

# TRICKS OF GHOSTS

By Edward H. Smith

IT WAS a night of marvel in academic Ithaca. The famous Davenport, the mystifiers of millions, the most sensational fellows on two continents, the conjurers of the silent dead, were in the great theater. All over Europe and half Europe had gasped at their spiritistic wonders—shuddered, quaked, shivered with ghostly malaise. Scientific men were scoffing and defending by other men of magy confessed themselves baffled. Was it true that the Brothers Davenport were able to summon the spirits to their aid and cause those phenomena that no one seemed able to explain? Some dozens of Cornell students attended the demonstration to see what might be seen.

The entertainment began. The elder brother appeared before the curtain and proceeded to entertain an audience of several hundred with the usual mystagogic palaver. The curtain went up. In the center of the stage stood a stout wooden cabinet with hinged doors. Inside was a collection of musical instruments, bells and rattles. A strong chair was at either end of the cabinet, and into these, it was announced, the two brothers would be tied and fettered. The audience was invited to examine all the paraphernalia. A committee saw to it that the knots were honestly fastened, the shackles and manacles properly applied, the musical instruments safely out of reach of the bound men.

Lights out! The entertainment whose mysteries thousands of interested minds had vainly tried to explain was begun. A chill breath of air swept over the audience as from an icy tomb. There was a low edrlich keening—the wail of a loup-garou. Suddenly from the blackness of the stage came the strum of the guitar, the rattle of the banjo. A shrill, unearthly trumpet blast jabbed through the night. Spectral airs, legs, faces, floated about the proscenium. Plaintive old tunes swam out over the audience.

There was a rustle as the students left their seats in the front of the house and crowded down to the rail of the musicians' pit. At a given signal they suddenly turned upon the stage the glare of four or five flashlight beams. The miracle was broken—the puzzle solved. In the light of the students' lanterns the Davenport brothers were plainly seen running back and forth across the stage, tooting trumpets, playing mandolins and banjos, waving aloft on slender poles their phosphorus-coated dummy arms, legs and spook pictures. There was a rustle for the stage by the audience and a dive for the exits by the spirit fakers. A good part of the world enjoyed a season of deep mirth over this affair, and the celebrated Davenports sank into soft retirement.

## The Blacklegs of Spiritism

THEIR obscure incident ought now to be rated as an event. When the Davenports were tricked by the students at their first performance, we reasoned. They were not the originators of modern spiritism, to be sure. The credit for that belongs to Kate and Margaret Fox, two country girls from up-state New York. The story is familiar enough. Kate Fox, then only nine years old, heard peculiar rappings in her father's home at Hydeville, Wayne County, in 1848. Kate shortly said she felt these knockings were purposeful, and announced something later that she was able to translate the code. The rappings were affirmed, and by the spirit of a peddler who had been murdered in the vicinity the year before and was trying to escape his slayer. Later on the two Fox sisters went to Rochester and there held forth for many years as mediums. Much of their work, as described by their contemporaries, bears the stamp of artifice.

Nevertheless the Davenports, who entered the field in 1853, only five years after Kate Fox's earliest announcement, were the first spiritists who belonged to a definite caste among the practitioners of the revived psychism. Mr. Harry Houdin explains in his book, *Unmasking of Robert Houdin*, that the Davenports were simply early handuff kings. On this simple conjuring trick they grafted the already sensational idea of spirit survival. With this composite marvel they set out and awed millions of credulous persons. However, that these men were fakers, charlatans—nothing more.



He Had Better Go Before the Ghost Was Angered to Greater Violence

From them there has descended a great family of men and women who have carried their arts to the utmost corners of the earth. The Davenports, mere charlatans, were the unconscious progenitors of the crooks of ghostland.

To-day every sizable city in all the Christian world has its criminal and quasi-criminal practitioners in spiritism. I do not, to be sure, mean to indicate that all mediums and psychiatrists, or even the majority, belong to these classes. I do assert that the proportion of fraudulent mediums is very large. I expect to show that many of these persons are felons. It will be demonstrated that there is and has long been an organized traffic in séances and spirit phenomena, a psychiatrist trust, a central bureau through which is cleared fraudulent information about unfortunate believers in psychism. Perhaps it will be apparent how many intelligent and even scientific persons have been deceived.

