set out with her to Kansas. There, he was said to have made himself unwelcome by his unwonted attentions upon the young women there and was rumored to have shot someone, perhaps his mistress. When he returned to Farmington, he began lecturing on the cause of "bleeding Kansas," and collecting money for the anti-slavery settlers, but locals said that none of the money collected ever left his pockets. Also, rumors from Kansas trickled back to Illinois that he had left the territory with a bounty on his head for his apprehension and return to answer for the shooting.[88]

By the spring of 1857, Tyler was wandering through upstate New York, in places like Oswego, Syracuse, and Auburn, giving lectures on Spiritualism, clairvoyance, and Free Love, against some stiff opposition and skepticism about "prophecies" he made, but he met with some success among the fairer sex. In Skaneateles, he boarded for some months with a family and seduced the mistress of the household, Mrs. Mary Lewis, converting her to the doctrine of Free Love. She abandoned her husband and children and the she and Tyler set out together to join a notorious fledging community of like-minded Free Lovers at Berlin Heights, Ohio. There Tyler, now referring to himself as "Dr. Tyler," and his paramour tried to set up a water-cure establishment in a hotel in the town. In October, the enraged locals had constables from Sandusky descend on the Free Lovers and arrest them. At their trial, Mrs. Lewis's husband from Skaneateles testified against Tyler and was able to convince his wife, at least for a while, to return home with him.[89] Afterwards, the *Auburn Advertiser* published a warning to other newspapers, declaring that "E. S. Tyler, the free love villain … will pollute every town he enters, and damn every community he visits." To help identify the scoundrel, the paper gave his description: "Tyler is a man six feet in height, thick

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[88] "E. S. Tyler—Some Ugly Facts," *Auburn Daily American*, 18 September 1857.
[89] The group also issued a nationwide call for a Free Love Convention in Berlin Heights: "Convention at Berlin," *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, 5 September 1857; "Descent by the Police on a Free Love Institution," *New York Daily Herald*, 23 November 1857; John C. Spurlock, *Free Love: Marriage and Middle-Class Radicalism in America, 1825-1860* (NY: New York University Press, 1988), 147, 158-60; "Marriage is the Slavery of Woman: Free Love is the freedom and equality of Women and Men: Polygamy is marriage multiplied: Free Love is Marriage Abolished," as reported in "Free Love Monstrosity," *Buffalo Morning Express*, 16 April 1858.

shoulders, long hair and very long whiskers; always wears a heavy gold chain dangling across his breast.—He assumes meekness and piety, carries a pistol, and is the most arrant knave and coward in existence. Look out for him!"[90]

Nothing daunted, "Dr." Tyler proceeded to New York City and began advertising his services as a clairvoyant and psychometric physician, "who by his superior clairvoyant powers can see what others guess at—can see all your disease—see all its extent and progress, and see the fallible means of cure." Patients were advised to mail him a lock of their hair for diagnostic examination, prescription, and psychometrical delineation of character.[91] At the same time, he organized a series of grove meetings outside the city in New Jersey, whose purpose was to form an "Equitable Emigration Association." The plan evolved into a manifesto, which incorporated language from the American Declaration Independence, and which was printed in the *New York Tribune*:

> We believe advanced minds and well-developed individuals can best secure [life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness] by association and cooperation to acquire and occupy the virgin soils of the Islands of the Pacific Ocean, there to commence anew the great experiment of Social Democracy and establish new institutions more flexible, and more conformable to human nature and the rights of the individual.[92]

The original plan was to sell shares and buy a ship to sail from New York harbor in October 1858, and "cruise from island to island, till one is found suitable to the purposes of the Association." That precise plan seems to have fizzled out for want of investors or committed participants, but when Tyler showed up in San Francisco the following spring, he brought his envisioned project with him, now building up enthusiasm for it with a group, who were inclined to the doctrine of Free-Love, calling themselves the "Harmonial Brotherhood," from within the ranks of the local Spiritualist believers. Rather than

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[90] Reprinted, "Parting Salute—Post Him!" *Syracuse Daily Courier and Journal*, 5 January 1858.
[91] "Clairvoyant and Psychometrist," *The Principle* 2.7 (August 1858): 72.
[92] "Colonization of the Free Lovers on the South Sea Islands," *New York Tribune*, 15 July 1858.

planning to wander out among the South Seas isles, Tyler and his new cohort fixed their sights on buying some massive piece of the Pacific coast of Honduras or El Salvador around the Bay of Fonseca. Several other places had been eliminated in the colonists' estimation because, in order to settle there, they would have been required to convert to Catholicism, which would, of course, been entirely at odds with what they intended to do. In their new paradise, no alcohol, tobacco, or "poisonous medicines," were to be permitted, and their diet was to be only vegetables and fruits. True to the Free-Love principle of absolute "Self-Sovereignty," "marriage was to be effected (or dissolved) by the parties making a record thereof in a book to be kept by the secretary."[93]

The most critical addition to the utopian pioneers was the perennial Come-Outer, Henderson Lewelling, for whom, undoubtedly, it seemed yet one more "impossible" migration, against the odds and in the face of people telling him he was out of his mind. He was so enthusiastic a supporter that he precipitously sold his Alameda estate, known as "Fruit Vale," and said to be worth forty thousand dollars, at a considerable loss, to California Governor John Weller, who moved into its alabaster-floored main house.[94] With the money, Lewelling bought the schooner *Santiago* and hired a crew, so that he, some of his sons, and the rest of the group—some twenty-five people—could ship themselves south. The *Daily Alta California* described the group who had determined to make the expedition (which was, it was noted, the first to set *out* in the opposite direction from all the many who had rushed *in* to the Golden State from elsewhere) in this way:

> The Society flourished for a time 'like a green bay horse,' but having no root, it withered like the barren fig tree, as the Doctor called his little flock together; pulled up his stakes and left … The Society numbers about twenty persons, a few of whom are young and inexperienced, but the majority of them are *blasé*—persons who have gone through a course of restless, unsatisfying indulgence, and have resorted to this last dodge of Free Love, to awaken a spasmodic enjoyment in their *effete* and worn-out existence.[95]

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[93] North San Juan *Hydraulic Press*, 23 July 1859.
[94] "Fruit Vale," *Daily Alta California*, 18 September 1860.
[95] "A Free Love Society," *Daily Alta California*, 8 October 1859.

Tyler, the group's "physician" and, essentially, its spiritual director who was being guided by invisible messages from the beyond, had a new "wife," bloomers-clad, who came along, but Lewelling's current wife, whom her husband, for her non-compliance, was about to abandon without a home, was certain that Henderson, "perhaps the only sincere one in the party," had gone crazy and swore out a writ *de lunatico inquirendo*.[96] When the *Santiago* slipped off from the wharf at the dark of midnight and drew off into the stream on October 8, Lewelling was not aboard, but had successfully hidden himself to avoid the authorities who were looking for him, and he "boarded her in the yawl only after she had finally headed for sea and was passing through the Golden Gate." At least one other member of the party, a Mr. Brooks, had also had difficulties before the time of departure. When Brooks insisted that his sixteen-year-old daughter accompany him on the expedition, she refused, and he swore out a writ of habeas corpus to collect her. However, the girl showed the court a vial of strychnine and said she would swallow it if she were forced to go, and the judge set her free.

At sea, the members of the little band almost immediately began squabbling among themselves about a number of issues—the nature of spirit mediumship, for one, but also, in particular, such things as their imposed "harmonious diet," which, during the voyage, "consisted of coarse flour, apparently ground up with chaff, straw and all, and very much resembling cattle feed." When the ship put into shore a couple of times along the coast of Mexico, members of the company took the opportunity to provide themselves with meat and game, to supplement the tea, coffee, and salt port they had been sneaking from the

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[96] Much of the information about the group's activities after they left San Francisco comes from "The Free-Love Colony," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 18 May 1860, copied from the *San Francisco Times* and widely reprinted around the country. Other sources include "Harmonial Brotherhood," *San Joaquin Republican*, 4 June 1859; "The Free Lovers' Departure," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 8 October 1859; "The Free Lovers," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 9 October 1859; "A Wife Deserted," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 14 October 1859; "Free Lovers," *Nevada Journal*, 14 October 1859; "Letter from San Francisco," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 14 October 1859; "For Central America," *Sonoma County Journal*, 13 April 1860; "Further in Relation to the Free Lovers," *Daily Alta California*, 18 May 1860; "Adventurers," *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 31 May 1860; and "A correspondent of the S. F. Call …" *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 9 December 1860.

crew's larder. The dissension within the company, often pitting Tyler against Lewelling, rose to such an extent that the crew referred to them as the "Discordant Devils," and to their project as "Free Love Hell."

After they reached the Bay of Fonseca, the colonists scouted its islands and shore, but were unsatisfied with the prospects of settling there, so they sailed up one of the rivers that fed into the bay sixty miles into the interior of Honduras before they made their encampment. Lewelling and his sons, however, after reconnoitering, realized they had few supplies with which the group could construct something permanent there. The group also assessed their human resources and found them wanting, suggesting at one point that they try to recruit a company of healthy German girls from abroad, "to improve the stock." It is difficult to determine how delusional they had become by this time: Malaria had soon stricken nearly the entire party, including Lewelling and his sons. Tyler was their "physician," but without "poisonous medicines," all he could think to do was to wrap them up in blankets and then douse them with cold water. Several of the party died, and by the time that word of their fate had reached San Francisco the following May, the entire expedition had burst asunder, and some of the survivors were making their way home again.[97] Lewelling's schooner, the *Santiago*, was wrecked at Mazatlan in July, and was a total loss. The *Daily Alta California* commented that "Several of the poor creatures have died, and others will scarcely ever venture to return to live among decent, civilized people."[98]

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[97] Unbelievably, Tyler tried again. He made it back to the East Coast and held organizational meetings in Philadelphia and New York City for the "New York and Nicaragua Company," whose aim was another expedition, this time to Nicaragua in 1862. His fellow Free-Love associate from Berlin Heights, Francis Barry, tried to warn investors about Tyler (apparently to little avail), writing that he and many other people around the country were of the opinion, "that he is not an appropriate person to take a leading part in such a Movement. I do not know a person of his acquaintance who would put money in his hands for investment"—"The Nicaragua Movement," *New Republic* [Cleveland] 1.17 (9 August 1862): 268. Nevertheless, Tyler seems to have been able to bring a group to Nicaragua, but of whose ultimate outcome I am uncertain, though Tyler himself seems to have still been there as of mid-1863; "Spiritualism—A Conference," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 June 1862; "Nicaragua Emigration Movement," *Scottish American Journal*, 3 July 1862; "Honduras and Nicaragua," *New Orleans Daily True Delta*, 5 April 1863; and "Interesting from Nicaragua," *New York Herald*, 7 June 1863.

[98] "Further in Relation to the Free Lovers," *Daily Alta California*, 18 May 1860.

Nevertheless, Henderson Lewelling did return. His wife, whom he had abandoned, had divorced him and was living with her children from a previous marriage. He found a job in Brooklyn in Alameda County for a while, clerking in a store, then joined together with another fellow doing in carpentry work in San Francisco. By 1878, he was living in San Jose, with a few people loosely described as his kin. He died one morning, on December 28 of that year, while clearing a lot near his home that he had rented in preparation for planting it. In the morning, he had gone out with the man he was boarding with to burn the stubble off the lot, and his companion went home to prepare lunch, expecting Lewelling to follow soon. When Henderson did not return, reported the later coroner's inquest, the man "went over to the field, a few hundred yards away, to find him dead, with his hair and whiskers burned off, together with the greater portion of his clothing, especially from the upper part of his body—the clothing being still on fire. The testimony before the Coroner revealed that the deceased was troubled with heart disease, and that recently he fell in a fit on the street, remaining unconscious for several minutes. The jury found that he died of heart disease, and that the burning of the body was subsequent to death."[99]

So ended the life of Henderson William Lewelling, noted activist on the Underground Railroad, legendary transporter of fruit trees to Oregon, the "Pioneer Horticulturalist of the Pacific States," and financier of the Spiritualist utopian Free-Love expedition to Honduras.[100] His first accomplishments have been the subject of books, memorials, and even a television show.[101] The last accomplishment has not been heralded

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[99] "Probable Suicide—Death from Heart Disease," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 30 December 1878.

[100] Tom Patterson, *A Colony for California: Riverside's First Hundred Years* (Riverside: Press-Enterprise Company, 1971), 139-150.

[101] Local histories in Oregon and California tell Lewelling's horticultural exploits, as well as those of his very successful brother John. Books on horticulture in the West revere him. Henderson's house in Henry County, Indiana is maintained by the National Park Service as the Lewelling Quaker Museum; it has an entrance in its basement that leads underground to other houses nearby that were on the Underground Railroad. Children's books about his trek across to Oregon include Evelyn Sibley Lampman, *Tree Wagon* (New York: Doubleday, 1953) and Deborah Hopkins and Nancy Carpenter, *Apples to Oregon: Being the (Slightly) True Narrative of How a Brave Pioneer Father Brought Apples, Peaches, Pears, Plums, Grapes, and Cherries (and Children) Across the Plains* (New York: Atheneum Books, 2004). The trip across the Plains was dramatized in "The Traveling Trees," a 1965 episode of *Death Valley*

much, not even—or, perhaps, especially not—among the Spiritualist believers who have recounted the history of Spiritualism in California, for whom the whole episode must surely have seemed better left untold.

3 Magicians in the Gold Rush and Beyond

The first professional magic performance in California that I can find recorded, apart from whatever clandestine card sharping was "performed" as soon as gaming tables were set up, was most probably offered by the English "Fire-King," that is, fire-eater, and "Necromancer," John Powell "Courtier," in the fall of 1849. He had arrived in San Francisco in the late summer aboard the *William Watson* from Melbourne. In 1833, Powell, listing his occupation as "comedian," had been sentenced in England to servitude in Australia upon being convicted of theft. Before he had finished out his sentence in 1841, he had somehow developed himself as a magician and fire eater and had given himself the last name of "Courtier." In that year, he began performing in Tasmania and then moved to Melbourne where he had irregular engagements in which he also worked with comical "automatons"—which might have meant anything from puppets or marionettes, to dummies, manikins, or self-moving mechanical figures. He did not rely on his magic performances to make money but attempted several times to establish and run small boarding houses or inns for the poorer (and rowdier) class of transients and laborers. He was somewhat given to rowdiness himself.

What made him pick up his wife Sarah and young children and leave Melbourne in June 1849 for San Francisco was likely the news of gold discoveries in California. He probably began performing in a saloon or outdoor pavilion on a few occasions in late 1849, announced only by pasted bills or small printed "dodgers" distributed on the streets. When

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Days, hosted by Ronald Reagan. Recreating the trip to Honduras would probably be a better fit for a director like Werner Herzog.

he first performed in Sacramento in April 1853, his ad for the engagement at the Theatre of Arts announced:

> Professor Courtier begs to inform his friends and the public in general that he has just arrived from San Francisco, where he has had the honor of performing on several occasions, to the most crowded audiences, in the year '49; in Washington Hall in the year '50; at the Theatre of Arts, Jackson street, in '51; since then at the California Exchange and at the Stockton Theatre.[102]

During the first few years, Courtier and his wife set up a barroom called the "Steamboat Exchange" in a rough part of San Francisco by the waterfront, near a place where clustered so many Australian immigrants who had worked out their penal servitude in exile that it had been called "Sydney-Town," and would evolve into the region of the city given the name "The Barbary Coast" because of its population of thieves, thugs, harlots, and incendiaries. Ex-Australian convicts, numbering in the thousands, had terrorized the city and had set a series of fires burning much of San Francisco. Citizens formed a vigilance committee and routed many of them out in 1851.[103] When Courtier arrived in San Francisco, it is not at all clear that he identified himself as having come from Australia.

Eventually, the Courtiers also opened the small Union Hotel, which seems to have been regarded by his neighbors as a house of ill repute. The venture into inn-keeping was similar to what they had done in Sydney before coming to California.[104]

Courtier also put together a small troupe of assistants, informally called the "Fakir Troupe," or "Ethiopian Fakir Troupe," who performed irregularly in San Francisco, sometimes in blackface, and traveled occasionally out to the gold camps and put on shows there. In effect, Courtier became California's resident magician during those years. In 1855,

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[102] "Theatre of Arts," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 18 April 1853.
[103] Herbert Asbury, *The Barbary Coast: An Informal History of the San Francisco Underworld* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1933), 49-50, 99.
[104] Courtier's checkered character and career is described by Kent Blackmore on his *Magic in Sydney* website: http://sydneymagic.net/courtier1.html

when a reviewer in the *Daily Alta California* went to one of their blackface performances at Thomas Maguire's San Francisco Hall, he wrote:

> If our memory serves us right this is the celebrated Mr. Courtier, a jolly Londoner, who in the days when slugs were plentiful and gold lay scattered about in "big lumps" in the mines, gave similar exhibitions in the diggings to those of the present day in San Francisco. One of the best tricks of Mr. Courtier, was holding a watch between his thumb and finger and allowing one of the audience to fire his pistol at it; the miracle being, that the watch always disappeared and the "Fakir" escaped uninjured. On a certain night, an old "Pike" [i. e., the generic name for an overland immigrant from the rural East, e.g., Pike County, Missouri] who was among the audience, believing that all was not right, determined to try the effect of his "Colt" on the time-piece, and to the astonishment of all no sooner did the unsuspecting Mr. Courtier hold the watch aloft and shout "fire!" to the man in the pit, (who, of course, had a pistol without ball,) than "Pike" drew forth a formidable six-shooter and drawing a bee-line on the ticker, not only smashed seven bells out of it but knocked off two of the "Fakir's" fingers and a piece of his thumb. This performance created considerable fun among the audience, though it made the "Fakir" execute some gyrations not contained in the programme. "Pike," as much astonished at the result as anybody, and having his belief in Jugglers very much shaken, made a clean breach for the door and has not been seen since.[105]

The 1855 performance at San Francisco Hall had Courtier headlining under the name of "John Moon, Prof. of Dexterity and Optical Deception, Fellow of the Mystic Lodge of Arts, London," assisted by "Elkan North, Prof. of Mechanical and Chemical Illusions, and

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[105] "San Francisco Hall," *Daily Alta California*, 21 May 1855; also recounted in "Gossip with Readers and Correspondents," *The Pioneer* 3.6 (June 1955): 375. This story, with the precise elements differing according to time and place, appeared over and over again, told about one magician or another. I do not know if this is its first appearance or if it ever had any grounding in reality. A very similar tale was told about the Fakir of Siva and an audience of Texas cowboys. And in slightly different form, it was said to have occurred in England, as reported in "Bullet-Proof Juggler Killed," *Virginia City Territorial Enterprise*, 17 May 1876.

pupil of the celebrated Adrian" (no telling what his real name was), and "W. J. Camp, Machinist and Automaton Manipulator" (another pseudonymously named performer).[106] "North," it was said, would "execute … the world-renowned Hindoo juggler feat of causing a person to disappear" and "Professor Moon" would close the show by "eating a large plate of flaming fire, which he will masticate without deception."

Courtier's possibly last performance in California was at San Francisco's Platt's New Music Hall at the end of December 1861, after the death of "The Pioneer Magician's" wife.[107] After that, he moved from California to New Mexico, where he somehow acquired the profession of physician and opened up and ran a water-cure and vapor bath and treatment establishment in Santa Fe until his death in 1876.

After Courtier's initial performances in 1849, California's next magician was something of a washout, "Don Rafael Croley," who appeared very briefly as part of a troupe consisting mostly of singers and dancers from the Teatro Nacional de Mexico. The reviewer for the *Daily Alta California* wrote of their performance on April 5, 1850: "From the peculiar expression of Don Rafael's face we expected to witness some admirable *diableri*, but his feats were few, common place, and performed clumsily."[108]

The next magician to appear did far better. Italian prestidigitator Signor Giovanni Rossi filled an engagement at the National Theatre in San Francisco on the night of April 27, 1850.[109] He performed on the bill with the brilliant piano virtuoso Henri Herz, who was finishing a grand tour of the United States. Rossi performed legerdemain and ventriloquism, and graced his audiences by imitating the sounds and calls of birds and beasts.

The writer and humorist, Stephen Massett, whose *nom de plume* was "Jeems Pipes, of Pipesville," wrote a letter for the newspaper using his comic persona:

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[106] Ad for the San Francisco Hall, *Daily Alta California*, 22 May 1855.
[107] "Professor Courtier," *Daily Alta California*, 27 December 1861.
[108] "Quelque Choze Extraordinaire," *Daily Alta California*, 6 April 1850. Helene Wickham Koon, *Gold Rush Performers: A Biographical Dictionary of Actors, Singers, Dancers, Musicians, Circus Performers and Minstrel Players in America's Far West, 1848-1869* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, 1994), entry 234, makes his name out to be Señor Rafael Castrejon.
[109] Koon, *Gold Rush Performers*, entry 1093, names him as Ernesto Rossi, born in Leghorn, Italy.

> H. Hurts gav 2 Konserts, and didn't play on moar than won peaner. Sig. Rossi did sum Ledgerdemain, and uther Triks, sitch as swallering Boilia Hoyle, Kutting Kards, makin Kanary Burds drink Treekel, and rapping a Lady up in her pocket hankercheef, and Then eatin her—prise of admisshun $4.[110]

Despite that "review," the local critics rated Rossi's performance very highly, and he took over top billing at the National for several days.

Rossi had come to the United States from Milan in November 1846, along with his wife, a prima ballerina named Fanny Manten. He performed in New York City at Palmo's Opera House and the Alhamba Saloon in January 1847. Then, as he and Fanny found bookings, they had gone to Philadelphia, Albany, and Cincinnati, eventually making their way downriver to New Orleans, where they played the National Theatre in May 1848.

From there, they sailed to Veracruz, during the American occupation of the city, and both performed in June at the Teatro Nacional in Mexico City. Fanny danced *Giselle* with Mlle. Aurelia Dimier, and Rossi took over the stage there after the engagement of the well-regarded German magician Herr Alexander (Johann Friedrich Heimbürger).[111] Rossi had boarded a steamship at Mazatlan and arrived in San Francisco on March 30, 1850, followed

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[110] *Placer Times*, 8 May 1850.

[111] Herr Alexander toured Europe, North and South American for years, including the Eastern United States, performing several times at the White House for President Polk and Senators Clay, Webster, and Calhoun in the late 1840s, and thereafter to Mexico and Brazil, but does not seem to have made it to California; Henry Ridgely Evans, *The Old and the New Magic* (Chicago: Open Court, 1909), 180-82. Herr Alexander seems to have had a habit of making sudden departures from venues to avoid paying debts; for example, he was arrested in Rochester and taken in irons to Lockport in July 1850, for having jumped bail two years previously when he failed to appear in court to answer a suit for damages filed by a man "who had his hand lacerated by one of the magician's pistols"; "A Magician in Trouble," Wilmington, North Carolina *Tri-Weekly Commercial*, 30 July 1850. In Chicago in 1852, he left the city so precipitously that his creditors found two large boxes left behind containing his magic apparatus, which they opened and auctioned off. The contents included his "inexhaustible bottle," his double-sided copper kettle, the iron framework for the "etherial suspension," and several more devices, all of which were examined by the *Chicago Journal*, which detailed their secrets to the public; "The Black Art Out!" *Gettysburg Star and Banner*, 28 January 1853.

in a few days by his wife and two other dancers. Fanny and her troupe danced the first ballet presented in San Francisco, entitled *The Midnight Thieves Dispersed; Or, Gasperone, Chief of the Murderer's Band of Calabria*.

Joseph Andrew Rowe, an equestrian impresario, had come to San Francisco the year before and had set up his Olympic Circus of bareback and trick riders under canvas, giving the city its first public entertainment on October 29, 1849. By the following March, as the public became jaded with the acts, Rowe remodeled the venue, called it the Pacific Theatre, installed a stage, and began offering other kinds of acts, starting with Signor Rossi and Fanny Manten. The review the following day noted the *distingué* presence among the motley crowd that packed the place:

> There was a general turn-out of nobility and gentry, courts and counsellors, doctors and divines, deacons and dignitaries, magistrates and marshals, harbor masters and houries, recorders and roues, traders and trappers, miners and gamblers, soldiers and sailors, tinkers and tailors, captains and majors, artists and agents, editors and hombres. Verily the Senor [sic] is the right sort of a magician, and his lady nothing less.[112]

The reviewer noted that "The naivete with which Rossi submitted his tricks to the scrutiny of the audience was really delightful." By that he meant that, unlike the magicians back East who performed their legerdemain with mere copper and silver coins, Signor Rossi flashed gold eagles to the audience, making them appear and disappear.

During their time in California, the Rossis also shuttled back and forth between San Francisco and Sacramento aboard the steamer *Gold Hunter* and performed at the newly opened Tehama Theatre, and made excursions out to the gold fields to perform.

Most people in Signor Rossi's audiences had lately come from elsewhere, from back East, or from abroad, and some were sophisticated theatergoers transplanted to San Francisco. Some had seen the most famous magicians in America perform, and they rated

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[112] *Placer Times*, 24 May 1850.

Rossi quite up to par—even better, perhaps, in his legerdemain—with such notables as Signor Blitz, John Henry Anderson, and Herr Alexander.

However, the Rossis' California sojourn was short-lived. They underwent a series of disasters during their months in San Francisco and Sacramento, and they departed October 1 on the *California*, headed back to Mazatlan. The *Daily Alta California* expressed sorrow:

> He came here worth several thousand dollars which he had earned by hard labor in his profession. He was robbed here of two thousand dollars by an Italian, was burned out of his theatre and household, went to Sacramento and was burned out in three or four days after his second engagement, his first having been defeated by the sickness of his wife, besides being robbed again. He then came here again and invested all his means in the "Italian Theatre," and in about three nights was burned out again losing everything.[113]

They must have recouped in Mexico, for we find them performing again jointly at the Teatro Nacional on January 23, 1853, in a program that included "The Magic Book of the Chaldeans; the Enchanted Scarves; the Tailor of Pluto; the Electric Coin, or the Aerial Road; the Platonic Candle, or the Mysterious Candlestick; and the Devil's Chicken Coop. After Fanny danced, Signor Rossi came back onto the stage and performed a skit with ventriloquism, called "Disappointment of a Drunk; or, Mauricio the Unfortunate," which involved a comic dialogue of an innkeeper with a drunkard who had locked himself inside a trunk, but also included imitations of various animal and insect sounds.[114]

Even before the Rossis had left San Francisco, another magician appeared in the city to perform. This was "Herr" Rolla Rossiter, who gave a public performance on August 25, 1850, at the Tehama Theatre in Sacramento. Rossiter was a circus horse rider, born in New York in 1807, who had worked in circuses back East, including Barnum's and Gilbert R.

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[113] "Signor Rossi," *Daily Alta California*, 1 October 1850.
[114] *Reseña histórica del teatro en México*, vol. 2, 2nd edition (Mexico City: La Europea, 1895), 192-93. They played several engagements there. In May, they were "all the rage" when they played in the Chiapas town of San Juan Bautista de Tabasco; "Prestidigitador," *Diario Official Del Govierno Mexicano*, 27 September 1854.

Spalding's. A few months before showing up in California, the 1850 census caught the itinerant Rossiter living in Manhattan. Perhaps he made his way to San Francisco encouraged by the success of Rowe's Olympic Circus, which had passed into the management of Rossiter's friend William H. Foley. A clown and equestrian, Foley had come with the original Rowe troupe, then quit it to start his own show. He then bought the Olympic Circus from Rowe in May 1850.[115] It burned down, however, in June, so Rossiter had to look for other performance venues when he arrived.[116]

Rossiter immediately drew on his other well-developed circus skills, including slack wire ("wire volante") walking and legerdemain. By October 1850, he was performing as the main act at the Jenny Lind Theatre in San Francisco, as a magician and wire walker. The writer George Horatio Kirby, writing as "Squibob," caught his act at the California Theater in Benicia around this time and described it with his genius for the ludicrous:

> Gracious! how he balanced tobacco pipes, and tossed knives in the air, and jumped on a wire, and sat down on it, and rolled over it, and made it swing to and fro while he threw little brass balls from one hand to the other. The applause was tremendious, and when after a solo by the orchestra, (which consisted of one seedy violin, played in such a state of hopeless inebriation, that his very tiddle seemed to hiccough,) he threw a back-handed summerset and falling in a graceful attitude informed the audience that "he should appear again to-morrow evening with a change of performance;" we enthusiastically cheered, and my friend, the man in the red vest, who had sat during

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[115] Rowe continued in the circus business; his subsequent company, under the name of the Pioneer Circus, often toured out into the mining camps.

[116] The *Sacramento Transcript*, 19 October 1850, briefly announced, under the title of "Hindoo Juggling," that "Signior Ferren, will give a grand exhibition of the magic art this evening at Lee's Theatre Hall. Signior Ferren is said to be a skillful performer, and presents an attractive bill." This was probably the 24-year-old, Italian born "A. Ferren," registered a couple of months before in the 1850 federal census as a miner, living among other miners, in Trinity. I see no other performances advertised for Sig. Ferren, but it is possible that he continued on as a "Hindoo juggler" here and there in the mining camps—"Correspondence," *Sacramento Transcript*, 24 May 1851. Letter from Murderer's Bar, El Dorado County, dated May 18, signed "Long Tom": "If Chinese billiards, ten pin alleys, sherry cobblers, fancy lotteries, Hindoo jugglers, pugilistic exhibitions, &c., are city sports, we have them all …"

> the whole evening in a state of rapt admiration observed with a profane ejaculation, "that it went ahead of anything he had ever seen in his life except the falls of Niagara!"[117]

Rossiter stayed in San Francisco and Sacramento, performing solo or as part of small circuses (as magician, slack wire walker, and ringmaster) as late as July 1853. He departed for Australia in December 1854 to follow the new gold rush there, carrying with him the same skills, which made him popular. He left Australia with his old friend William H. Foley—who had made his own way to Australia managing another equestrian troupe—to tour New Zealand in September 1855. Rossiter then went on to Valparaiso in 1856 with the famous bareback rider James Munro Melville, with whom he had previously worked in the Lee & Bennett circus. Foley and his wife stayed on permanently in New Zealand, becoming a mainstay of the country's early theatrical and dramatic talent.

The next professional magician to perform in California was Isham Bailey Hardy, who arrived in San Francisco aboard the *Tennessee* on May 20, 1851. He had been born in Kentucky, had gone to school in Louisiana, and had begun performing ventriloquism and legerdemain in 1840, at age 17, in Quincy, Illinois, and then farther afield. When he reached California, his uncle, Mexican war veteran Jeduthun Philip Hardy, had just arrived in Sacramento intending to settle there with his family, and Isham's first performance was at Lee's Exchange in Sacramento, where he played three nights, beginning on May 26. He advertised a "Grand Display of Ventriloquism, Mimicry, and Natural Magic, Together with a Group of Beautiful Mechanical Figures." He called himself "I. B. Hardy, the Wizard of the Mammoth Cave."[118] He had a few engagements in Sacramento through the rest of the year, then moved out to Placerville and, in San Francisco, at the California Exchange (a barroom and music hall) before making his way back to Kentucky.[119]

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[117] "Squibob at Sonoma," *Daily Alta California*, 21 October 1850.
[118] "Amusements," *Sacramento Transcript*, 27 May 1851.
[119] A garbled report about his career appeared in *Mahatma* 1.2 (April 1895): 6, in which he was reported as 80 years old (he was actually 72) and the oldest living magician in America. He also reportedly claimed to have given the first public performance in Salt Lake City, and to have first performed in California when he was 16. If that were true and if he was 80, as he said, it would have been in 1831 (or 1839, going by his actual date of birth).

Another series of magic performances happened at the beginning of October 1852 with the engagement of the soon to be famous troupe of Chinese Jugglers. The troupe, with fifteen to twenty members, including musicians, deboarded their ship from Hong Kong in San Francisco and, over the next several days, walked the streets of the city in rich silk costumes, quite different from what their countrymen already there typically wore, while their local manager, Dr. John Hancock Gihon, plumped their upcoming engagement. They gave a private show for the press and the city's new elite at the American Theatre on October 6, and then opened their engagement there to the public beginning two days later.

Their performances were said to be "the most astonishing that have ever been witnessed on the American continent." And they were said to have exhibited to "the largest audiences that ever assembled together in California" for any reason.[120]

The head of the troupe was a magician named Tuck Quy (or Tack Quy), from Nanjing, and his wife Wang Noo (or Wo Nuy). Included in the troupe was their adopted daughter, Amoy, and their eight-year-old son Teen Shee (or Ten Hue). The individual members could switch off roles to some extent. Juggling, tumbling and magic were mixed in the show, contrary to how Western magicians generally worked. Their athleticism, physical training and dexterity were much admired ("forward somersets!") as well as the contortionist performance of a dwarf named Chin Gan who was said to be double-jointed throughout his body. Most wonderful was their knife-throwing, outlining a troupe member against a vertical board ("impalement"), which the American public had never before seen.[121]

Either is highly implausible. For a fuller and more accurate account of his career, see *Memorial and Biographical History of McLennan, Falls, Bell and Coryell Counties, Texas* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1893), 520-521. The notice of his death is in the *Clifton (Texas) Record*, 23 April 1909.

[120] *New Orleans Picayune*, 26 November 1852.

[121] A program printed in the *Daily Alta California* (8 October 1852) lists: Grand Tableaux, featuring the entire troupe and "the celebrated Double-Jointed Chinese Dwarf 'Chin-Gan,' and his Sedan Chair"; The Magic Balls; The Chinese 'La Rieta'; The Centrifugal Water Cup; The Flying Knives; The Boy Tumbler; The Balance Plate and the Flexible Rod; The Amputation; Impaling with Knives; and various and entertaining feats of Magic, Necromancy, Juggling and Legerdemain."

As for what a Western magician would qualify as "pure magic," two effects amazed their audiences: the magical filling of an empty bowl with water and goldfish, and the decapitation and restoration of the head of one of the performers. No reporting mentioned if they used linking rings, but Western magicians had already appropriated that and were widely performing it.

The ads and the reporting on these sensational performances—at least in California—did not single out the individual performers by name; they were always just "the Chinese Jugglers." And their audiences, one feels in reading various reviews, did not know how to compare these performances to those of the magicians with whom they were familiar. "As magicians, they are far inferior to Blitz, Alexander, and other notables in that line, but some of their feats are wonderfully startling," wrote one local reviewer.[122] But another wrote, "Some Chinese Jugglers are playing the very devil in San Francisco, and destroying utterly the reputations of the greatest of our long-tail-coated necromancers. Among the feats performed by these celestials is one in which they cut a man to pieces, then eat him up, and afterwards reproduce him just as good as new! Powerful stomachs, it must be allowed."[123]

On October 16, they opened in Sacramento. The editor of the *Sacramento Daily Union* wrote that, "The queuerosity of our citizens to see these Oriental magicians is doubtless sufficient to draw a crowded audience at the American theater this evening."[124] They played a three-day engagement there to absolutely packed houses.

They left San Francisco by the steam packet *Falcon* for Panama. Then they sailed on the *Georgia* to New Orleans, where they played an extended engagement at Thomas Placide's Varieties, as well as at Armory Hall, the Charles Street Theater, and (for the French-speaking residents) at Orleans Theatre. Here, the performers of the troupe were individually named in the advertisements, and a detailed description of their program was given. From there, they traveled upriver, playing in Natchez, St. Louis, Cincinnati,

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[122] *San Joaquin Republican*, 13 October 1852
[123] *Natchez Daily Courier*, 16 November 1852.
[124] *Sacramento Daily Union*, 16 October 1852. Presumably, referring to the local Chinese immigrants' hair queues, rather than simply being a play on the words "queue" (as in lining up to buy tickets) and "curiosity."