For fear of quibble it may be as well to point out that the Davenports put themselves forward as practitioners of spiritualism, to use the old and incorrect term. Their shows were called séances. They laid claim to supernatural control over supernatural entities and death-surviving ego. This is the position of all the worse fellows who have followed them down the years and the flagrant ways.

Our attitude toward the ghost has undergone a startling mutation. When I was a boy the very thought of a grave transgression charged every shadow with terror, filled every wandering moonbeam with goose flesh. In those days the bravest whistled when they passed a grave lot after nightfall to keep up courage and ward off spooks. To-day many good people seek out the darkness and, figuratively at least, whistle to call up the very shades that made terrible the lone nights of our youth. It was not far down the succession of our greatfathers that any hapless hag accused of intimacy with spirits was hanged or roasted in the market place and in the high name of righteousness. To-day whoever is suspected of acquaintance with the dead is hailed a seer and reared a priest of the new psychism.

The leaders of this cult are there more than four million believers in this country. This is of course not a census figure. It is not claimed that all these persons belong to any organization or are communicants of any ghostly church. The idea seems to be that this large body of adult Americans—one out of every seven or eight grown-up in the country—has been touched with the rod of supernatural faith and inclines to believe that the dead are alive, or that the puzzles of life may be unfurled from the tomb. Many Laodiceans are among these folk, no doubt, but also many passionate devotees. Moreover it is said this total does not include the many Southern negroes and immigrants, among whom the tenets of primitive magic are still strongly held.

And the Great War, with its vast effusion of blood and tears, has caused such an upsurge of spiritism as no one can have foreseen. How many thousands or millions have turned to the idea of spirit survival for solace in time of bereavement—who shall say? One thing is certain: If any large proportion of the good people who have turned their credence in this direction is being victimized by so-called mediums and criminals it is important to know this fact and to understand the why and how.

It is to the ghostland crooks that I dedicate present attention. Beyond the ranks of the fraudulent and grossly fraudulent priests of psychism I shall not venture.

The men and women who make up the host of spiritist fakers are recruited in most instances from well authenticated sources. For many years before spiritism was spawed or reawakened in the mind of Kate Fox this country and many other sections of the world were infested with traveling horse doctors, hypnotists, side-show grafters, gypsies, fortune tellers, prestidigitators, clairvoyants, healers, advertising sharpers, bunco men, spook men, itinerant peddlers and tinkers, conjurers and practitioners in legerdemain and natural magic. To the last of these, my amende. The better men of the conjuring and magic line have always emphasized the fact that their marvels were tricks pure and simple. One went to them to be mystified and entertained, not to be duped and filled with superstition.

But from the balance of this picaresque crew came the early and later fakers in ghostly miracles. They received the first teaching of spiritism with gready eagerness. Its possibilities were apparent. To practice to the profit of their own marvels to spirits instead of to other long-familiar agencies. The hypnotist or clairvoyant needed only to change the sign on his door and the words on his tongue. The illusionist and suggestor needed only to change his literature. Presto! The world was full of the shamans of psychism. Was it any wonder that spiritism, whatever its merits, fell at once into the hands of this venal crew? It is hard to believe that it has largely remained there?

## Old Superstitions That Still Live

ACCORDING to the anthropological view, the birth of religion was long preceded by the existence of savage belief in what is called sympathetic magic—a credo dominated by fear of uneasy spirits and invisible haunts. From this supernaturalism of our remote ancestors have come down all the common superstitions of mankind. The strange and often pitiful credences of antiquity have never died out in the brains and sympathies of a large number of people. Religion has superseded but never altogether extirpated magic. Thus there has always been present in the background of the popular mind—in the unconscious, if you like—a tenacious belief in the power of the occult. In many parts of the world the curious taboos, prejudices and superstitions of prehistoric times are still completely vital. The very core of these strange fables is the older spiritism. On this the rogue or the faker has played for his profit in all times and lands. Hence no wonder was more welcome to him than a rebirth of the belief in haunts and ghosts. A thing that was half dead was evoked into vigorous life—for the faker's personal profit, he concluded. He appointed himself a priest of the new spiritism at this juncture.

He went out into all the ways of the world with the tenets and the terminology of the new spiritism in his brain and his old tricks in his bag. How ready and resourceful the ghostland crook has been and is may be judged from a recent incident.

Interferences were being felt on the wireless, and Marconi said—with his tongue probably in his cheek—that the mysterious interruptions might be due to signaling from some near-by planet. He said it lightly, speculatively, as a man of science. The newspapers made much of it; the psychic fakers more so.

Within ten days of the flaunting of this bit of scientific fancy I met an old-time spirit roger, and he was bursting with wonders. I had and were forming a new religion. "Had I seen what Marconi was doing, the wireless would be right—and wrong. Those signals were from

Mars, all right, but they were caused by the spirits of departed earthlings. I laughed. He grew serious and took me to his den to explain.

It went like this: The spirits of our dead are transported to the various planets after earthly dissolution, suffering a sort of esoteric transmigration. Those who were upright in this life go to Mars or Venus, where general conditions are more or less like those on earth. There these restless souls are penned in the bodies of higher anthropomorphic creatures, intelligent as we, or more so. Wicked human spirits are sent on to Jupiter and Saturn and are mere reptiles in the flesh, while the more evil still are condemned to Uranus and Neptune, where they inhabit the plasm of mere molasses and jellyfish. And the deadly dupe is sent to Mercury, where it is hellish hot. Yes sir, that's the way it is!

The spirits of our dead fathers domiciled on Mars or Venus undoubtedly were signaling their mundane children vast secrets and wisdom unguessed. More than that, my friend and his partners were getting ready to translate the messages to their dupes at twenty-five dollars a sitting. "We'll set up a fake wireless and go after the money!" he exclaimed. "Won't that knock 'em dead?"

### The Bluebook of the Mediums

I SUPPOSE it will. The story is worth attention as illustrating the invariable practice of the fakery to seize upon every scrap of imaginative science or speculation and to twist it for use in exploiting the superstitious, the bereaved and the gullible. The history of the crooks of ghoulish is a record of such scabby adaptations.

The attitude of these scoundrels is always just what this man's was. They take the whole matter mirthfully. They feel the coldest contempt for their dupes. Nothing is too conscienceless for the poor worms who will swallow such bait. One of the suggestionists who played the American stage circuits was once asked by a friend of mine what was the most difficult part of his profession.

"To keep from laughing at the damn boobies," was his instant answer.

Most people who are touched with faith in the psychic have been brought to this attitude by some pretended demonstration of spiritist powers or truth. Even at this late day nothing is so effective as a miracle. If, then, I desire to demonstrate the fraud of such spiritism as is in the hands of the crooks of ghoulish the miracles must be enacted for the recovery made plain. So be it!

The basis of spiritist, hypnotic, mind reading and clairvoyant frauds is advance knowledge. It is by starting

the dupe out of his common sense through the blinding revelation of something he considers known only to himself that nearly all the victims of these swindles are originally befuddled. Once this is done the rest is easy. Thousands and perhaps millions of persons have been led into the lairs of these scoundrels and robbed of their normal wit that is what is passed off as supernatural knowledge of the distant history, ambitions, beliefs, hopes, fears. This is the beginning. These armies of poor human beings, originally mystified by this simple trick, are then led on into the farther recesses of black magic and superstition. They are robbed of their fortunes, parted from their spouses, separated from their children and driven to madness and suicide.

At the beginning—at the

crisis—the trick is performed by means of preknowledge of the dupe. This opening miracle is all-important. If the sucker can be deluded by it he is generally lost. If he cannot be cheated he is saved.

Hard-headed men have always surmised that these opening tricks of the mystics have been possible only by means of solid knowing in advance. But so cleverly is the whole business managed that the majority of people who can be induced into the mystic haunts are utterly confounded. Psychic investigators have often exposed this form of trickery. Indeed, public knowledge of this fraud mechanism is an old matter. However, I think the history of this artifice has not been written; the great organized traffic in the records of spiritist dupes has not been exposed.