Pittsburgh (there giving extra shows for children), New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, Boston, Lowell, Springfield, Newark, Albany, Cleveland, Milwaukee, and perhaps elsewhere in the U. S. In each place, they caused astonishment and sensation, playing to packed crowds.[125] They performed in the U. S. for over a year, then crossed the Atlantic, performed in Paris, then in London in 1854, and finished their tour.[126]

They were by no means the last Chinese jugglers to perform in early California. A few days after they left San Francisco, the *Daily Alta California* (1 November) noted the arrival of the Tong Hong Tock Dramatic Celestial Company, consisting of 123 performers with their own music, which "gave a few entertainments" at the American Theatre.[127] In October and November 1858, the veteran impresario Thomas W. Turner toured his small family circus through Marysville and Nevada City, and included in its company "Ming Sing, the great Chinese Wizard; Kim, the great Chinese Fire-Eater and Necromancer," and "the two Wonderful Knife Throwers, Sham and Pam."[128] The professionalism of these performers was somewhat in question: At their show in Marysville, the "real" knife-thrower was replaced by another, "who knew nothing about the science, but 'let on' to the *throwee* that he was 'tip-top' at the business," and bungled the job completely, very nearly skewing his partner.[129]

The arrival in San Francisco of the *Golden Era* on October 1, 1854 brought passengers from New York City. Among them was the "magician and enchantress" Miss Mary St. Clair, who began performing at the Metropolitan Theatre on October 23 as "the world's only female magician." She was presumably Mary St. Clair, "the English Sybil," described as "a young lady of extremely prepossessing appearance" who had performed to appreciative crowds in Boston and Baltimore in 1844, and then, the following year, this

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[125] For a particularly enthusiastic (and detailed) review of their act, see "The Chinese Jugglers at the Theatre …" *Albany Evening Journal*, 19 May 1853.
[126] Tuck Quy was the "Tuck Guy" mentioned in David Price, *A Pictorial History of Conjurers in the Theater* (New York: Cranbury, New Jersey, 1985), 496, 498; for an episode at the end of their tour in England, see *Old Baily Proceedings Online* (www.oldbailyonline.org, version 8.0, 08 July 2020), August 1855, trial of ASSAM AFUCK APOI AYANG (t18550820-788).
[127] *Daily Alta California*, 1 November 1852.
[128] Ad for the Marysville Theatre, *Daily National Democrat*, 27 October 1858; "Legerdemain," *Nevada Democrat*, 10 November 1858.
[129] Described at length in "Theatre," *Marysville Daily National Democrat*, 30 October 1858.

time accompanied from Paris by the famous "Mons. Phillippe" (Jacques Noe Talon, 1802-1878), whose student she was said to have been.[130] They performed with a panoply of automata, giving "magical soirées," and filled engagements in Boston, New York City, Providence and the English provinces of Eastern Canada. After those performances, she seems to have disappeared from public view until she showed up making the trip to San Francisco in 1854 (without Mons. Phillippe).

From there, the attractive lady moved on to Sacramento, where a reporter for the *Sacramento Daily Union* commented, "The fair damsel arrayed in full Bloomer costume, displayed considerable ingenuity in her various experiments; but her winning smiles and social conversational powers, tended more towards captivating the rough sex, than all of her magical arts."[131] From there, she went to Stockton and Shasta, where she presented a program of "magic, necromancy, and legerdemain" in "soirees" conducted in what was billed as her "Boudoir of Wonders." She was still in California the following March, where she played in Sonoma, but she appears to have left not long afterwards, for in January 1856, we read that "the bright queen of magic" was "still performing in Valparaiso" in the same column of the *Sacramento Daily Democratic State Journal* that described gold discoveries about twenty miles from that Chilean city.[132]

Other visiting performers of legerdemain that showed up briefly in the papers included "El Senor and Senora Delfino," who performed "Magic and Electric Art" (including "sleeping in air" by Senora Delfino) in San Francisco at the Metropolitan Theatre, in Sacramento at the Forrest Theatre, and in Stockton at the Stockton Theatre from May to October 1856. An editorial wag in the *Daily Alta California* wrote that, "Señor Delfino, the magician advertises among his experiments at the theatre to-night, 'The Mysterious Disappearance of a Lady; or How to Get Rid of a Troublesome Wife,' and says that this is 'the first time in San Francisco.' We beg to correct the magician. There have been a number of 'mysterious disappearances' of the same character here within the past few years."[133]

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[130] Ad for their joint performance at Mechanic Hall, Salem, Massachusetts, *Salem Register* 12 May 1845.
[131] "Necromancy," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 22 November 1854.
[132] "More Gold Discoveries in Chili," *Sacramento Daily Democratic State Journal*, 12 January 1856.
[133] "Not So," *Daily Alta California*, 7 June 1856.

John Gardner Kenyon was an immigrant from Ontario who first began offering his skills as a ventriloquist and magician to audiences in California in 1856. Ventriloquism was his strong suit; his imitations of the California mockingbird and the humming of bees were particularly noted. His act was described as "Ventriloquial and Polyphonic illustrations, and the exposition of magic in an experimental lecture on deception."[134] Kenyon spent years in California, performing magic only occasionally, sometimes under the name of "Professor Monte Cristo." He was an avid tinkerer and mechanical inventor as well, patenting an improved carriage axle design, crafting a "fluid pencil" whose ink reservoir was released into the tip by a tiny spring loaded cork that prevented blotting, and showing off to his audience his invention of a "geigroscope," of which the *Sonoma Democrat* reported, "though it has never yet been applied to any practical purposes, shows the existence of a yet undeveloped principle in science, which may at some future day, prove to be a great utility."[135] Kenyon's main interest and ability, however, appears to have been in land acquisition and real estate dealing and farm management, and he even dabbled a bit in politics. He traveled up the coast of California and found the prospects there to his liking, acquiring land at the mouth of the Salt River in Humboldt County and founding the town of Port Kenyon in 1872, envisioning it as a shipping settlement. And so it became, until the silting up of the Salt River around 1890 made it unnavigable. But Kenyon had already pressed farther north, performing ventriloquism and magic at times along the way into Oregon and Washington. He eventually settled down in Seattle, where he bought several lots that increased in value, making him a very rich man before he died.

The first Australian gold rush began in 1851, very soon after the California gold rush came into full swing, and that was no coincidence. Gold had been discovered in Australia from time to time, but until the government there saw masses of its people carrying themselves off to California in a hunt for the metal, it had suppressed the news of earlier finds. After it allowed and even encouraged the news of gold discoveries in Victoria and Ballarat to spread through the world, immigration followed, and miners who had been

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[134] "Instructive, Mysterious and Amusing," *Napa County Weekly Reporter*, 6 April 1867.
[135] "Ventriloquism," *Sonoma Democrat*, 8 September 1859.

working claims in California made their way (or, in some cases, returned) to Australia, setting up a two-way traffic of gold seekers across the Pacific. "Going to the goldfields" during this time could mean one was setting off either to California or to Australia.

A talented English magician and ventriloquist, Joseph Jacobs, who performed under the name of "M. Jacobs," "Wizard Jacobs," or "Jacobs the Wizard," traveled from England to Australia after its gold rush began, along with his brother, who affected the part of his truculent and comic "familiar spirit," Goblin Sprightly. They spent a year there, giving extraordinarily successful performances in Melbourne and Sydney, but also traveling out into the goldfields to perform and to invest in copper mines.[136] Jacobs did very well, but in November 1856, he and his brother left Australia on the American barque *What Cheer* for San Francisco to try their fortunes in California as well.

Jacobs opened his performances of his "Temple of Magic" at Maguire's Opera House in San Francisco in March 1857, causing such a sensation there that it ran all the other theatrical offerings in the city "off the rails." He and his brother set out to Sacramento, and performed there at the Forrest Theater, and then farther up into the goldfields, in what were certainly more primitive venues, in places like Marysville, Amador, and Nevada City, where the reception was more mixed, and eccentric. The *Jackson Amador Weekly Ledger*, for example, reported that, "While the Wizard Jacobs, (who was vastly overrated in the city papers, by-the-way,) was at Drytown in this county, Deputy Assessor Eagan assessed his 'traps' and 'persuaded' the itinerant showman to come down with fifty-four dollars State and County tax. 'My heys! [he said,] what bloody 'eathens these Amador people are. It's perfectly 'orrible!'"[137] Not long after that, the Jacobs brothers decided to return to Australia, where their fortunes were still secure.[138]

Another performer who found his way to California was Jonathan Stickney Haskell, born in Newburyport, Massachusetts in 1820. He performed under the title of the "Fakir of

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[136] He advertised that they had performed for almost a hundred thousand people in Sydney, Hobart, Launceston, Melbourne, Geelong, Ballarat, Creswick's Creek, Castlemaine, Bendigo, Fiery Creek, Magpie Gully, and Adelaide.
[137] "The Wizard Had to Pay His Taxes!" *Jackson Amador Weekly Ledger*, 27 June 1857.
[138] His long record of success in England and Australia (and back again to England) demonstrate that he was a remarkably talented performer. On his way back to England, he toured in the Eastern United States and met with hugely appreciative audiences.

Siva," which name he deliberately invented to draft behind the fame of another, already-established magician, English immigrant Isaiah Harris Hughes, who performed first as "El Jarascid, late Fakir of the Temple of Ava," and then simply as "The Fakir of Ava," beginning about 1843.[139]

Haskell first performed as the Fakir of Siva in Augusta, Georgia in October 1848, dressed in a spangled robe and feathered turban. (He had been doing essentially the same act until then as "Signor Haskell.") His ads said he was "an actual pupil of the Hindoo Brahmins and Egyptian Magi," but his presentations, inasmuch as they ever actually delved into the mysteries of the East, were very far from being an homage to them. Rather, they resembled, in their mocking tone, the way that other magicians would soon "expose" and burlesque Spiritualist séances. For his show in Augusta, for example, Haskell's ad read that he had "the honor of announcing his practical experimental lectures, consisting of representations of [Hindoo Brahmins' and Egyptian Magis'] extraordinary and laughable rites, fascinations, and delusions, and enchantments with Hindoo miracles, and Persian divinations."[140] The "Fakir of Ava's" publicity also, from the first, had made clear that his performances were done in order to impugn the pretensions of Oriental mysteries, very much in line with how Rationalists had come to accept and even embrace magic performances as a means to erase confidence in public superstition, which is to say, religious belief.[141]

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[139] Hughes' fictitious early biography as "El Jarascid" reported his place of birth and early life in Persia, and his wife as Circassian. It resembled that of another itinerant magician, "Rahab Ben Abel Marchael," whose ads appeared around the country from 1838 to about 1848, and who claimed that he was a Persian or a Circassian. "Rahab's" purpose, too, was claimed to be to "expose" the tricks of Indian and Persian priests. It is noteworthy that one of "Rahab's" ads declared that he would perform a levitation that had never been "attempted by any other person but Rahab's brother, El Dowldah Jarascid"; see "Grand Novelty and Scientific Entertainment," *Vicksburg Whig*, 26 January 1838.

[140] "Ventriloquism and Art, the 'Fakir of Siva,'" *Augusta Daily Constitutionalist*, 6 October 1848.

[141] That did not mean that the performer was not allowed to invent a wholly fictitious backstory about his birth and familiarity with Oriental mysteries. For the Fakir of Ava's, see "The Fakir of Ava," *Lancaster (Pennsylvania) Intelligencer and Journal*, 30 April 1844. The backstory functioned as his credentials that he truly knew how the Oriental mystagogues performed their effects. For Hughes' transition from "El Jarascid" to the "Fakir of Ava," see

Haskell's act depended heavily on ventriloquism, and made comic use of a "conversive spectator and talking automaton." Magicians at the time made far greater use of ventriloquism in presenting their effects than magicians do today; the acts themselves were performed as a series of skits, scenes, "dreams," and so on, in which mysterious personae—invisible sprites, his familiar spirits obtained in league with the Devil—played roles that devolved into that of the magician's mere stage "assistant" of later days, when magicians' performances evolved into "shows" made up of a series of tricks strung together.

Haskell was a polished and accomplished performer of magic, a "graceful conjuror" and "inimitable ventriloquist," who had no trouble drawing enormous crowds that, by most accounts, were pleased to be bewildered by his legerdemain and illusions. These included "the inexhaustible bottle feat, suspension in air, California gold box, wizard clock, crystal casket, and mystic cabinet," all set in an "enchanted palace" by this "Wizard of the World," as he modestly styled himself. These illusions were developed by other magicians and thus standardized to some extent. The inexhaustible bottle, for example, consisted of offering audience members whatever kind of drink they requested, all poured out of the same bottle. The California gold box, according to the advertisements of magician Andrew MacAllister, involved filling a locked money safe, shown to the audience as empty before it was locked, with coins.

Haskell's onstage presence was charming, amusing, and persuasive. He never neglected publicity, covering towns and cities with plastered bills and publicity sheets he commissioned local printers to print. From the end of 1849, he toured constantly, not just along the Atlantic coast and up the Mississippi and Ohio rivers, but often into the interior of the country.

Despite the nationwide ubiquity of his engagements during the first half of the 1850s, later historians of magic have nearly ignored him. I can only suppose this was because Haskell quickly proved himself to be a liar, a cheat, an obtainer of money under false pretenses, a seducer of girls, a con artist, a thief, a passer of counterfeit money, and a

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"Practical Lectures and Exhibition of Hindoo Miracles …" *Buffalo Commercial*, 8 November 1843.

man who skipped out on creditors whenever he could manage it. He burned up the territory in his wake, making it difficult for others to perform there for years afterwards. By the mid-1850s, the name "the Fakir of Siva" had become the near definition of a sleazy charlatan. Because many of his creditors were the printers he never paid, and because those printers were often the publishers of newspapers, his notoriety spread across the country, as their expressions of outrage followed just behind him on his rapid travels. Because historians have not focused on him, I may be forgiven for dipping a little more deeply here into his career.

Many magicians during the mid-nineteenth century often featured gift shows, at the final appearance of their engagement in a venue, selling extra tickets above the admission cost to give the bearer a chance to win an item in a lottery drawing hosted by the magician. Typically, there would be one or two big prizes—a nice couch or armoire or gold watch, for example—then a few more things of lesser value—a walking cane, say, or a fashionable bonnet—and then as many as hundreds of items of far lesser value—like cans of corn, or bottles of cooking oil. The drawing would take place after the conclusion of the magic act:

> Now hearts throb, for here beginneth the joyous banquet of gifts; something for nothing, the endless song; food for those who are a-hungered and hopeful. And of a truth all's well, for here be hams of high flavor and in plenty, and foods and furniture any many things of cost freely bestowed upon the man of magic, may he ever be much happy, selah! And the multitude depart with joy in the heart and gifts in the arms, and all the world becomes purple and pretty.
>
> The deed is done and the man of magic fondles his purse bulging with coin of the realm and on the morrow the nimble messenger in blue lays it cheerily in the open hands of his waiting wife and babes.[142]

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[142] Kit Clarke, "The Story of the Gift Shows," *M-U-M* 58.7 (January 1918): 1. Clarke said the more unscrupulous operators of gift shows eventually turned them into what he called "country stores," with flash in the store windows of rented buildings, selling tickets for drawings that would never happen. These, in turn, one might assume, would further devolve into what David W. Maurer, in *The Big Con* (1940), detailed as a particular class of elaborately set "long cons" named, as a class, "The Big Store."

Hams are mentioned as having been on the list of desired prizes, but pigs and hogs still on the hoof were another popular "gift." Many times, such shows were honest enough (where lotteries were legal), but it was no secret that some vagabond performers gave away what turned out to be only worthless flash, or they skipped town with the ticket receipts before the drawing, leaving the items that had been on display to make their way back to the merchants who had in fact only rented them out.

Jonathan Haskell often operated gift shows, the prizes of which were sometimes worth something. He did what many other magicians, even the top-ranked, like Signor Blitz, Andrew MacAllister, and Wyman the Wizard (John Wyman, Jr.), did—materialize "gifts" for the audience. Something for nothing was of the essence of magical illusion. But Haskell's "gifts" were often revealed to the packed crowds that held tickets to be worthless trash with no resemblance to the promised goods that had been on display for days.

His entertainments were usually "trumpery affairs," like little South Sea bubbles, according to one newspaper reporter, which suddenly burst, leaving his audience a mass of howling indignation.[143] On one occasion, almost all the "prizes" turned out to be copies of "a sheet of small newspaper size," entitled "Life of Fakir," which contained a pictorial advertisement of his wonderful exhibitions—a sort of flimsy precursor to the pitch books that magicians later sold in theater lobbies after their shows. Once, when he had outraged thousands of people in Washington, D. C. with a gift show whose "drawing for prizes" never seems to have occurred, he was said to have yelled "The world is governed by humbug" to the policemen looking for him as he waved them farewell from the rear end of a departing train. He even toured for a while by ginning up a large troupe of Chinese jugglers about the time Tuck Quy's troupe was finishing in America. He fronted them as "The Fakir of Siva's Chinese Jugglers," as if they were the originals. After taking them on a tour through the South, they abandoned him, complaining to the local magistrate that they were afraid to follow him to Havana, where they thought he was likely to try to sell them as coolies.

Haskell "got religion," it was said, while touring in Texas, and soon thereafter falsified his clerical qualifications to a Congregational church in Mount Pleasant, Iowa,

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[143] Magic historian Diego Domingo says that another way the audiences were sometimes conned was for the magician to hire a stooge who would "win" the big prize at the public drawing and afterwards receive his wage while returning the prize to the performer.

which hired him as pastor, submitting for a while to his strange version of preaching when he wasn't out collecting money "for the church." When the congregation discovered his true record, he left and became a Methodist, and, by turn, an independent preacher, setting up his own church in Nebraska, where his wife and daughters were settled. It failed, and he set out again on the road, as the Fakir of Siva with a magic show, and headed to the West Coast via the Horn, playing dates in Rio De Janeiro, Valparaiso, and Callao, making his way to California and its cities of gold. He opened at the American Theatre in San Francisco in June 1860, and between then and 1863, he played dates throughout central California and up to Portland.

By the time Haskell traveled to California after he had made himself *persona non grata* in the East, he had perhaps reformed, at least to the extent that his performances no longer included "gift entertainments," but were straight ahead shows of legerdemain and ventriloquism. Nevertheless, the one-night stands he played were often billed as charitable performances "for the benefit of" local organizations, raising the question, given his previous career, of whether the organizations ever saw any of the proceeds.