All spiritist rogues work with advance information. The fakery who preceded them and blazed the way for them also used this method. These fakery invariably kept what was called a bluebook, into which were written the name, description, peculiarities, history and financial rating of every dupe who passed through their hands. The traveling medicine shows, horse doctors, itinerant leeches and their crew began this record, so far as America is concerned. In Europe the gypsies are said to have held the art for centuries.

In this country the keeping of the sucker lists of mysticism and trickery soon developed the addition of the exchange. This was at first only an informal arrangement between friendly rogues. Doctor Shrewd went annually through a certain territory and knew the people of this region who were natural suckers. He kept a fine, clear record of all he met. He had a friend in a neighboring city—a woman clairvoyant, let us say. One fine day the clairvoyant received a call from Farmer Brown, who was located in Doctor Shrewd's territory. The clairvoyant stalled her victim with crude tricks or evasions and provoked his curiosity just enough to make sure he would return. As soon as he had gone she wrote posthaste to her friend the doctor and asked for the dope on the farmer. It came back by return mail, and when Farmer Brown came again he was fairly bowled over with wonderment. Thereafter he was bled for all his credulity and superstition were worth.

This method was crude and uncertain. It did not cover the field effectively. Many of the ghoulish crooks felt the need of something comprehensive in the way of a bluebook. Perhaps a great centralized exchange could be worked up. But the project languished for many years.

A little further along in the development of this matter came the mind-reading shows, the theatrical expositions of alleged second-sight and mediumistic powers. Twenty

years ago such exhibitions were sensational events all across the country, and fortunes were made by the practitioners. These companies carried a corps of investigators who went over the route weeks in advance of the show itself and looked up local people and local history. These details were forwarded to the company and thoroughly digested by the performing mystic before he or she took the stage. With this gathered information and various tricks practiced by means of mechanical and other devices whole audiences were thrown into spasms of mystification, dread and misbelief.

Naturally through their travels these theatrical performers came to have extensive records of people prone to mystic games. These came eventually to be the basis of the list, the Dun and Bradstreet of the company and thoroughly compiled of this wondrous roster of dupes and their frailties began in New York less than twenty years ago. At that moment there appeared in a prominent building a man who had come slowly east out of the Middle West, where he was born and where fate and inclination had started him out as a peregrine horse doctor and general fakery. Tiring of this small-fray pursuit, he determined to launch himself on the credulity of the rich and fashionable. Part of his scheme was the formulation of the long-expected central bureau of exchange for information necessary to the clairvoyant, hypnotic, mind reading and spiritist games.

Doctor Jones—which was not his name—made overtures to six of the foremost traveling fakery that abounded. Each of these magical fellows turned in his complete bluebook with full data. In return each member of the clique was to have access to the assembled information. It was agreed that information from this list should also be sold to accredited fakery outside the syndicate. Out of the money so received were to be paid the expenses of the central bureau. Any excess was to be divided equally among the six, and Doctor Jones. The members were also bound to send in the data on any new victims who fell into their snares.

### The Great Eastern List

MEANTIME Doctor Jones was to bestir himself about augmenting his data in every possible way. He constantly employed several clerks, who did nothing but revise, correct and amplify the information. Reports on fresh victims of fake games came in from all sections and were promptly put into form and filed for future reference. Thus there grew up the Great Eastern List. In the psychic world there is no other name for this body of data. This list covered the entire United States east of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. By some unwritten agreement the western half of the country was left to a similar organization working in San Francisco, and the Western spiritist Dun and Bradstreet is and always has been worked from the Golden Gate.

Perhaps it should be explained that in the lingo of the ghoulish crooks any roster of victims kept by an individual fakery is called a bluebook. Smaller congregations of such data are referred to as exchanges. Only the two great filings, one for the East and one for the West, are called lists.