In 1870, Haskell was back again in California. In the intervening years, he had gone home to his wife and daughters in Nebraska, had failed in an attempt to be appointed a chaplain in the 1st Nebraska Infantry, had worked as an auctioneer.[144] Then he had started another traveling magic show, this time under the name of "Robert Houdin" (he was never given to modesty; and, besides, the name "Fair of Siva" was pretty much all chawed up), in which he did illusions mixed with a considerable amount of oratory on the subject of Temperance. When he arrived again in California, he was simply "Dr. Haskell" and got a position as the advance agent of Col. John Wilson's Circus and Hippodrome, at which job he became the "chain-lightningest" of all circus agents working the Pacific Coast.[145] In 1874, he also wrote and published, *Autobiography of Dr. J. S. Haskell; Twenty-five Years with a Circus and on the Stage*, which portrayed him as a moral reformer in the cause of abolishing alcohol, describing the "fearful fate" of the circus and theatrical performers he had known

[144] "Haskell, Alias Houdin," *Memphis Daily Post*, 12 October 1866.
[145] Ad for John Wilson's Grand Hippodrome, *Sacramento Daily Bee*, 23 September 1872; "Personals," *Russian River Flag*, 28 November 1872.

who had abandoned themselves to rum.[146] He was a "red hot lecturer" in this period, delivering "tornadoes of eloquence." The Colusa paper described Haskell, "whilom 'Circus cuss and Clown,'" as the "Boss Crusader of Earth," and noted, "To say he is immense, is just behind the light-house for the true state of the present excitement concerning him."[147]

When he finished his stint as a reformed drunkard lecturer, he found a young and beautiful pianist, Clara Simmons, to tour with him: "Dr. Haskell" did magic tricks, exhibited wax marionettes, conducted horse auctions, sold bottles of "his all-curing specific, Yerba Buena Bitters," and lectured on "Humbug," advertising to "expose modern spiritualism, materialization, and mind reading."[148] Clara played the piano and "psychometrized," whereby she guessed whose sealed envelope in a pile belonged to whom.

In 1876, after a few run-ins with the police, he was convicted in San Francisco of "worming cash out of fellows without just compensation."[149] That seems to have marked the end of California newspapers' coverage of him; but he left the state in search of other mission fields, for we find this notice of him in the *Los Angeles Herald* in April 1879:

> "Bro. Haskell," a "reformed" circus performer, is drawing crowds at Amboy, Ill., preaching revival sermons. Here is a specimen of his eloquence:
>
> "Stand away brethren and sisters!" the evangelist shouts, as the saints gather around a sinner stricken down (as they say, with the Holy Ghost). "Let the angels come in and fan him."
>
> "Bless God! I feel as if a quarter section of heaven had caved in, and all the stars were tumbling down on me!"

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[146] Published in San Francisco by A. L. Bancroft and Company.
[147] "In Colusa, the 'Boss Crusader' of Earth," *Weekly Colusa* Sun, 30 May 1874.
[148] "Triumphant Ovation to the Great Work of Moral Reform," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 17 February 1874; "The 'engagements' of the irrepressible Dr. Haskell …" *Los Angeles Herald*, 17 July 1875; "Dashaway Hall," *Daily Alta California*, 18 April 1875; "Royal Marionette Troupe at Liberty Hall," *Russian River Flag*, 6 May 1875; "Doctor (?) Haskell," *Truckee Republican*, 30 October 1875.
[149] "The Way of the Transgressor Is Hard," *Weekly Colusa Sun*, 15 July 1876.

> "You Christians are like young pigs. I have to pull your ears off to get you up to the gospel trough, and after you have got a taste of the glories, nearly pull your tails of to get you away."
>
> We know the man in Los Angeles and it would be charitable to say that there are few more stupendous frauds to be found in the land.[150]

Haskell then took his revival campaign south to New Orleans, where his wife joined him, and made his way northward, to Louisville, where he erected a large mission tent and edited "a curious religious publication," entitled *Railway Age*. He had to leave the city, however, after some weeks, having fallen under a cloud, having been implicated "in several transactions which were said to have been unbecoming in a minister." In October 1883, he went back to Louisville, but his health failed him and he died in a poor little room on November 19, leaving the mortal sphere for parts unknown. His wife had his body shipped to Nebraska, where he was buried in the family plot in Otoe County.[151]

Mining the California newspapers, somewhat as the gold miners washed down high hills with pressure hoses, we find various twinkling flecks of magic, twinkling for a moment and then vanishing. For example, the "unrivalled Oriental Magician, El Malhaubur," billed as "the celebrated Prestidigitator," appeared a total of three times during one week in April, 1863, as a feature at Hayes' Park in San Francisco, and offered "extraordinary feats never before witnessed on the Pacific Coast," and then—was no more, disappearing from the known universe as quickly as he had appeared.[152]

Then there was a strange creature who arrived in San Francisco on the mail steamer *Constitution* at the beginning of May 1866. Even in that city of immigrants from all parts of the world, his exotic appearance caused wonder as he walked the streets:

> A shaggy caftan of black sheep's wool, from the centre of which depended a white bag, such as hussars wear in their helmets surmounted a bronzed visage, Eastern in its contour, and having mystery written in its swarthy lineaments. A quaint tunic of white

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[150] "Brother Haskell," *Los Angeles Herald*, 18 April 1879.
[151] "Jonathan Haskell," *Louisville Courier Journal*, 20 November 1883.
[152] Ad for Hayes' Park, *Daily Alta California*, 3 April 1863.

> cloth enveloped the lower part of the figure, while a scarlet bosom gave an air of Eastern richness to the costume. From the shoulders hung the ancient bandoliers, or belts strung with silver cartridge tubes, whilst the waist was confined by a silver girdle supporting a formidable looking knife, whose inlaid blade and peculiar formation showed its origin to be that famous city of Damascus, which has given its name to the weapons composed of its subtly tempered steel.[153]

But surely the man must have had a trunkful of costume pieces from which to choose because another observer described this human quiddity who "throws Emperor Norton into the shade" as attired somewhat differently:

> … resplendent in full Suliote costume—a tall pioneer-like *fez*, or chapeau; a long white cashmere *capote*; embroidered belt, containing his ataghan and long eastern pistolets, and a silver-worked scarf across his breast, in which are placed his cartridges. Boys follow him about, and even the women forget to criticizingly scan each other, to admire the illustrious stranger.[154]

After a few days of displaying his extravagant appearance in the streets, the *Daily Alta California* ventured to list the various identities people had guessed him to be:

> A Greek Prince: a Polish Count: A Lascar of rank: a high cast Bengalee: a Pasha of Turkey: an Algerine pirate: an Egyptian Mameluke: a Bedouin of the Desert: a Camanche [sic] Chief: an emissary of Maximilian: Commander of the Guards, in the opera of Nabuco [sic], on his way to rehearsal: a Highland Bagpiper: a walking advertisement for Heuston, Hastings & Co.: the man who was advised to Try Ward's Shirts: the Head Centre of the Fenians: Mercer, the female immigrationist, etc., etc.[155]

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[153] "Necromancy," *San Francisco Examiner*, 5 May 1866.
[154] "A Sensation," *San Jose Weekly Mercury*, 10 May 1866.
[155] "A Few Mistakes," *Daily Alta California*, 8 May 1866. Heuston, Hastings & Co. was a clothing store; Asa S. Mercer was a young man who came West in 1860 and made a name for himself by trying to organize schemes to import marriageable women to the Pacific Coast.

He shortly made himself known, however, through a German interpreter, to the local population. He was the curiously-named "Francisco Kehry," and he was, he declared, "from Schura the Capital of Circassia … a subject of Russia, and a Circassian by birth, and was in the Crimea with the armies of the Czar." It was announced in the papers that Kehry was a practitioner of legerdemain and that he would commence a series of *soirées magiques* at Platt's Hall, which would encompass "the subtleties of the Ancient Egyptians, the secrets of the wily Arabian, and the mysteries of the sombre Hindoostan."[156]

Besides his own feats of legerdemain, worked without any paraphernalia, his alleged son "Rudolph Kehry" would undertake "The Crystal Act," which was described after the first performance by a reviewer: "The antipodean feat, with four decanters, and the pyramid feat, with fifteen decanters … the boy managed to spin himself around in the air, while resting his head downwards on the top of the decanter forming the apex of the pyramid, by simply moving the muscles of his neck, and at last managed to turn water from a decanter and drink it up, instead of down …[157]

Master Rudolph's acrobatic feat certainly was well received by the audience, but, alas, his father's skills as a magician were deemed rather limited, amounting to the ability to making handkerchiefs, rings, and watches transfer from boxes to vases, and so on; and so, were judged disappointing. And even more—when he left San Francisco for his next engagement in Sacramento, the words "charlatan," "bilk," and "humbug" were being tossed about.[158] In June, he performed in Mokelumne Hill, and by July, the San Francisco Chronicle was accusing him of "hankey-pankey tricks," to wit, of having alienated the affections of a Mrs. Grote, such that she had withdrawn a thousand dollars from the bank with the intention of departing for Europe with the "Circassian Magician."[159] And perhaps they did so, for that was the last time that one hears in the press of the magician Kehry.

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[156] "Platt's Hall," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 10 May 1866.
[157] "Kehry at Platt's Hall," *Daily Alta California*, 10 May 1866.
[158] "A Traveling 'Orient,'" *San Francisco Chronicle*, 19 May 1866.
[159] "On Tuesday and Wednesday evenings of this week …" *Calaveras Chronicle*, 16 June 1866; "Hankey-Pankey Tricks," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 21 July 1866.

Another performer of legerdemain that made his appearance in California during the late 1860s was Francis ("Frank") A. W. Morey, from Lowell, Massachusetts. Before showing up in California, Morey, a ventriloquist and magician, had been performing in the settlement of Farmington, Utah. To accommodate audience members of that rural community who lacked cash, "Professor" Morey accepted other goods as barter:

> The doorkeeper took in pay for admission, flour, wheat, corn, oats, barley, eggs, butter, molasses, and dried peaches. Flour and all kinds of grain were received at five cents per pound, eggs, at twenty-five cents per dozen, molasses at two dollars per gallon, butter at thirty-five cents, and peaches at fifteen cents. One man wanted him to take a wheelbarrow of bricks. The Professor got a two gallon brass kettle for two tickets.[160]

Morey played the Academy of Music in Sacramento in January 1869, then moved on to Stockton in February, Marysville in March, San Jose in April, and Grass Valley in May. On occasion, he supplemented his magic and ventriloquism with a gift show. By September, he had connected himself with Bartholomew's Circus when it played in Colusa.

The German gymnast and wire walker Maximilian Freuder appeared very briefly in San Francisco in August 1869. Being billed as the "King of Magicians," he added a "magic" set to his exhibition of zampillaërostation (trapeze work) at the Alhambra Theatre, going so far as to perform a faux Spiritualist séance (as an exposé) and an "explanation" of Psychology and Mesmerism, as well as an "impalement" and a rope-tying trick.[161] Or, more precisely, a rope-*untying* trick: After a sailor from the audience spent half an hour tying up the "King of Magicians," Maximilian "requested him to leave the stage, and going through a couple of slight-of-hand movements, he freed himself completely from his ligaments in less than two minutes, to the immense astonishment of the audience."[162]

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[160] Grass Valley *Morning Union*, 13 November 1868.
[161] "Alhambra," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 14 August 1869; "New Alhambra Theatre," *Daily Alta California*, 15 August 1869.
[162] "Alhambra," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 12 August 1869.

Then there was Herr Schlam, a German magician who appears to have had his start at Kroll's Garden in Berlin around 1870, then traveled to Australia to perform.[163] From there he traveled to America in the spring of 1871 and spent a couple of months in San Francisco as the engaged magician, giving "somatic experiments and scientific magic," attracting the public to Woodward's Gardens and, in Oakland, to Captain Badger's Grand Central Park.[164] He was a skilled sleight of hand operator, manipulating cards, balls, handkerchiefs, coins, cups, glasses, and so on, but his shows depended on relatively close up illusions. It was the kind of performance that worked well with smaller audiences, and when he drifted to the Eastern states after his couple of months in California, he gravitated to working under contract to dime museums and in circus sideshows, where he spent the next several decades of his career, in Brooklyn, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, New Haven and Boston.

English magician Alfred Silvester (often spelled Sylvester) embarked on a performing tour of the United States in 1870, beginning in New York City, and worked his way across the country and back over the next two years. At some venues, his act was offered as the entire show (where he would stretch it out to two hours or more), and at others, his act, in an abbreviated form, was part of a line-up of other variety-style turns.

Silvester's main assistant during this tour was an English actress, Angelique Schott, who was given second billing as "the fascinating protean artiste"—she seems to have specialized in impersonations and physical mimicry.[165] A reviewer for the *Chicago Tribune*, who saw their performance at McVicker's Theatre during this tour, described one of Silvester's signature illusions, an (improved) "aerial suspension," and described it in some detail:

> The pupil, Miss Schott, is introduced to the audience attired in tights, and is placed upon a slightly elevated platform. She steps upon a stool, and a pole is placed under

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[163] "Oddfellows' Hall," *Sandhurst Bendigo Advertiser*, 1 April 1871; "Princess Theatre," *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 August 1871.
[164] "Woodward's Gardens," *Daily Alta California*, 12 May 1872; "Captain Badger's Grand Central Park," *Oakland Daily News*, 14 June 1872.
[165] Silvester's son, Alfred Silvester, Jr., also added his talents on this tour, as a roller skating tyro. He would eventually become a professional magician.

each of her outstretched arms. The Professor then puts her apparently into a mesmeric trance, when she becomes as rigid as a corpse. The stool is then withdrawn from her feet, leaving her suspended in the air, and supported only by the two poles. Presently one of them is taken away, and her attitude remains unchanged. Resting her elbow on the end of the pole, she is put through a variety of attitudes by the magician, in whose hands she seems as clay in the hands of the potter. Now she is standing bolt upright in the air, now reclining in an almost horizontal position, and again assuming the attitude ascribed by the popular imagination to angels in their flight through space.

The series of pictures presented in this way are very beautiful, and the wonder is increased when it is shown that not only are no invisible wires at work between her and the ceiling, but that the arm has no apparent connection with the pole on which it simply rests as on a bank whereon the wild thyme blows. The young lady remains in this inconceivable position for quite a lengthened space of time ere she is awakened from the trance, her limbs all the while being obedient to the touch of the master as if they were lifeless pieces of mechanism. The audience seem to draw a long breath when the pupil at length comes down from mid air, and walks gracefully off the stage. The impression remains as if we had all the while been under some mysterious spell, or had been gazing on a phantom.[166]

Silvester's troupe reached California and was playing San Francisco in March 1871 as one part of a variety line-up of entertainments under the general name of the "Gaietie Groupe," which performed at Maguire's Opera House. Silvester offered "The Séance Diabolique," a "lady suspension," and other illusions, and Angelique Schott added "Masks and Faces, or Lights and Shadows of Character in the Human Face." By this time, Silvester was calling the aerial suspension "The Marvel of Mecca."

They then moved on to Maguire's Metropolitan Theatre in Sacramento, the Marysville Theater, Maguire's Stockton Theater, and back to San Francisco at Maguire's Opera House; then to Virginia City, Nevada, where they performed at Piper's Opera House,

[166] "M'Vicker's Theatre," *Chicago Tribune*, 28 July 1870.

before continuing back to the Eastern states.[167] All this time, he performed simply as "Professor Silvester," but when he arrived back on the East Coast, he began using the *nom du travail*, the "Fakir of Oolu," under which name he met with high acclaim. He appears to have made another trip across the United States in early 1872, giving his last show, this time as the "Fakir of Oolu," on June 1, before embarking on the *SS California* to return to England for a while, then set off again, to India, and then New Zealand and Australia, where he eventually settled.[168]

The newspapers also carried brief mentions of other magicians who played (at least once) in California during this period, but about whom nothing more is known—Professor Mazelle, for example, whose engagements in Sonoma and in Petaluma in 1869 were announced in the press, and Professor Williams, "Deaf and Dumb Magician," in Weaverville in August 1875. Other visiting performers of legerdemain included a Parisian part-time *prestidigitateur*, "M. Chevalier," who performed infrequently in San Francisco, Stockton, and Nevada City (where he settled) from 1853-55. And William Stone, another of William Foley's clowns, turned to performing magic, formed an olio troupe, and performed in 1864-65 in Georgetown, Spanish Flat, Coloma, Kelsey, Greenwood and Johntown. Most likely there were others, too, who brought in their audiences only with handbills and posters plastered in the places they were about to perform, and who never advertised in the newspapers.

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[167] "Maguire's Opera House," *Daily Alta California*, 19 March 1871; "Metropolitan Theater," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 27 March 1871; "The 'Gaiete Troupe of Specialties,'" *Marysville Daily Appeal,* 2 April 1871; "Stockton Theater," *Stockton Independent*, 3 April 1871; "Maguire's Opera House," *Daily Alta California*, 11 May 1871; "Piper's Opera House," *Gold Hill Daily News*, 24 May 1871. He appears to have split off his troupe occasionally during this run, performing independently, for example, at the Merced Theater in April; according to the *Los Angeles Evening Express*, 27 April 1901.

[168] For the performance in San Jose as the "Fakir of Oolu," see "San Jose Opera House," *San Jose Mercury News*, 26 May 1872. An announcement for the "Fakir of Oolu's" arrival in England is in *The (London) Era*, 21 June 1872. But almost immediately after Silvester departed California, a San Jose bill poster and amateur magician named Felix Grundy ("Phil") Hartman, began performing magic for a few months in small venues in central California as the "Fakir of Oolu"; "Fakir of Oolu's Mishap," *San Jose Mercury*, 20 June 1872; "Two Hours in Fairy Land," *Gilroy Advocate*, 11 September 1872. Hartman would later move to Alameda and open a shooting gallery.

At least one other magician is difficult to document for another reason: I do not think I know his real name. A "Prof. Harmen," I am inclined to believe, invented his performing name with an eye to having it resemble "Herrmann." He does not appear in census records, city directories, or other public records that I have been able to discover. The newspapers always referred to him simply as "Prof. Harmen" (or, on a rare occasion, "Prof. Harmon"). Yet he sprang into existence fully formed as a "wizard and ventriloquist" in various Southern California communities at the beginning of 1872.[169] His act seems to have been a small scale one; he called it a "parlor entertainment" and the venues he played were rented halls, not often theaters. He liked to pair his act with another performer's—usually, a hearty male balladeer or a champion clog dancer. "Prof. Harmen" plugged away in California for about five years before eventually moving the center of gravity of his bookings north into Oregon, Montana, and then more or less settling down in Caldwell, Idaho. He was said to have been best known among mining communities, and to have been well satisfied with that. The last notice for one of his performances was run in 1890.

Other magicians appeared in California during the first quarter-century after the gold rush started, but generally they raced through the territory like tourists (or bandits). They did not linger. They often arrived from, or would depart to, other gold regions around the Pacific rim, particularly Australia. Until the transcontinental railroads were completed in the United States, it was as easy to reach San Francisco by sailing across the Pacific as it was to cross from the Eastern United States to the West. Theatrical performers and troupes—including magicians, equestrian circuses and minstrel shows—throughout the 1850s traced a touring circuit whose main ports of destination included San Francisco, Honolulu, Hong Kong, Melbourne, Sydney, Auckland, Valparaiso, Callao, and Mazatlan.

If the annals of conjuring in California were compiled, other magicians, who traveled this trans-Pacific circuit, would be included for the years through 1875. The British magician John Henry Anderson, "The Wizard of the North," first visited California from Australia where he had toured after leaving England. He arrived in San Francisco and gave his first performance at Maguire's Opera House on December 26, 1859, then moved to

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[169] "Prof. Harmen," *Santa Barbara Weekly Press*, 24 February 1872, performing at Briggs' Hall.

Sacramento where he appeared first on January 25 at the Metropolitan Theater; then on to Marysville where he played at the Marysville Theatre at the beginning of February. From there, his troupe traveled to Grass Valley and Nevada City. He was assisted on his tour by his son, J. H. Anderson, Jr., and his daughters Louisa and Flora.

For years, Anderson had been at war with Spiritualist mediums who produced physical phenomena (rapping sounds on tables, levitation of solid objects, the materialization of flowers, coins, and so forth on tables in dark séances) allegedly by the power of the spirits of the departed. When on tour in California, he issued a thousand-dollar challenge to any Spiritualist who could display any such phenomenon that he could not duplicate by jugglery, but no one accepted the challenge.[170] In his show in San Francisco, at the Opera House, he transformed the stage in the "Palace of Cabalistic Bewilderment," and performed set pieces that included "The Wizard's Spirit-Rapping Table," "The Tocsin of the Invisibles," and "The Mesmeric Couch."

Prof. Simmons (John Wesley Hugh Simmons Lynn), another Briton, arrived from Australia and first played in San Francisco in December 1863. He performed elsewhere in California, including in Stockton, and then moved on to Nevada, Utah, and Colorado on the way to the East Coast. Known for his "how it's done" explanations, he included in his act a lot of spiritualistic effects, which he first demonstrated, then exposed. "He is so wonderful a man," a reviewer wrote in the *Daily Alta California*, "that believers in Spiritualism claim him as a medium, an allegation Simmons stoutly denies."[171]

The English magician and designer and dealer of magic apparatus Joseph Michael Hartz came to the United States in 1866, toured the Eastern states, then by steamer from Panama reached San Francisco where he performed late in the year. From there, by rail, his

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[170] "Professor Anderson's Last Nights," *Daily Alta California*, 12 January 1860.
[171] "Two Nights More," *Daily Alta California*, 22 Dec 1863. Simmons was prepped and prepared for his tour by Artemus Ward and his advance man; Edward Peron Hingston, *The Genial Showman* (London: John Camden Hotten, 1871), 343-359 (re: "Juleps"); he shadowed along behind Ward at least as far as Salt Lake City; Richard Hatch, "Artemus Ward versus the Basilicothaumaturgist," *Gibercière* 14.2 (Summer 2019): 37-84; Margaret G. Watson, *Silver Theatre: Amusements of the Mining Frontier in Early Nevada, 1850 to 1864* (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark, 1964), 241-242. The Spiritualist lecturer Emma Hardinge began her Western tour starting in San Francisco at the same time that Ward did. Ward's advance man Hingston refers to her throughout his memoir as "the lady with the large teeth."

troupe stopped in Salt Lake City, then headed back East via Omaha. He stayed in America for sixteen years before returning to England.

Another famous English magician, Robert Heller (William Henry Ridout Palmer), first appeared in California in San Francisco in March 1867, where he performed "Wonders & Miracles, both Musical and Magical," as "The Renowned Pianist, Conjurer, Etc." at the Metropolitan Theatre. Heller was especially known for his second sight mind reading act. By the middle of April, he played at Piper's Opera House in Virginia City, and was in Carson City, Nevada on May 10. On one of his later trips to California, in 1877, he had as an assistant a Parisian-born magician named Leon Leotard, who had first appeared in California briefly in 1874. Leotard was adept at magic as well as at wire walking and trapeze work and had settled in Salt Lake City in 1873.

The American magician G. C. Robinson, who had been an assistant of Hughes, "The Fakir of Ava," named himself "The Fakir of Vishnu" in 1863 and began touring the Eastern U. S. with a combination show of magical illusions and "gift soirées." He arrived in California by railroad in September 1869 and gave performances and gift shows there for a few months, into the first week of 1870. When he returned to New York, he began using the phrase, "California's favorite illusionist" in his ads. He wanted to return the following year, but it did not happen, and he finished out his career by the end of 1873, performing in New York and New England; however, not before launching the stage career of a former knife cutler and bit maker, Pliny H. Briggs, who had developed a knife-throwing, juggling, and balancing act. Briggs toured with Robinson, changing his name along the way to "Signor Briginsi," and then to "Ned Forbes," under which name he had a long run with circuses and dime museums, and became the acknowledged American expert at knife-throwing.[172]

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[172] "The Fakir of Vishnu," *San Jose Mercury News*, 30 October 1869; "A Rare Chance for Business," Huntington, New York, *The Long-Islander*, 12 August 1870; "$3000—A Rare Business Opportunity," *Portland (Maine) Daily Press*, 13 June 1871. In retrospect, Robinson, the "Fakir of Vishnu," is remembered by magicians for having taught the very rudiments of magic to William Golden Mortimer (who was then 15 years old) during Robinson's engagement in Santa Cruz in the last week of December 1869. Mortimer would become a magician himself and would found the Society of American Magicians in New York City in 1902. A number of performers latched onto the name "Fakir of Vishnu," one of which burned through Iowa and Indiana in the early 1870s, leaving a trail of unpaid bills behind him, and another, "Ishmael, the Fakir of Vishnu," performed in dime museums and

German magician Carl Herrmann arrived in California in 1870, playing the Metropolitan Theatre in San Francisco in February, and was in San Jose, Stockton, and Marysville in March, Grass Valley, and Virginia City in April. When he arrived in San Francisco, he discovered that one of his previous assistants, named Eduardo, had played a long engagement at the Metropolitan Theatre back in the fall of 1861, using the name of "Edward Hermann," almost certainly counting on being confused with his master. Edward had advertised himself as "The Great Prestidigitateur" and the "First Magician of the Nineteenth Century." Carl therefore was obliged to take out space in the *Daily Alta California* to introduce himself to the people of California and to make clear that there had been confusion caused by the earlier performances there of his assistant.[173]

In 1875, Carl's younger brother Alexander arrived in San Francisco and performed there at Maguire's New Theater for six weeks, and in Sacramento, San Jose, and Los Angeles, before he departed for Oregon and British Columbia. He was accompanied by his new wife, Adelaide, who was billed as "the celebrated Spiritualistic medium Mademoiselle Addie."[174]

Cora De Lamond (Mrs. Ursula Bush), another "World's Only Female Magician," performed in California for about three months, from January through March 1871, in San Francisco at the Alhambra Theatre, in Petaluma at the Petaluma Theatre, in Marysville, San Jose, Grass Valley, and in Sacramento at the Metropolitan Theater, giving shows of magic as well as gift shows. Before arriving in California, newspapers show her having performed in Logan, Ohio from 1869, playing second bill to a "Prof. LaRoche" (using "magic and acrobatical automatons"); then in Chillicothe and Hillsboro, Ohio; then in Connorsville and Crawfordsville, Indiana (still with LaRoche), in Ottawa, Illinois in February 1870, and Coldwater, Michigan in 1870. She arrived in California, with no sign of "LaRoche," in

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carnivals in the 1890s; see also, "Eliza M. Henderson," *New York Clipper*, 2 December 1876. On Pliny Briggs/Ned Forbes, see M. P. Lyons, *How to Throw Knives and the Wonderful Impalement Feat as Performed by the Champion Knife-Thrower Ned Forbes: with instructions for amateurs in the arts of juggling, balancing and legerdemain* (ca. 1893).

[173] "A Card. To the People of California," *Daily Alta California*, 30 January 1870; "Herrmann, The Prestidigitateur," *Daily Alta California*, 31 January 1870. For an example of an ad for "Edward Hermann," see "Metropolitan Theatre," *Daily Alta California*, 7 August 1862.

[174] "The world-renowned magician …" *San Jose Mercury News*, 31 October 1875.

January 1871. From California, she went to Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, New Zealand via Hawaii, then to Australia, India, and South Africa.

Austrian-born magician Louis Haselmeyer performed in California beginning in the spring of 1871, including in Sacramento and Marysville, then in Gold Hill, and Virginia City, Nevada, with his "wonderful Drum and Aerial Bell," a musical instrument of his own invention he called a "stylocarfe," and twenty performing birds and mice.[175]

Antone Francis Zamloch was born in Bohemia in 1849, and there began learning magic at age seven from a German magician named Kaitna. He emigrated to the United States in 1865 and found his way to California, where he settled at first into a job, probably in Napa, as a harness maker.[176] He seems to have begun presenting himself as a magician in 1872, with shows in Folsom and Placerville, calling himself "Professor Zamloch" or, alternately (at least at first), the "Fakir of Arabia." For the entirety of his highly successful fifty-year career as a magician, he made his home in California, moving first to San Francisco, then to Oakland. He was a superb illusionist, and often changed and enlarged his show. From the beginning, he played the mining towns of the West, not only in California, Nevada, Utah, Arizona, and New Mexico, but also up the Pacific coast into Oregon and Washington. His touring was not limited to the West, however, but extended in time to the Atlantic states, and across the Pacific to Hawaii and the Far East. Late in his career, the magic historian H. J. Burlingame referred to him as the most accomplished magician on the Pacific Coast. He died in Oakland in 1932.

Just as the young Zamloch was starting his magic career in California, one of the greatest magicians of the nineteenth century, by then well advanced in years, gave a series

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[175] The stylocarfe was an "indescribable" and "peculiar" instrument, made of wood and rubber. The Cairo, Illinois *Bulletin* of September 15, 1870 wryly reported that, "The Stylocarfe, familiarly called the 'Tronduenmiphlilitenotrascomomenta,' is a strange instrument, and under the touch of the Professor will produce very sweet and surprising effects."

[176] Much of the bio data here is from R. G. Glover, "Zamloch, The Great," *Tops* 6 (February 1941): 15-18; and "Zamloch Dies," *The Sphinx* 31.10 (December 1932): 406; see also the ad for the Carson Theater, *Carson City Daily Appeal*, 5 February 1873, and "The Fakir of Arabia," *Marysville Daily Appeal*, 1 March 1873. For more details of his career, see E. G. Fitzhamon, "Zamloch the Great: Magic Life of Oakland Necromancer, Eggs and Top Hats," *Oakland Tribune*, 5 April 1927, and the extensive Wikipedia article, "Anton Zamloch."

of sensational performances at Platt's Hall in San Francisco and at the Opera House in San Jose, during July and August 1873. This was the Hungarian-born Josef Vanek, whose travels and fame as a magician are not well known among historians of magic, almost certainly because most of his long career, after he was driven from Hungary during the revolutionary unrest of 1848, was spent performing, often for royalty, in Turkey, Egypt, Persia, India, China and Japan, with only brief periods in France, England, and with one rapid tour of three months across America, with significant engagements only in New York City and Buffalo, before sight-seeing and reaching San Francisco.[177] Professor Vanek performed without speaking, and came onstage dressed in Oriental costume. Two of his illusions were especially commented on by the press. The first was a sort of gender transformation: "The professor will … take a gentleman, whom after having undergone the transforming process, he will at command of word cause to disappear immediately, and at once assume the appearance of, and in reality be, a young and beautiful lady" (who was, in fact, his daughter).[178] The second illusion was by far the most sensational and formed the climax of all his performances. Vanek came on to the darkened stage accompanied by a pale young man (in fact, his son):

> The attendant laid himself upon a table in the center of the stage, and was there sent to sleep by being subjected to mesmeric passes. … A cloth was then arranged about the victim's neck, and everything being ready, Vanek drew a scimitar [sic] … sent it hissing through the air, and with one sweep drew the blade across the youth's neck, separating it from the body. The head was lifted up with the blood streaming from it, and placed upon a salver to be handed around for the company to examine.[179]

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[177] His extraordinary career is outlined in a two-part article by Ottokar Fischer, "Professor Joseph Vanek," *Magic Circular* 29.329-30 (April-May 1935): 107-109, 117-118; see also, "A Master of Magic," *Buffalo Morning Express*, 19 March 1873. Contrary to Fischer's article, Vanek's last performance in San Francisco was a benefit (excluding magic) of his elaborate light show machinery at Platt's Hall on December 3-4, 1873; *Daily Alta California*, 3 December 1873.

[178] "Professor Vanek," *Buffalo Morning Express*, 7 February 1873.

[179] Quoted from a San Francisco writer by H. J. Burlingame, *Herrmann the Magician: His Life, His Secrets* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1897), 224.

Audience members who dared were allowed to touch the head on the silver tray and feel it still warm, with blood dripping from the mouth and from the veins of the neck. As one might imagine, some in the audience fainted. As that illusion, which he seems to have developed in 1859 while in Constantinople, formed the centerpiece of the magician's show, he was advertised as "Professor Vanek, the Great Decapitator and Electrician Extraordinary."

In 1875, the last year of our consideration of magicians in California, two men appeared in the Golden State offering its citizens something new—"mind reading." This mental magic was demonstrated by the performer's asking a member of the audience to think of any object somewhere in the room or hall. Then the "mind reader" has that person grasp him lightly by the wrist or place the back of his hand gently on the magician's forehead and concentrate on the object. Immediately, the "mind reader," without any words having been spoken, leads the person to the object thought of, whether in plain view or hidden. Back East, the "inventor" of this effect, J. Randall Brown (and others, including Washington Irving Bishop) were touring with it. Because the effect is actually accomplished, not by literally reading the person's mind, but rather by the "mind reader's" practiced recognition of the subtle muscular pressures that the audience member unconsciously exerts as the pair move in the direction of the object or away from it, the effect was eventually called "muscle reading."

At the end of January 1875, when the Australian Mail Steamer *Cyphrenes* reached port in San Francisco (having sailed from Sydney, via Auckland and Honolulu), a testimonial appeared in the *Daily Alta California*. It was signed by the ship's officers and some of her passengers, attesting to the "wonderful tests" that had been offered them at an entertainment during the voyage by "the justly celebrated Mind Reader," A[rchibald] E. Rice.[180] These "tests," as described, all consisted in locating the objects of which various people were thinking.

What Rice's background was, and among whom he was "justly celebrated" is unknown to me, but he was booked for a three-night engagement at Platt's Hall, beginning on February 15, where he created a sensation. In fact, his performances consisted of

[180] "Mind Reading," *Daily Alta California*, 31 January 1875.

several parts, only one of which was finding objects. He also displayed other "mental" tests, such as the variation on "psychometry" by which one identifies the audience members whose "billets" (folded slips of paper) were mixed together on a table onstage. His act was an integrated "mentalism" demonstration. But because theater audiences were already familiar with billet reading, "as these latter are introduced by every humbug and charlatan" (meaning Spiritualist medium), it was Rice's "muscle reading" that caused the stir.[181]

When he finished his engagement at Platt's Hall, he continued his performances into the beginning of April at Woodward's Gardens. And by the end of his engagement there, he had begun advertising in *Figaro*, the city's daily theatrical sheet, that he was giving "tests of his strange and miraculous power at private residences," for a fee of $20 for five tests, with additional tests for $5, available daily.[182] He was advertising, in other words, as a paid, private "test medium," to put it in Spiritualist terms. Like many other performing mentalists over the years, Rice seems to have walked a line, sometimes presenting himself as having genuine "powers," but at other times presenting himself as a mere entertainer, a magician specializing in mental tricks.

From San Francisco, he went to Sacramento, and then through the summer, up into Oregon, and on to Vancouver. By the following year, he was back again in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara. But he then began shuttling back and forth over the following few years, between the Pacific Coast, New Zealand, and Australia, where he appears to have settled in permanently by the early 1880s.[183]

Rice's early performances in California during the first few months of 1875 triggered another performer into action to begin his career in magic and mentalism. Charles N. Steen, born in 1849 in Austria, was described in San Francisco and Los Angeles papers as an ex-circus performer, a small time grifter, mental healer, fortune teller,

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[181] It was not long before Californians began to discover that they, too, could do this "mind reader" stunt and recognized how it was done; see "Plenty of Mind Readers," *Oakland Tribune*, 30 June 1875.
[182] "Mental Telegraphy," *Figaro*, 2 April 1875.
[183] Robert Kudarz, "Magic and Magicians," *M-U-M* 10.7 (December 1920): 32. J. V. Reilly, "Stories of the Past," *Magicana* 39.229 (June-July 1991): 10-11. The last newspaper announcement I see is a benefit concert for him in Brisbane in 1898, mentioning his failing health.

trickster, and dreamer (especially about women).[184] On May 4, 1875 in San Francisco—a month after Rice had left the city to perform in Sacramento and elsewhere—Steen offered to a small audience a demonstration of "experiments in psychometry."[185] They were somewhat primitive: First, he sat in the middle of a circle of people, to which of which he had handed out a slip of paper. He told them to pick a number, write it down, then pick another and multiply the first one by the second. Then fold the slip in half and drop it in a hat that was passed around. Someone mixed up the slips in the hat and emptied them onto a table. Steen then unfolded them, looked at them, and guessed to whom each belonged. He made two mistakes out of sixteen. Second, a package of cards, blank on one side and with a single letter of the alphabet on the other, was produced. He was blindfolded and led out of the room. One of the sitters laid out twenty-six of the cards on the table, and another person picked up or touched one of the cards. Steen was led back into the room and passed his hand over the cards, "feeling" which one had been picked.