Early in 1902, or late in 1901, when our Doctor Jones opened his books, the six members of the syndicate could supply only twenty-eight

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The Woman Grew Impatient and Placed Her Own Interpretation on the Words of the Medium

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 here and there a few abroad and which the Russians will accept. The Russians have fax, probably a large quantity. The German industry has been ruined for a low level for some time. But all this depends on whether Europe is really getting a commercial peace existing in the near future and whether the Entente permits to Germany freedom of trade.

It is clear that they will permit; I fancy further that France is moving toward some kind of trade arrangement of advantage to herself, by her own terms, and the gasp of the exchange, the ore for her furnaces and steel mills. M. Clémenceau was strong on politics and not especially strong on economic. In 1918, the Minister of Finance, he had a queer figure, Klotz seemed to go on the theory that you can kill your cow and milk her too. Millard, succeeding Clémenceau, is no more loving with Germany than was the old Tiger, but he does view economic facts broadly, and his fifteen months spent in shaping up Alsace-Lorraine for French rule have added to his education. By small signs rather than great I feel a sense that France and England have realized that the cow is pretty sick and needs to be fed up with you are to expect much milk from her.

In 1848 France overthrew Louis Philippe and elected the Second Republic, but at the time in a devil of a fix, industrially and economically—just as Germany is now. The liberal forces were divided between

plain Republicans and communists—as in Germany. A rather weird proviso of loyalty to a king, the love for the display of his honors, was warring in their bosoms with the deliciousness of a man's being his own master. I think that Napoleon, with the conflict going on in the minds of individual Germans. The hickories and divisions of the French royalists gave this weird spirit time to sprout and to grow. After five years France dared call herself a republic and asked of plots and intrigues not quite finished yet, the republic never stepped back. Something like this may be happening in Germany. Time works with the republic. But it is all guessing, even when the best-informed German makes the guess.

However, the German republic of 1918 had one strength lacking to the French republics of 1848 and 1871—the world wave of republicanism over her borders. Crowns have been falling in showers during the last ten years. When, a few years ago, Portugal finished with kings, everyone expected a prompt relapse; she went through the war a republic, and shows no signs of recanting. It seemed too much to believe that China would make her republic; but it is still here.

All but one of the new states created by the war were republics, with the exception of Hungary and a few others. But signs of a relapse. Nowadays those states are being swayed by the most guarded borders; and perhaps finally the strongest ally of a German republic will be the spirit of these times.

## CROOKS OF GHOSTLAND

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thousand names. On this had to be based the vast expansion to come. About five years afterward one of the assistants of the Jones trust, the one to Chicago and there shortly opened offices to continue the business. At that time there were one hundred and ten thousand names on the mysticism dupes on his rolls. A very remarkable growth for that five years.

It is thought that the business grew anew. Conditions there in 1906, when Doctor Jones' assistant arrived with the ghostland names, showed that they had moved to New York. Chicago's purveying of mysticism was in fact in the hands of a combination which was able to force all intruding competitors to pay tribute or close up. With the New York list early encountered this puissant factors' trust and had to submit in terms of money, probably the amount of a percentage of his profits and access at a low price to his information. In return he was allowed to operate unmolested, to sell his information to all outside fakery and to conduct campaigns for adding to his store of knowledge. Moreover, he was hired to make all investigations for this magic trust. He not only made a very fat living but he continued to build the list until it reached the incredible proportions. I have a fairly definite idea of the present whereabouts of this remarkable library of forbidden information and the number of persons listed therein. Confidence, however, binds me to silence on this point. Let me, however, give you an example of the listing:

Jones, John—40 years in 1920; born Chicago, Home 1721 Blue Street, Turnville, Ohio. Five ft. 10. Thin. Dark. Mustache. Nasal drawl. Big ear left cheek. Babe. Falls for hyp and spirits. Butcher shop. Good. Bank \$2000; no less. No church. Married. Boy, 7—William. Girl, 6—Blady. Wife interested in astrology. Attends lectures. No dead children. His mother dead; father living. Trouble with mother-in-law.

### Information from Headquarters

This is a fairly representative selection from the list. Its less apparent portions mean that the man is a rustic, is victimized by a hypnotist and is a victim of a suspect for fleeing, never has less than \$2000 in the bank and can be made to pay. This level of things is not important for victims without money are as useless in spirit faking as solesless shoes.