Then he produced sticks that he gave to a couple of men and picked up one for himself. He first hit each man on the knees and then encouraged them to try and hit him, which he promised they would not be able to do. They only got in one blow, on his left hand. He also "self-mesmerized," across two chairs, suddenly becoming rigid, instructing several men beforehand to stand next to him, holding sticks, and to lift him when he became rigid, promising them that his body would be in a condition of near weightlessness.

A review of his performance several days later noted that the performance, though called "psychometry," did not involve him handling "any unknown substance in his hand and give his impressions of its character and history," which is what "psychometry" usually meant. The review also concluded that if Steen meant to repeat his exhibition as a way to make money, it would probably fail, for the "experiments have too much the appearance of trickery to be of any service, and they are not of a nature calculated to attract large audiences.[186]

That was what Steen intended to do. That summer, he traveled back and forth between Los Angeles and San Francisco, either offering himself in the Los Angeles paper as

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[184] "Prof. Chas. N. Steen," *Los Angeles Herald*, 23 December 1875.
[185] "Wonders in Psychometry," *San Francisco Chronicle*, 7 May 1875.
[186] "Psychometry," *Common Sense*, 15 May 1875.

a "disease annihilator" (that is, as someone who cured sickness by "magnetic" passes of his hands over patients' bodies) or, as at the Merced Theatre, as "Prof. Chas. N. Steen, the Great and Only Mind Reader in the World." Now, in his act, he clearly challenged the "Mind Reader" Rice, who was meeting with success around the state. Steen's act had three parts: "1st. Mental Questions Answered. 2nd. Leading to Objects Thought of. 3rd. Wonderful Figure Test." His ads read, "The learned and scientific of Los Angeles are earnestly requested to attend and witness this wonderful phenomena of Brain Telegraphy," and included a *Nota Bene*, "Beware of impostors as Prof. Chas. N. Steen is the only Mind Reader in the World."[187]

He was said to believe that he could conquer women by a mere magnetic glance of his eye. He was also said to have been "always in a blissful state of spooney love." In August, he married a woman who was delicately referred to as a "woman of the town," but she left him after a week, saying she preferred returning to her old haunts than to endure life with such a fraud.[188] It does not seem to have bothered him. By the following month, he had convinced Clara Simmons, the piano playing psychometrist who had been paired with "Dr. Haskell," to perform with him as a team. At the beginning of October, they were planning to head off to Europe together, but one morning, in a café, Steen was recognized by an Army officer as being the Pvt. "Charles N. Stone," of the 23rd Regiment, who had enlisted in New York City in 1870, and then deserted in 1872, probably in Arizona. Steen was taken into custody and incarcerated at Alcatraz for seven months before he was released. When he was freed, "The Professor announced his intention of earning an honest living by engineering a marionette show and exposure of all the tricks of 'mind reading,' 'table rapping,' 'materialization,' and the 'spirit' medium business generally."[189] That would in fact become the trajectory of his career. He married a Missouri girl, Martha Smith, in 1878, and developed with her a second-sight mind-reading act, with which they had great success in America, Europe, and Australasia. But Charles also gained renown as a public exposer of fake Spiritualist mediums and their techniques.[190]

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[187] "Prof. Chas. N. Steen," *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 July 1875.
[188] "Prof. Chas. N. Steen," *Los Angeles Herald*, 23 October 1875.
[189] "Prof. Chas. N. Steen," *Los Angeles Herald*, 10 May 1876.
[190] For an account of some of his later career, see David Price, *Magic: A Pictorial History Conjurers in the Theater* (New York: Cornwall, 1985), 461-62. Steen, however, remained an unreformed fabulist about his past; see, for example, his interview in the *New Zealand*

Unlike almost all of the magicians considered here, magician Daniel Martin became a fixture in California and the American West for nearly fifteen years. He made his living there, performing in small settlements and large cities both, and so became renowned all over the Pacific coast, the Mountain West, and the Great Basin.[191] When he left to perform for some years in the Midwest and the East, he still called himself "the California Illusionist." He then traveled back to the West to tour and spent most of his later life there.

Daniel Martin was born September 15, 1829, in Bolton, Ontario, Canada, the son of Henry and Sarah (Taylor) Martin. The family moved to the United States soon afterwards, first to New York State, then, in 1836, to the sparsely populated, but black soil-rich, prairie farm settlement of Radnor, Illinois, in Peoria County. Henry Martin died in November of that year.[192] The 1840 census shows Sarah as the head of household, living on their farm with her children.

Daniel had three younger brothers, Samuel, John, and William, one older sister, Elizabeth, and one younger, Jane.[193] The census for 1850 shows Daniel, then 21, working as a laborer, living apart from his mother and siblings, on the nearby farm of Erastus Peet, who had been Radnor's first settler. Sometime not long afterwards, Martin left for the gold

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Observer and Free Lance, 15 October 1892. Charles and Martha separated in 1906, and each found another partner to tour with. Charles died on May 14, 1926, at "Brinsworth," a retirement home for those in the theatrical business, in Twickenham, west London, England.

[191] The famous magician Carl Hertz (Leib Morganstern) was born in San Francisco in 1859 to parents who had come there ten years before, with the first wave of the Gold Rush, and he was sometimes referred to as the "California Illusionist," but he did not achieve fame as a magician until he had moved away.

[192] James M. Rice, *Peoria, City and County, Illinois* (Chicago: S. J. Clarke, 1912), 285; David McCulloch, ed. *Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois, vol. 2 History of Peoria County* (Chicago: Munsell, 1901), 791-95.

[193] Brothers William and John would both fight in the Civil War—and would die in action (William was a Private in the 112th Illinois Infantry; John was a Private in the 77th Illinois Infantry). His sister Jane's husband, John Collins (also a Private in the 77th Illinois Infantry) would also die in action. Elizabeth's husband Norton Bristol would serve in the Union army (2nd Colorado Cavalry) but would survive the war. Brother Samuel would stay back in Peoria during the war, keeping the family farm going, with their mother Sarah. Daniel did not fight in the war, and was living far from the theater of battle during that time, but as far as the records show, while working as a performer of magic, he never toured (or even ventured into) any state that went with the South in the war.

fields of California. Perhaps he thought he could make more money for his family there than by working for wages on his neighbor's farm. It is equally possible, however, that the 1850 census listing signifies that he was already working to save enough cash to book passage to California. Years later, he would write that he "entered the magic circle" in 1851 or 1852. That likely occurred after he had reached the Western land of golden promise.

In the few photos and engravings we have of him, all of which come from after he had become a magician, we see a handsome and intelligent-looking man, slender, with dark hair, penetrating eyes, high cheek bones (all in all, with a resemblance to Jefferson Davis), and a substantial, but carefully trimmed mustache and goatee (the facial hair arrangement is reminiscent of magician Alexander Herrmann).[194]

If Martin arrived in California cash-poor, and did not enrich himself in prospecting, he would have looked about for some way he could make a living.[195] In November 1854, he appeared in the California newspapers, when he headed a trio of performers (Martin, Gilson, and Belknap) at the Sacramento Theater giving a two-night exhibition of "mechanical figures, ventriloquism, and legerdemain."[196] Some years later, Martin would say he had had a good acquaintance in 1854, with a man who was a clown and gymnast in Lee & Marshall's National Circus and Hippodrome, so it is not implausible that Martin and the other two men here were associated with it as well.[197] Or, alternately, he may well have

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[194] Two cartes de visite of Daniel Martin are in the Alfred Doten Papers in the Special Collections Department of the library at the University of Nevada-Reno: https://unrspecoll.pastperfectonline.com/photo/FE935861-1DFC-4010-9D04-431320751379 and https://unrspecoll.pastperfectonline.com/photo/456568DE-E0AD-40D4-8605-150245347939. A nice later ad portrait engraving of "Prof. D. Martin, Wizard and Ventriloquist," sporting an exquisitely long moustache, is in the *Sandusky Daily Register*, 7 November 1871.

[195] The 1852 California census does record a Daniel Martin, who was working as a miner in Tuolumne County, but he was probably not our man. The Tuolumne Martin was born in Canada, but on Prince Edward Island, about 1822, and his last residence before coming to California was Massachusetts.

[196] "Amusements," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 10 November 1854.

[197] Alfred Doten, *The Journals of Alfred Doten, 1849-1903*, ed. Walter Van Tiburg (Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1973), 768. Actually, the reminiscence, at least as Alf Doten wrote it down in his diary in March 1864, was garbled. Doten wrote that Martin told him then that he had known the man back in California in 1854 when the man worked for the "Lee & Burnett" circus. But there never was such a circus. There was, however a "Lee & Bennett" circus that formed and played through California in 1856. However, Henry

been honing his skills at legerdemain, ventriloquism, and the operation of mechanical figures under John Powell Courtier, in his "Fakir Troupe." The circuses at the time were constantly touring the mining districts. Lee & Marshall's went throughout the mining region in 1854. But Martin's act, with its emphasis on ventriloquism and marionettes was enough like Courtier's that it is reasonable to guess that Courtier was Martin's teacher. And that when Martin reached California and did not make his fortune by panning it out of the rivers, he attached himself to Courtier's "Fakir Troupe" or to one of the circuses that already traveled through the region.[198]

The circuses were generally small affairs (although Lee & Marshall's had a big tent), consisting of equestrian acts, gymnastic and juggling feats, slack wire performers, a clown, and a trumped-up assortment of troupe members who played music to accompany the acts and to announce the troupe's arrivals in the camps and towns. The jugglers might sometimes also perform some legerdemain, or there might be someone in the troupe (often unbilled in the advertisements) who specialized in magical performance. Nevertheless, Martin never did gymnastic stunts in his act, which, because of its illusions and ventriloquism, resemble Courtier's, and the only musical instruments he was ever said to have played were the bass drum and cymbals.

By September 1856, he was appearing as a solo magician. The "Celebrated Enchanter and Magician" D. Martin gave a "grand exhibition" at the Coloma Theater, in Coloma, California. The town had grown up around Sutter's mill where gold was first discovered in 1848. An ad in the *Coloma Empire County Argus* announced that "Mr. Martin's Magical Experiments have bewildered the most learned of the Old World, and caused quite a stir in the United States. The illusions are of the first order, truly magnificent, instructing and amusing, and of such a nature that persons of the strictest religious principles can feel no repugnance in witnessing. Mr. M. will also introduce his wonderful power of Ventriloquism, consisting of a variety of laughable and amusing incidents."[199]

Charles Lee, along with John R. Marshall, had earlier been the proprietor of the San Francisco-based Lee & Marshall "National Circus and Hippodrome" from 1852.

[198] Admittedly, this is a series of guesses, to carry Martin from Erastus Peet's farm in Illinois in mid-1850 to where he next definitely appears, in Sacramento near the end of 1854.

[199] "Grand Exhibition," *Coloma Empire County Argus*, 13 September 1856.

The ad for his engagement on November 17, in Auburn in Placer County on the American River, was extravagant in describing his act. It listed the "experiments" in "Signor Martin's" repertoire: The Spanish Pin, or Wandering Philosopher; The Electric Slipper; The Mysterious Money; Wandering Rice, and the obedient Card; The Inexhaustible Bottle; The Gambler Outwitted; Transition of a Lady's Glove; Washington Temperance Pump; Restoration of a Broken Watch; Wonders of the Magic Rings; Wonders of the Yankee Silk Factory; The Mammoth Hat; The Magic Egg; Cup and Ball Game; and The Productive Cup.[200]

His ventriloquial offerings included "Representations of Conversation with different Persons in Different Places, Imitations of barking of Dogs, Imitation of Killing of Pigs, Imitation of Singing of Birds, Imitation of Grinding Knives, and Imitations of Pulling Teeth." He also manipulated a "splendid set of mechanical figures" or "apparently automated automatons," to represent ten performers in various dances: "Grand Pole Dance by Count Rebolia, Turkish Ball Tossing; Highlander Plate Balancing, Highland Fling, and Sailor's Hornpipe" by Jack Hallian," "Grand Setto by Mickey and the Live Yankee," including an Irish Jig by Mickey," Fancy Dance by Scarry Mack," and "Breakdown Dance by the Plantation Negro and Miss Clarrisa Wiggin." All of this concluded with "the grotesque and Laughter-provoking capers of the Clown, Joey Grimaldi, Jr." (his main ventriloquism figure) "with his adventures, conversations and exploits, interspersed with mechanical tricks, terminating with a grand attempt at horsemanship on his favorite horse Spot." The name, Joey Grimaldi, Jr., was derived from the famous English clown and "agent of chaos," Joseph ("Joey") Grimaldi. This is another piece of circumstantial evidence suggesting that Englishman J. P. Courtier—who was already listed as a "comedian" when he was shipped off to Australia, and who used automatons to perform in Melbourne—was probably Daniel Martin's teacher.

The ad was probably his full menu of what he could offer (although he only played the Auburn Theater for a single night), and on the occasions when he played a multi-day engagement, he undoubtedly changed his performance each day, selecting from the list. With a single-day performance, or when he trouped into places where bringing his effects presented a formidable obstacle, or where the size of his audience was unpredictable, his

[200] Ad in *The Placer Herald*, 15 November 1856,

act was pared down accordingly. A month later, for example, he was playing at Roach Hill (also in Placer County). Publishing his entire repertoire for such a venue would have seemed an overreach. But when he played at the Metropolitan Theater in Sacramento at Christmas time, his ad in the *Sacramento Daily Bee* ("Martin, the Wizard, Has Arrived!") again stretched out its description of the act of the "World-renowned, Wonder-creating Wizard."

He adjusted his act to fit whatever performance he expected to give. He gave shows in theaters, in small rented halls, in saloons, at outdoor fairs, and, eventually, under his own tent pavilion when he anticipated performing in a place with no hall large enough to hold the audience he hoped to gather.[201]

For the next dozen years, until about 1868, Daniel Martin itinerated through the West, following the miners who followed the gold and silver strikes throughout California, Nevada, Utah, and Montana. He made it up into Oregon and Washington, as well, and into British Columbia. His advertisements and notices called him "Signor Martin" and "Prof. D. Martin," but most often "Martin the Wizard" or "the Wizard, Martin." When he performed in cities and towns whose populations had become permanent, he equipped his show accordingly, providing instrumentalists and assistants and advertising in extravagant style in the local newspapers. But normally, he was a one-man traveling show, arriving even in the smallest, most isolated, and evanescent of places by horse, buggy, wagon, or stage. He would gather a crowd in a remote miner's camp by plastering bills on the nearest saloon or provisions store, depending not on newspaper ads, but on word of mouth to bring in an audience.

For the most part, following Martin's tracks during these years requires combing the newspapers of those days. Like the prospectors, publishers and editors were pushing out into the gold and silver camps as well, investing in the future success of these places. Martin came to know many of these editors; they found him to be a good companion. But his newspaper trail sometimes vanishes for months at a time. The reason is that he was

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[201] The tent pavilion was not without its risks. A performance by Martin in Marysville in May 1860 had to be postponed when high winds collapsed the tent, and in setting up the tent for a performance in Yreka in June 1861, a man died when he fell from the flagpole he was erecting over the tent.

performing far off into the mountains and gulches over most of the state, giving shows of legerdemain, illusions, and ventriloquism. He sometimes traveled by stagecoach, with only a trunk. But when he went to places out of the reach of even the stage lines, he would arrive with his magical effects, marionettes, and a bass drum, in a wagon drawn by a pair of horses fitted out for the occasion with spangled netting and feathered plumes. He was sighted in Stockton once, for example, by the editor of the *San Joaquin Republican*, when he was passing through town:

> WIZARD MARTIN—A handsome wagon, with the above inscription upon it, passed through town yesterday, on the way to Knight's Ferry. It was drawn by two very large and handsome white horses which were an exhibition in themselves.[202]

Martin found his audiences were eager to enjoy themselves. Inhabitants of those isolated regions had little to relieve their hard, quotidian work. Poet Joaquin Miller, who spent part of his childhood in "The Forks" in Shasta County, wrote that, "Of course, we had some few papers, very old ones, and there were some few novels on the creek; but there was no place of amusement, no neighbours with entertaining families, nothing but the monotony of camp and cabin-life of the most ungracious kind."[203] The populations of some towns were even regulated by the weather. Placer mining requires moving water. During the winter months when the streams were frozen, or during the seasons when they dried up, some places, like Johntown, in the Nevada Territory (where Martin played, at least once) were abandoned. Martin moved around, but so did many of the camps, which reinforced the feeling that a magic performance there was like attending an extraordinary fair or picnic. In later years, Dan De Quille, Mark Twain's boss at the *Nevada Territorial Enterprise*, wrote an article of fond remembrance:

> In the early days, "Martin the Wizard," ventriloquist, practitioner of legerdemain, prestidigitation, conjuration and hocus-pocus generally, arrived at the little mining

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[202] "Wizard Martin," *San Joaquin Republican*, 15 August 1858.
[203] Joaquin Miller, *Life Amongst the Modocs: Unwritten History* (London: Richard Bentley, 1873), 78.

town of Omega, Nevada county, California, and "painted the town red," blue and green with his bills.

In the town the Wizard found in Jim Fletcher, a leading miner, an old acquaintance. Being alone, the Wizard insisted that Fletcher should act for him as door-keeper on the occasion of the entertainment he was about to give in the town. Fletcher demurred. He was one of the best natured men in the world, and a man who could never say no to man, woman or child—dog or Digger Indian.

Said Fletcher: "It is now the dry season and there is very little money in the camp. Now I know every miner, far and near, and if I am at the door all will expect to go in, money or no money."

"Well," said Martin, "If it should happen that some of your friends want to see the show and have no money, just let them pass in."

"But they all are my friends," said Fletcher.

"Very well," replied the Wizard, "go ahead and do the best you can."

On the night of the show Jim Fletcher was at the door. The "boys" came toiling up from Washington and other places on the South Yuba, crossed the great chasm of Scotchman's Creek from Alpha, came in on the trails Indians made from Fall Creek and Diamond Creek, and not a few found their way across the forest from far-off Steep Hollow. The majority had no money, but as they had heard that Jim Fletcher would be at the door, they were sure it would be all right. "If not," all said, "we'll make it right when water comes."