It may be that a spirit medium in Kansas City is visited by a stranger who wants to communicate with the dead. He is first stalled, as the expression goes. He is made to come again, having first given his name

and address and made an appointment. Before the date of his return the medium tries to get the list office and asks for information on him. The name and address, name and record are at hand if he has ever been duped before. The information just given shows is hurried out to the medium in Kansas City. If there is any fear of detection it is sent in prearranged code. When the dupes show up for an appointment the medium knows all about him and immediately establishes his belief in the powers of the fakery. The poor dupes are made to feel bewildered and convinced. He is now ready for plucking.

Generally the medium now wants further detailed information on certain points. She—for they are usually women—again communicates with the keeper of the list. The names and addresses are sent to them on. If not he gets the information by one of the many devices which will be explained hereafter. With this foreknowledge of her man, the medium can do as she likes with her pawn. She says from five to ten dollars for the original list data. For further particulars she pays the cost of investigation, plus a good round profit. If her victim is moneyed she can afford almost any rate. The names and addresses of a lot of dollars have been spent to get the dope on spiritist dupes who later paid for these subjects for thousands.

The strange part of all this is that the victims never seem to suspect the truth. They are in the room when the medium has been duped by one medium after another over a period of fifteen years. In each case the information used has been got from the list. Each new séance has brought out new details, most of them disclosed by the victim himself, so that his record is now a document. But if never suspected, as I am told he has had seventy distinct mediumistic adventures. Each has cost him about a hundred dollars. He has had no more at all, any one time and is rated as a sure-fire, small fry boob.

It will be clear what the list is and how it operates. Its chief function, remember, is exactly that of the commercializing hope, for the first thing the rogue wants to know is whether the sucker can pay, and how much. All other information is secondary. It is not wanted at all if the dupes is not a sucker.

To-day, I am told, there are minor lists sprouting in Connecticut, where a good deal of the work is being done, and in a certain New Jersey town, where several retired spiritists are building up a business to make their declining days more comfortable.

The gathering of lists and the procurement of the listed names and data are the next things to be considered. The methods

used are almost endless in variety. It is not necessary to speak of persons who already have advertised into the mystic realm. They are taken in the hands of fakery who operate with the list facts regarding them have been duly sent into the office and are on the list for the next one into whose hands they may stray.

But the objection always raised by those who are not so glibly matters the question about those who have never before been in the hands of the mystics. How can the spirit medium be in possession of facts concerning an entirely fresh subject, a person who has never dabbled before, one unknown to the fakery?

The case may be explained—of that be certain. These answers will sometimes be painfully obvious; less frequently somewhat obscure. The facts as to list gathering will answer most.

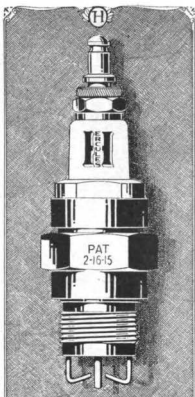
### Plot and Counterplot

After the great New York list was removed to Chicago and its owner was operating in conjunction with the mystics trust there it was the habit to get current information on new subjects in a manner illustrated by the following case.

One afternoon in July, 1909, a wealthy Chicago woman was taken to one of the séances by the spiritist. She was a friend. Neither woman had ever visited such a place before. Both were merely out to see the show and to get their own opinions of a mutual friend, who was not medium and to their plan. They were admitted to the séance room of the spiritual medium and made to wait. Four other persons were in the room, and a neat maid was in attendance.

An hour passed—two hours. Finally a man issued from the inner sanctum, put on his coat and departed. One of the waiting party was advised not to see them to-day. There were three others waiting for his services and he had already put in an exhausting day. If they would give their names and addresses, an appointment would be made for the earliest possible hour. The professor was unpeakably busy. They ought to understand. The woman gave her full name, made an appointment for a morning three or four days distant and went their way. They did not notice that they were shadowed as they drove off or that one of the intelligence squad of the list was following their day's wanderings to the doors of their homes.