Man after man presented himself for admission who said he had no money, but would make it all right when water came.

Jim had not the heart to turn anyone back. He wanted all the boys to see what his friend, the Wizard, could do. With beaming face and cheery voice he waved the applicants to the door, crying: "Go in, go in, you'll see a good show. I know Martin of old; he'll give you a show that will make your hair stand on end."

A few men offered money at the door, but Fletcher said: "Never mind paying now; it will only bother me in making up my accounts. It will be easier to remember that nobody paid than to keep in mind who put up and who didn't. You can make it all right when water comes."

Seeing the house packed in every part the Wizard did his very best, and the applause was continuous and hearty, for in those days shows of any kind were few and far between in the camp.

After the performance was over, Wizard Martin called up his door-keeper. “Well, Jim, how did it pan out? How much money did you take in?”

“Money!” cried Jim—“How much money? Why, not a cent—nary red! But never mind that; it’s all good—it’ll be all right when water comes.”

“When water comes!” cried the Wizard aghast. “When water comes? But, my dear boy, I’m here without a cent, and here is the hall rent to be paid.”

“The hall? Oh, never mind the hall; we’ll make that all right when water comes. Don’t let that fret you; I’ll see the owner about that.”

“Well, but just see what a fix I am in,” says Martin; “here is my bill at the hotel.”

“Bother the hotel bill! Why will you hunt up things to worry about? But here comes Van Vrankin, your landlord,” and facing about, Jim called out: “I say, Van, we’ve had a devil of a big house—the show has been a grand success, but we haven’t taken in any money. As for the Wizard’s bill at your house, we’ll settle that when water comes.”

“All right,” cried Van, “come over now and get a dram; lunch is about ready.”

Next morning the Wizard wanted to take the stage to Nevada City, but his pockets were empty. “It’s all right,” said Fletcher, “I’ll see the driver and tell him he’ll get his money as soon as water comes.” And so it was arranged. Martin had seen no money, but in every other respect the entertainment he had given had been a great success. It was some comfort to the showman to reflect that he left behind him no debts that were not satisfactorily settled for. The magic words: “Will pay when water comes,” had been as good as gold, yet the Wizard would doubtless have felt more at ease could he have jingled a few dollars in his pockets.

Some weeks later while he was performing in some of the valley towns of the State, Martin the Wizard received a letter from Jim Fletcher in which was enclosed a check for $75. Jim explained that the amount sent was the profit on the performance given at Omega, after paying for the use of the hall, settling the hotel bill, stage fare and the like.

> Said Jim, in his letter: "I knew every person that was in the show and not one has failed to pay. You see that I knew what I was about when I said to you: "It will be all right when water comes."[204]

Until 1863, Martin toured mostly through California and sometimes up the coast to Oregon. There probably were periods of boom and bust for him, but it seems he made a good living for himself.[205] And he paid his bills as he went, unlike some other performers, who left behind them a trail of debts and complaints. In 1860, he presided over a couple of "gift entertainments" at the end of his shows. At the Placerville Theatre in February, for example, he advertised he would give away 250 prizes worth $3000 (tickets $1) and he did the same at his engagement at Volcano in December. As far as the newspaper reporting reveals, his gift shows were honest, and the prizes were real; but such shows needed a lot of attention, beforehand and afterwards, and he did not continue them for long.[206]

According to newspaper accounts of his performances (discounting what may have been puff pieces in which he had a hand), Daniel Martin was an extremely skilled and amusing performer, not only in his ventriloquism and marionette manipulations, but also in his legerdemain. Editors and reporters in places like San Francisco and Sacramento, ranked his abilities as equal to or better than any other magician who had ever played in California. "We will say for M. Martin," wrote the editor of the *Stockton Independent*, "that having witnessed his exhibitions before in other parts of the State, he is certainly the most expert and thorough deceiver we have ever seen, and can come as near swallowing himself as 'any other man.'"[207] Declared the editor of the Weaverville *Weekly Trinity Journal*, "Martin is a genius, a regular trump in his line, and excels any slight of hand performer we have seen in California."[208] And the Marysville *Daily National Democrat* wrote that, "Mr.

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[204] Dan De Quille, reprinted as "When Water Comes," *Salt Lake Daily Tribune*, 4 April 1885.
[205] The 1860 federal census captured him in St. Louis (Sierra County), California, occupation "wizard," reporting his net worth as $27,000.
[206] I see an image on the internet of a ticket from his gift entertainment in Volcano, on the back of which is written a notation that it was submitted as an exhibit in a court case about a year after the drawing was held.
[207] "Martin, the Wizard," *Stockton Independent*, 8 May 1863.
[208] "Martin the Wizard," *Weekly Trinity Journal*, 26 December 1857.

Martin is the most accomplished and thorough magician that has ever performed on the Pacific Coast, and that his feats of ventriloquism are not surpassed by the best masters in the world."[209]

From July 1863 to about August 1864, he established himself among the first inhabitants of the tiny boomtown of Como, Nevada, situated high in the Pine Nut mountain range in the northwestern part of the state. Prospectors, on their way to the gold and silver of the Comstock Lode, which had been discovered in 1861, had just recently discovered gold in the region. But it was not pulled out by placer mining. The gold was embedded in seams that emerged onto the surface in quartz ledges, and so had to be developed by digging down with shafts or tunnels, hacking out the ore, and hauling it to a steam-driven crushing mill. Martin arrived in the newly born town not with the intention of giving a show there (although he would do that occasionally), but to join in the general rush to make a fortune by staking claims, establishing joint stock mining companies, and then trading in mining stock.

When he arrived, he quickly found a place to board with another new arrival to Como, Alfred Doten, who had come out to California from Plymouth, Massachusetts at the very beginning of the Gold Rush in 1849. Doten's younger sister, Lizzie, had become known back East as a Spiritualist medium and a published poet, and Alf had journalistic aspirations, not just hopes to make a fortune in gold. Over the years, he would write for a series of newspapers in Nevada and California, including the *Virginia Daily Union*, the *Virginia Territorial Enterprise,* the *Reese River Reveille*, and the *Gold Hill Daily News* (of which he became the editor). He kept a daily journal for fifty years, a section of which covers his time in Como. It provides several choice descriptions of Daniel Martin, with whom he became good friends.[210]

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[209] "The Wizard," *Daily National Democrat*, 18 December 1858.

[210] Alfred Doten was the elder brother of Spiritualist medium and poet Lizzie Doten, who stayed back in Massachusetts. Because of this connection, Alf Doten met quite a few of the Spiritualist lecturers and mediums who toured California, including Ada Foye, Benjamin Todd, Emma Hardinge, and Laura De Force Gordon. Alf's sister Eunice also moved to California and married; with her, he was drawn into dallying with the "spiritual dial" to contact the spirits of various departed friends and family.

Within a month of arriving in Como, Martin had built a saloon there. Unlike the other structures in the settlement, which were wooden, his was built of stone, perhaps taking a lesson from the fire at Gold Hill, California, in September 1855, which had burned the town's wooden buildings completely, replaced almost immediately by ones built of brick and stone. Martin managed the saloon, decorating it with his magic paraphernalia. By the end of the first month, the saloon had hosted two lectures by the erratic phrenologist and Spiritualist Charles Pinkham, who had wandered into town to lecture and give readings of folks' cranial contours and to preach about his visionary Millennium.

In October, three months after Martin's arrival in Como, the town was unsettled when a group of Piutes in the area, led by the redoubtable chief Numaga, entered Como and told the settlers that they were not to cut down any of the live pinion trees in the area, that they were the Indians' orchards, from which they gathered pine nuts, one of their staple foods. Some in the town ignored him and continued felling the trees for lumber and charcoal, but when a group of solemn faced Piutes appeared one day out of the brush, clearly disapproving of the continued cutting, the whites rushed back to town and began a fevered rumor that an attack was imminent. As the *History of Nevada* tells it, "Martial law was declared in Como by Martin, the Wizard, pickets were posted, and a courier dispatched to Fort Churchill for military assistance." The town's women and children were brought into Martin's saloon (it was made of stone, after all) and into the town's hotel. The next night, a curfew was set and passwords were shared, but a few of the edgy men confronted dark forms in the night and shot at one another by mistake, alarming the town until everyone recognized what had happened. "The next morning," the account tells us, "the Indians came into town to see what all the row was about."[211]

Martin also began exploring the area with others, including Doten, staked claims, and over the next year established himself as the president of the Floridian Gold and Silver Mining Company and secretary of the Wizard Gold and Silver Mining Company. It is unclear whether these companies ever made any money. He also ran an express depot from his

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[211] Myron Angel, ed., *History of Nevada; with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Its Prominent Men and Pioneers* (Oakland: Thompson and West, 1881), 169; Doten, 240-42.

saloon, which served the community for its mail and packages.[212] Doten's diary tells us that Mark Twain, then gaining some fame as a writer for the *Territorial Enterprise*, arrived in Como on March 4, 1864 and stayed for four days, looking around and socializing with Doten and others. It seems most likely that Twain would have met Martin then, even if he had not heard about "the Wizard" earlier while working at the *Enterprise*.

Doten's diary also relates the public hearing, in Como, of a suit brought against Martin by a prospector named Roberts who lived in town with his wife. It seems that one night at a late hour, the couple heard a noise in the next room of their house, where their servant girl, a Digger Indian woman, slept. They got up and circled around the back of the house, where they found a stool set up under the servant's window. Mrs. Roberts then saw Martin exit out the back. Doten's diary entry recording the court proceedings continued, "Next day Roberts told Martin if he would pay 45.00 he would keep the matter quiet, but if not he would expose him—the $45 was for having to do with the squaw—Roberts says Martin has done it some nine times, & he understands that $5.00 is the regular price of the article, therefore wanted $45."[213] Roberts, of course, had thus compromised himself by trying to blackmail Martin, and the complaint fell apart in court. Martin's story was that he was merely carrying messages between the servant and her lover, who lived in another town and who had been forbidden to visit. The hearing then reeled off into a comic scene, as Doten wrote: "Court room full of men—funniest trial I ever saw—created plenty of sport—the stool was produced and sworn to—whole affair comical in the extreme—much sparring & eloquence on both sides." At the end of the hearing, Martin was discharged.

In the fall of 1864, a depression in precious metals prices took its toll on mining ventures in California and Nevada. The population of tiny Como began to thin out as investors for prospecting began to shy away. Doten left Como for the more secure and reliably prosperous Virginia City; Martin began to travel again with his magic show, and moved back into Gold Hill, near Virginia City, although he seems not to have dissolved all

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[212] *The History of Henry County, Illinois* (Chicago: H. F. Kett & Company, 1877), 298, also credits him with "holding office in California and Nevada" as well as having been appointed County Commissioner by Gov. Nye of Nevada, and as having been a Tax Collector and Federal Auctioneer, probably after Doten left Como and moved to Virginia City in September 1864.

[213] Doten, 796.

his interests in Como for perhaps another year. At the height of its activity, Como had perhaps numbered 700 souls, but it would quickly peter out and be abandoned. Even as early as August 1864, the *Gold Hill Daily News*, reporting on Martin's successful performance in that town, could comment on the rapidly disappearing Como, "And yet a little while and ye shall see it, and yet a little while and ye shall not see it."[214]

At the beginning of 1865, Martin traveled to Utah, to perform in Salt Lake City and other Mormon settlements.[215] The "Gentile" newspaper published in Salt Lake City, the *Camp Douglass Union Vedette*, wrote, "When we state that he can change a half starved mule and police cart into a fine six mule team, with two cords of wood thrown in for a load, we have exhausted our measure of praise."[216] Several days later, it offered its readers an article entitled, "Good Gracious Me, Who Ever Saw the Like?" Of "Wizard, Martin," it said, "His trickery is most dexterous, his magic most magical, his *diablerie*, most d—lish. We have seen magicians before, Anderson, Simmons, and the rest, but Martin kind of lays over all of them."[217] He made a huge splash in Salt Lake City, playing to seven-hundred-dollar houses at the Salt Lake Theatre and in the settlements to the north, touring in Utah for four months. He traveled by stage, giving entertainments all along the route, at the forts and settlements. "Everything from rabbit skins to pumpkins was accepted in payment for tickets," which he sold at Salt Lake City afterwards.[218] "There's no humbug about his tricks; they are simon pure," wrote the *Union Vedette*, "Crowded houses he has always, and those crowds are not only elated, but are 'wondrous wise' at the way he has of doing things."[219] News of his success filtered back to Nevada, where the *Gold Hill Daily News* reported that "Dan. is quite a favorite with the Mormen and women."[220]

By the time he departed Salt Lake City to return to Nevada (but planning to return again in the fall), the *Union Vedette* had observed that, "'Mystery and Magic' takes well in

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[214] "Witchcraft," *Gold Hill Daily News*, 23 October 1864.
[215] "Prof. Simmons" (and Artemus Ward) had performed in Salt Lake City in February 1864.
[216] *Camp Douglass Union Vedette*, 10 February 1865.
[217] *Camp Douglass Union Vedette,* 15 February 1865.
[218] *Progressive Men of the State of Montana* (Chicago: A. W. Bowen, 19--), 871.
[219] *Salt Lake City Union Vedette*, 1 April 1865.
[220] *Gold Hill Daily News*, 6 June 1865.

new countries."[221] It was a point well taken: Those who "lit out for the territories" were likeliest the most hopeful of human kind; in general, not timid but willing to risk their future against the odds. In addition, Mormons were living amongst those they regarded as saints and prophets, and had even the existence of their Zion as evidence of present-day miracles. Mormon audiences may well have known professional magicians were really "jugglers," but the performances dramatized, as acknowledged entertainment, their basic intuition that Something—Zion—could be brought into being out of the desert of Nothing. The reporters at the *Territorial Enterprise* back in Virginia City, who would write very favorable reviews of Martin's performances there the following year, expressed it differently, with its usual "smartness":

> Wizard Martin is again among us, having just returned from Salt Lake City. The wizard left all his traps in the City of the Saints, whither he will shortly return. The Mormons have a natural hankering after the devil and take kindly to any of his disciples. Wizard Martin's skill as a practitioner of the black art told fearfully upon the Latter Day Saints. Some of those of Brigham's subjects who attended the wizard's exhibitions did not get their mouths shut for a week afterwards, and to this day many of the old women believe Martin to be adorned with a pair of horns and an extensive caudal appendage. A great many of the saints believe that his feats were performed by means of "power" granted him by Brigham.[222]

Martin had planned to set out again from Virginia City to Salt Lake City in November, but storms delayed his departure. He did reach Utah by the start of the year, however and began another run of smashing success at the Academy of Music in Salt Lake City, and then, again, into the "provincial" settlements of Utah. He was not in the Salt Lake City press again until the third week of May, when he set out in a buggy from there and drove himself straight through over the course of eight days to play an engagement at the People's

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[221] *Salt Lake City Union Vedette*, 7 June 1865.
[222] Reprinted as "Heavy on 'Brigham's Subjects,'" *Salt Lake City Union Vedette*, 2 August 1865.

Theatre in Virginia City in Madison County, Montana.[223] (Gold had been discovered in the area in May 1863.) "There never has been an entertainment so thoroughly enjoyed by a Virginia audience since we first came to this city," wrote the editor of the *Montana Post*. "The 'tricks' were so neatly performed, and many of them such fine specimens of legerdemain, that the audience were delighted, and the genuine humor of Martin himself, kept the house in an almost continuous roar of laughter."[224] A correspondent to the *Helena Radiator*, writing from out in the camps, eagerly looked forward to seeing "the great expounder of the magic art, better known throughout the western portion of Uncle Samuel's dominions as Martin the Wizard."[225]

He traveled for a few months through the prospecting region of Montana. When he returned to Virginia City, Nevada in November, Alf Doten, who was then contributing to the *Gold Hill News*, quoted Martin in the paper as saying about Montana that "while traveling in

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[223] The editors of *Mark Twain's Letters, Volume 1* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 339-340, annotated a letter that Twain wrote to his childhood friend William Bowen from Hawaii, 7 May 1866, which describes a man he and Bowen had known in their Hannibal days, a carpenter named Martin. In Hawaii, Twain met him again and wrote Bowen that this Martin had come to Hawaii the year before, calling himself the "Wizard of the East," and had been sponging off the Hawaiians and the missionaries, and performing bungling sleight of hand shows there, using primitive, defective props. He had ended the show Twain saw by offering to give ten dollars to anyone who could catch and hold a wild hog for two minutes. A couple of men grabbed the porker's hind legs and got bit and dragged off through the crowd, while Martin used the chaos as a chance to grab his cash box and "shove." Twain wrote that, "I am of the opinion that Mr Martin is a brick." The modern editors of the Twain letters tentatively concluded that this "Martin" was in fact Daniel Martin, but that is impossible for several reasons, not the least of which is that Daniel Martin was clearly in Nevada, Utah, and Montana for the entire duration of Twain's visit to Hawaii. All this assumes, of course, that Twain's Hawaiian "Martin" had some existence in fact more substantial than "realist" Twain's "petrified man" or the protagonist in his "news" article, "Bloody Massacre Near Carson." In the latter story, he used the name of a real man and created a sensational lie around him (and then blamed readers for their ignorance in taking it seriously). He probably did the same sort of switch in his autobiography (Charles Neider, ed. *The Autobiography of Mark Twain* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1917), 50-58) with a traveling mesmerist who visited Hannibal in 1850. In reality, he was "Professor" Allen Ryan (1828-1889), who gave lectures and "amusing" demonstrations (according to Clemens' brother), but Twain called him "Simmons," presumably tagging him with the magician "Prof. Simmons'" name; see "Lecture on Psychology," *Hannibal Western Union*, 10 October 1850.

[224] *Montana Post*, 7 June 1866.