This man, a private detective, easily found the real names of the women, made sufficient inquiries about the neighborhood



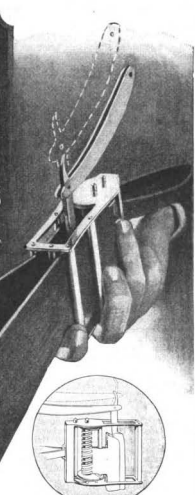
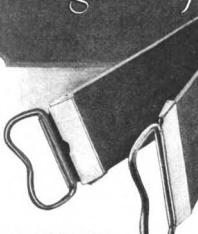
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to be certain of his identification and augmented his knowledge of the pair by perfectly obvious methods. When the women appeared before Professor Dart on the appointed morning they were dumfounded to find that his evoked spirits told their correct names, guided the professor's hand as he wrote out their addresses, and revealed sundry rather intimate details of their lives and personal circumstances.

The names of these women, their descriptions and all the gathered data at once went in to the list. This is of course one of the obvious plans of work. But those who make up the great list do not limit themselves to such crude methods. Neither do they wait for the victims to appear. To-day there are the spirit readers, the names of many thousands of persons who have never been near a medium's web. The central bureau anticipates, it gathers the names of persons who may be reasonably expected to call in the future.

Such names are put in various ways. One may buy the subscription lists of various psychic periodicals, publications of a sort that grow in number every month. These subscription lists may be bought *à la carte* or for any given territory. I do not of course make the charge that all such publications stoop to this practice. Many may be and doubtless are quite ethical.

The list has in its employ the sextons of many cemeteries. These men send in the names of relatives of persons buried in the grave lots under their charge. The mothers of dead babies and of grown young sons and daughters are considered especially valuable. The sexton always tells how big a funeral there was, how expensive a casket was bought and the price of the tombstone, if any. Here again we have the medium's thirft for financial information.

Some canvases or photographic enlargements firms, which deal mainly in the likenesses of what are called dead subjects, also turn in to the list the names of all recently bereaved persons, especially those who buy expensive enlargements and frames.

Many spiritist mediums fit up fine residences and play a sort of social game on the fringe of better society. All who attend receptions, teas and musicales at such places are listed, for they have been bombarded with spiritist anecdotes and marvels at these functions.

### Cleaners of Information

The newspapers are scrupulously watched for obituary notices, and especially for memorial services. Persons who hold such commemorative services are known to be dying of their dead, and the spirit faker knows that the human being with his mind so directed is the ideal prospect.

Some years ago when I was in Boston I remarked to an acquaintance once deep in the mire of the spiritist underworld that the town was uncommonly full of desk-room brokers. How did they all make a living? The man told me and demonstrated that many of the shoddy brokers were doing the spirit-information game with the aid of their wives. Each broker and his spouse were experienced in the art of making one's circle whose minds were skillfully orientated toward spiritual marvels. The members were in the charge of the customers, and the necessary preknowledge of these poor dupes and their affairs having, of course, been obtained in the name of his wife.

To-day in some large book stores where writings on spiritism are sold there are girls in the pay of the list makers. They are selected in the charge of the counters displaying such wares, and they are instructed to get the names and addresses of all persons who buy spirit books, especially those of men and women who habitually indulge in this form of reading. In addition they are asked to get the names of persons who, to wax enthusiastic on it, they are provided with a stock of brief, marvelous and convincing anecdotes, which they dole out. Many persons interested in the subject stop to chat with these girls, and they usually betray information about themselves by their remarks in the process. But the mere name and address is all that is required.

All such names have a definite market value, depending on various considerations. Prices ranging from one to five dollars are paid by the list for every new name. If definite information comes with the name the sender receives even more.

It is of course not hard to guess what uses these names fill. Every person whose

name goes in through these various channels and many others is in danger of being roped by the mediums. He is listed as a prospect and may reasonably expect to be hauled to a seance at some future date.