[225] Letter from "Rambler," *Helena Radiator*, 1 September 1866.

one portion of that country he saw taken from a small spot, by four men in three days' time, two thousand pounds of gold. The lucky finders at once sold the claim, and taking their gold, left the country."[226] A few days later, in preparation for Martin's performances in Gold Hill and Virginia City, Doten wrote, "There is not a boy of ten years of age, on the whole Pacific coast, who had not heard of Martin, the wizzard, so notorious has he become."[227] Mark Twain was also back in Virginia City at the same time, giving his lecture on the Hawaiian Islands to enthusiastic audiences. By the end of December, Martin and his little joker, "Joey Grimaldi, Jr." had gone back to California, for an engagement at the Metropolitan Theater in Sacramento, and from there to Marysville, Weaverville, and Yreka. A newspaper reporter in Weaverville wrote that, "Martin is a genius, a regular trump in his line, and excels any sleight of hand performer we have seen in California."[228] In February, he was playing in San Francisco at Maguire's Academy of Music, and probably residing across the bay in Antioch.[229] The *Daily Alta California's* description of Martin's act at the time mentioned that besides the other "jugglery," that is, legerdemain and physical illusions, ventriloquism, and marionette dances, it now included an "exhibition of 'second sight.'"[230] The second sight segment—a mind reading act—implied that he now had a partner. It was a woman.

We earlier noted a Stockton editor who noticed Daniel Martin's impressive livery and pair of stalwart white horses passing by on the way to Knight's Landing, the crossing point over the Sacramento River. It may have signified nothing. Yet, the constable of Knight's Landing, John Dillard Reid, had a wife of several years standing named Clara (or "Clarissa"), the daughter of a fractious and somewhat demented fisherman named Samuel Bixler. Clara, along with her father and mother and a few of her brothers, had come to

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[226] "Martin the Wizard," *Gold Hill Daily News*, 10 November 1866. Also, wrote Doten, "Martin, finding that the mines of Como would not pay, he took his 'little joker' under his arm and started out to show the people that all they saw was not to be believed, for it is 'now you see it and now you don't see it.' Como played the same thing on us."
[227] "Martin the Wizzard," *Gold Hill Daily News*, 15 November 1866.
[228] "Martin the Wizard," *Trinity Journal*, 26 January 1867.
[229] 1867 California voter registrations has him listed as residing in Antioch.
[230] "Academy of Music," *Daily Alta California*, 27 February 1867. The magician Robert Heller, who was known for his second sight act, was to open at San Francisco's Metropolitan Theatre the following week, on March 4, his first appearance in California.

California from Ohio in the 1850s. Clarissa had married Constable Reid when she was sixteen. Now, in the spring of 1867, when we see Daniel Martin having returned to the Bay area to display his wizardry to an admiring public, Clarissa Reid was twenty-two. Let us suppose that she and her husband may have divorced by then (though I have yet to find the evidence for that).[231] Be that as it may, she and Daniel Martin turn up on April 8, 1867 at Nanaimo, on Vancouver Island, which was a fast trip away up the coast from San Francisco, joining themselves as man and wife. By May, they were back in California, where Martin the Wizard played dates through July in Napa, San Jose, Santa Cruz, and in San Rafael in Marin County.

The repertoire of magic and ventriloquism that he advertised at this time practically duplicated what he had offered his audiences a dozen years before. He had not changed his act through the years, although he certainly adapted each show to the audience and the circumstances in which he played. Now, however, with Clara as a partner, new things were added. In September 1867, they left California for a tour of Martin the Wizard into the upper Northwest, in Portland, Olympia, Seattle, and then into Canada, in Victoria, New Westminster, and, following the gold rush trail there, to Cariboo and Barkerville, coming finally back down into Idaho Territory to perform in Idaho City and "other towns of the Great Basin."[232] On this tour, "Mrs. Clara Martin" was integrated into the act as a second-sight mind-reading performer, and her head was the "Wonderful Sphinx; or Floating Head" that appeared inside a box that Martin carried, closed, onto the stage and placed on a table before opening the front panel.

The performances during this tour were well attended and well received. When the act played in Portland at the Oro Fino Hall, "the wizard, Martin, drew better crowds than the séance mediums and displayed more wonders."[233] The Olympia paper, the *Washington*

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[231] Divorce records are harder to find than birth, marriage, and death records. John Reid remarried in May 1871.

[232] Beginning in late 1866, Martin's ads occasionally stated that he had performed in Australia—at least that portion of his act that involved ventriloquism and his "mechanical figures"—in a "lone exhibition," as he put it. So far, I have not been able to find him in Australia.

[233] "Letter from Oregon," *Sacramento Daily Union*, 22 October 1867.

Standard, declared him as "certainly the best conjuror we have yet seen."[234] By the time he and Clara had reached Barkerville in June, they were able to provide the community with its first professional act in the town's Theatre Royal. "His favourite trick was that of borrowing a gold ring, placing it in a brass vessel containing alcohol and setting fire to the liquid, putting a cover upon the vessel, then raising the cover and displaying a beautiful dove with a red ribbon around its neck to which was attached the ring."[235]

From the territorial towns in Idaho, the Martins proceeded back to San Francisco, where they boarded the *S. S. Idaho* for Honolulu. They gave performances onboard on the way over, and opened at the Royal Hawaiian Theatre on October 3, 1868 playing there to packed houses. "The man who hasn't seen him mend broken plates, tend babies, coin money faster than he can pick it up, and do a score of other magical tricks, that would 'be easy enough if you only knew how,'—had better go and see for himself," wrote a reviewer in the *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*.[236] The popularity of their show was great enough that they extended their stay in Hawaii into November.

In mid-December, Clara became pregnant. The next time the Martins show up in the records is the following April, when they have traveled back to Peoria, and are living with Daniel's family. They were looking for some farmland to buy. "Martin the Wizard and California Illusionist" gave a performance at Warren's Hall in Henry, Illinois, near Peoria, at the end of April. By June, Daniel and Clara Martin had bought a farm in Cambridge, Illinois, and their daughter Olive was born there on June 22, 1869. Cambridge was where Sarah Martin, Daniel's brother Samuel's daughter had settled after marrying George Talbot, a native of the place. Daniel's older sister Elizabeth had also settled in Cambridge after her marriage. It seems clear that Daniel and Clara intended to make Cambridge their home—

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[234] *Washington Standard*, 14 December 1867.
[235] Chad Evans, *Frontier Theatre: A History of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1983), 94.
[236] "Martin the Wizard …" *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 17 October 1868. An example of his program was published in the *Hawaiian Gazette*, 7 October 1868. For a longer review, mentioning the "Floating Head," "Magic Rings," Hat and Chinese Lanterns," and "The Magic Drum," see "Amusements," *Pacific Commercial Advertiser*, 10 October 1868. Producing coins in the way the reviewer describes was a classic magic illusion; around 1888, magician T. Nelson Downs combined coin production effects into a routine called "The Miser's Dream."

and to some extent, Peoria, where Samuel lived—while they were developing their property in Cambridge. Nevertheless, they still intended to tour with their act from time to time.

They encountered a problem. Beginning the previous year, a magician whose real name is unknown to me had begun performing as "Martino, the California Illusionist and Champion Ventriloquist of the World" in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Illinois. As evidence that a confusion with Martin was deliberate, "Martino's" manager was New York theatrical manager Harry Weston. He also managed the act of magician John Mawr, who carefully chose to adopt the performing name of "MacAllister" after the renowned magician Andrew MacAllister had died. Weston advertised Mawr simply as "MacAllister" or "The Great MacAllister" when he could get away with it, but he was sometimes forced to use "M. MacAllister" or "J. M. MacAllister." Mawr's act as "MacAllister" was framed loosely as Andrew MacAllister's, which, in his later years, had included an extravagant gift show.[237] Weston seems to have believed that an excellent way to publicize his clients was to present them to the public as a vague simulacrum of a performer with an already established reputation. Thus was "Martino, the California Illusionist" born. And so, we find Weston fabricating spurious "opinions of the press" for "Martino," such as the following, which Weston attributed to the *San Francisco Herald* of November 12, 1867 (the paper had not existed since 1860): "Martino's last great entertainment took place last night. The Opera House was crowded. He carries to the Atlantic States a reputation gained here as the most expert Magician and Ventriloquist that has ever visited California. Success to him."[238] I have not been able to discover that "Martino" ever set foot in California, though he may have been there and even may have been an acquaintance or a previous associate of

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[237] Andrew MacAllister died in 1856, never having made it to California, although Charles Thorne, the proprietor of the American Theater in San Francisco had made preliminary engagement the previous October to book him; see "Miss Julia Dean," *Marysville Daily Herald* 27 October 1855. J. M. MacAllister did go there and performed sporadically in 1876. He returned to New York under Weston's management in 1878, but wandered out to San Francisco again, dying penniless there in 1899.

[238] Ad for "Martino" at Mechanics' Hall in Utica, New York, *Daily Observer*, 18 March 1868. By the early 1870s, Martino's manager and business agent was George H. Twombly, the man who had been "The Fakir of Vishnu's" manager during Robinson's 1869 tour through California.

Martin. On the few occasions when "Martino" was interviewed, he would claim to have been born there and would spin out colorful balderdash about his earlier adventures there and all over the Pacific and South America.[239]

When the Martins settled in Illinois in 1869, Martin the Wizard found that his reputation had preceded him there, but largely in the form of "Martino's" performances through the state several months before. The confusion was irksome enough that Martin descended upon Dart's Hall in Rock Island in October, where "Martino, the California Illusionist" had performed a long engagement in March. Martin gave his full act there, with marionettes and all, as "Martin! The California Wizard." The *Rock Island Evening Argus* did not comment on the fact that this "Martin" was not the "Martino" lately seen, but did give Martin's performance an enthusiastic review, including the comment that "His automatons are the funniest pieces of wood ever manufactured, and can beat half the live men in town

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[239] See, for example, "Some Moments with Martino," *Quincy Daily Herald*, 23 February 1871, reprinted from the *Kansas City Times*. The 1880 federal census lists him as having been born on Prince Edward Island in 1830, and living in East Saginaw, Michigan with Gertrude Florence, the woman whom he had brought into his act years before, when she was 16, as a second-sight performer, presumably filling in the role that Clara Martin played in Daniel Martin's act. His skill in ventriloquism that he initially claimed when trying to assume Martin's persona doesn't appear to have amounted to much, and he eventually hired someone else to do that part of his act, and then dropped any actual performance of ventriloquism, largely relying instead on illusions that, with the exception of the "talking head," Daniel Martin never did, such as a skit about a magician's dream in which he conjures a girl and then a skeleton from under an "enchanter's canopy." Over a period of perhaps fifteen years, "Martino, the California Illusionist" had a busy career, mostly in the Midwest, but it appears that his popularity as a performer relied heavily on his gift shows. He was apparently a capable magician, but he was highly dependent on his machinery for his effects; when it wasn't working, his performances could be a disaster; see, for example, H. J. Burlingame, *Leaves from Conjurers' Scrap Books* (Chicago: Donohue, Henneberry & Company, 1891), 84-85. The last I see of "Martino" is a few performances he gave in August 1882 in the Dakota Territory, in which his rural gift entertainments were climaxed by his undertaking balloon ascensions. I can only imagine that when L. Frank Baum arrived in Aberdeen, South Dakota a few years later, during the height of the drought there to edit the local paper, wizard "Martino's" reputation and tales of his balloon ascensions (and not just the parched landscape) would later creep into his tale of "Kansas" and the ludicrous figure of the wizard who floated away in a balloon. "How can I help being a humbug," said the Wizard of Oz to himself, "when all these people make me do things that everybody knows can't be done?"

talking and performing."[240] Afterwards, Martin occasionally referred to himself as "Martin the Wizard, Original California Illusionist," in his ads, but Martino then sometimes adopted the phrase, "The Original Martino, California Illusionist."

By at least 1870, the Martins resumed a seasonal touring schedule, sometimes into the upper Midwest (Wisconsin, Illinois, Ontario, and into the coal and oil regions of Western Pennsylvania), and returning home to Cambridge in between times. In Cambridge, they set up a small boarding house, the Central Hotel, and tended to their farm. In 1873, Martin ran into a bit of trouble when he found that magic illusion creator Thomas William Tobin, presumably confused at first between Martin and Martino, had made preliminary arrangements to lease a portion of the rights to perform Tobin's "Frankenstein Mystery" (a realistic dismemberment illusion) to Martino instead of to Martin.[241] Martin succeeded in securing the bulk of the rights, however, and performed it as part of his show over the following year.[242]

Clara gave birth to a son in 1874, whom they named Daniel Lester Martin. It is unclear how much time Daniel and Clara could devote to performing during the latter half of the 1870s, or how well their farm and boarding house in Cambridge were doing (Daniel's aged mother Sarah was living with them), but the *New York Clipper* archives allows us to see that Daniel continued to run his show seasonally, sometimes as a marionette troupe accompanied by a band.

Despite that, the Martins' fond memories of touring under the Western skies and the excitement of the mining camps, where their audiences were filled with folks who had gold in their eyes, must have come back to them. In the fall of 1883, with their daughter Olive now thirteen and their son Daniel now nine, they decided to return to the West they had left fifteen years before—by touring the mining towns. "Prof. Martin, magician and

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[240] "Amusements," *Rock Island Evening Argus*, 11 October 1869. In August, the *Argus* had indeed shown itself to have been confused, when it reported that "Martino, the illusionist, is astonishing the Cambridgers,"referring to a performance that had undoubtedly been given by Martin ("Henry County Notes," *Rock Island Daily Argus*, 13 August 1869).
[241] Compare "Notice to Magicians," *New York Sunday Mercury*, 11 May 1873 (Martino) to the notice "To Managers and Magicians," *New York Clipper*, 24 May 1873 (Martin).
[242] For a full description of the illusion, see "Cutting a Man's Head Off," *Ottawa Daily Citizen*, 6 February 1874.

ventriloquist, assisted by Miss Clara Martin, second sight" performed in Collister's Hall in Dickinson, in the Dakota Territory, on September 22. From there, they proceeded into Montana, playing dates in Billings, Livingston, Helena, Deer Lodge, Butte, and Walkerville. The early part of the following year, they were in Utah, with engagements in Provo, Lehi, Springville, Spanish Fork, Payson, Nephi, Juab, and Salt Lake City, then moved on to Wyoming, where they did shows in Carbon and Laramie, before returning in May to Salt Lake City to finish their run. By this time, daughter Olive ("Ollie") had become a good singer and pianist and her parents incorporated her into their act.

They returned to Illinois, but continued to perform in the Midwest—Nebraska, Kansas, and Wisconsin—occasionally through the 1880s. By the end of 1891, however, they were out West again, performing in Utah into the spring of the following year. A newspaper reporter reviewing the show in March in Brigham City, declared Daniel's legerdemain really wonderful. "The Wizard, he seems to be the old fellow himself," he wrote, "has lost some of his ventriloquial power since his last visit here, years go, but the antics of the marionette character were astonishing."[243] In the fall, they were playing dates in Seattle, and then on into British Columbia, reaching Revelstoke on the Columbia River on the newly completed Canadian Pacific Railway for an engagement near the end of November.

Whether they headed back to Illinois after that to wait out the winter is unknown, but in May of the following year, they were back in Utah, with son Daniel now old enough to serve as their advance man, playing through the year in such places as Hyrum, Ogden, and Manti.[244] I do not see them then until February 25, 1894, when Clara passed away in Kalama, Washington, and Daniel buried her in a cemetery on a bluff overlooking the Columbia River.

The evidence for his whereabouts during the next few years is vague, but it seems he moved to San Francisco, and paid several visits, with magic engagements, to an old friend Harley Fay, whom he had known since their days living in Como. Since then, Fay had continued to make his way in Nevada, following the trail of silver strikes, prospecting and opening a succession of saloons and lunch counters. He had headed to Mohave County,

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[243] "Martin the Wizard," *Brigham City Bugler*, 19 March 1892.
[244] Son Daniel L. Martin would go on to become a theatrical manager of stock repertory companies, and an early promoter of moving picture producers' associations.

Arizona in the early 1880s, following the same pattern, and by the early 1890s, he was an old hand in Kingman. Aside from a period in 1896, when Martin was playing a number of dates in venues around Puget Sound, it is in Arizona that ads for his engagements show up—in Mineral Park, Mesa, and Kingman. Fay died at his sister's home in San Francisco in 1899, and it was around that time that Martin no longer appeared performing in Arizona.[245] The 1900 census shows him living in a San Francisco boarding house and working as a theater manager.

In 1902, however, despite his age (he was now 72), he set off once again, as "Prof. Martin, Wizard and Ventriloquist" to follow gold prospectors, this time into the Yukon. He spent most of that year amidst them, performing, for example, in Skagway at the Elks Hall, in Whitehorse, in the Yukon at the Athletic Club Hall, and late in the year in Nome and Valdez. All along the way, his legerdemain and his marionettes delighted audiences.

In the summer of 1905, "Martin's marionettes," described by the Chicago *Inter Ocean* to be "an interesting lot of automatons," without a mention of the operator himself, was a vacation attraction at the Chutes, in Chicago's Riverview Park.[246] By 1910, Martin was living back in Cambridge, Illinois with the Talbots, his niece Sarah's family, but he moved in November of that year to the Illinois Masonic Home in Sullivan.[247] He died there on May 29, 1913, and was given a Masonic funeral. His body was sent back to Cambridge, where a funeral was held for him there in the Methodist church and his remains were laid to rest in the Talbot Cemetery.[248]

His grave has no marker among all the others. But a visitor in 1879 to the place that was Como, Nevada wrote about what had happened to the town after it went bust:

> The houses were stolen piece by piece, and taken to Mason Valley. A fire or two occurred, and the work of destruction never ceased until not a wooden house

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[245] Some future researcher might uncover how it came to be that Harley Fay's sister Emaline, born in Michigan as he was, married William Wilkinson, who lived in Cambridge, Illinois, where Martin and his kin lived.
[246] "At the Chutes …" *Inter Ocean*, 16 July 1905.
[247] He had been a member of Cambridge Lodge # 49 since 1875.
[248] "Funeral of Daniel Martin," *Decatur Daily Review*, 30 May 1913; "The remains of Daniel Martin …" *Rock Island Argus*, 21 June 1913.

> remained. Last summer, when interested parties visited the place, the walls of two solid stone cabins alone remained. One of these was occupied by "Old Martin, the Wizzard," a ventriloquist and juggler.[249]

Those stone walls are still there, sitting alone near the top of the windswept grassy ledge that used to be Como. It's all that's left. If need be, let them serve as Daniel Martin's memorial marker.

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[249] "Como and Palmyra," *Reno Gazette Journal*, 17 October 1879.