How is this accomplished? Again the answers are many and various. For instance:

In one city during recent months whoever has gone near the shelves in the reference room of a public library where the books on spiritism are or were displayed may or might have noticed a woman who was either hovering over the books or reading close by and who seemed to be the person who took down a book from this charged case. As soon as such a victim appeared a certain dame would step in and began to gush spiritism. Was it not wonderful? To think of it! She had lost her only daughter just six months before. She was in despair. She did not want to live until a friend suggested spiritism to her. Wonder of wonders! She had gone to a seance and her lost daughter had been summoned. She had heard this daughter's voice, received messages of comfort from her, and she had seen her in the spirit world. Life and death had now no terrors. How wondrous a dispensation was spiritism! The person who approached her responded, and three of four did, for this woman was a shrewd judge of character and an experienced hand in this trade. She had trusted into confidences of his own. She wound up by promising him solace similar to her own. Here after some pretended search she produced a card with a medium's name and telephone number. If the dupe were interested he might call up. He could see the medium by appointment only.

### How the Steersers Work

If the sucker bit and telephoned his name and telephone number were got, and his address if possible. Then an appointment was made for a week ahead. Meantime the investigators of the list were sent out, the prospect thoroughly looked up and the facts of his life and previous work reported to the medium, to supplement all information already turned in by the lady. What happened next was the most interesting word from the veld may be left to sane imagination.

The most orderly lady is one of the principal figures in the spiritist fraud as it is perpetrated to-day. She may always approach the subject of her relatives with a book for her first qualification. Again an overwhelming majority of all the victims of psychism are women. I record it with a certain glee, for the women are persons who are listened to with respect by women. Finally the ideal dupe of the spirit medium is the bereaved widow with a little estate.

So these motherly old women are sent out to look up persons whose names have come in to the list as prospects. Recently in a city not far distant from Chicago was listed the name of a wealthy widow who just buried her debilitate daughter. The woman was doing very prosperous under middle class. She was educated—even cultured. She had had no children, and her only son, who had been dead even only a few years, had shied her from any concern with practical details of the estate.

The chief of spiritist information decided that here was a prospect worth a real effort. One of the steersers was sent out with a book on spiritism by one of the standard authors in that field cluttered in her hand. After some days, utilizing the book, she was out about the prospective dupe, the waiting steerswoman encountered her prey by apparent accident, and she was introduced into the shop of shopping. She remarked the widow's weeds with deep sympathy. "I have just buried my only daughter."

"I can sympathize with you," said the steerser, wiping at a pretended tear. "I lost my daughter."

The two women fell to consoling each other. "You're just where I was till two months ago," said the motherly stranger at last. "I want to lend you this book. It has given me more relief than anything new I bought."

"I don't take much stock in such things," objected the widow, taking in the title of the book.

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"That's because you don't know. Please read it. I know what it will do for you. But be sure to preserve it for me. I want it back. I'll call for it, if you will let me."

The widow unsuspectingly gave her name and address, and went home with the book. She had given this strange plotter entrée to her home. That was what was wanted.

In a week the steerer appeared at the residence of her new acquaintance. The widow had read the book—was dubious, but wavered. Here the stranger got in her licks. She magnified and multiplied marvels. She played the tremolo stop of the widow's grief. She soothed and led and prompted. And she went away leaving another spirit book.

Repeated visits and successive introductions of ever more vivid literature followed. The spiritist agent became a familiar caller at the house of the widow. She penetrated into all the secrets of the other woman's heart. She wormed her way into familiarity with family history. All this information she filed with the list. It was apparent that the widow would shortly be in the fold. How much money could be got out of her? The motherly old woman was aided in investigating this point by a detective assigned for that purpose, an expert at the game. When this vital information was in hand the old woman began on her victim in earnest, filling the widow's mind so full that she was no longer mistress of her wits. She was now ready for the oblation.

After the medium had got nearly ten thousand dollars from this woman the foresight of her husband saved her. The spiritists found to their chagrin that her fortune was not in her own hands and that they could hope to get only what she had saved out of the income. She is still in their power; but they cannot quite pluck her.

Just the proper anecdote to sway the minds of the credulous is a thing constantly being sought and invented among mystic crooks. The latest device is worth setting down. It is used on women of the less-educated classes who have just suffered bereavement and been through the tortures of a civilized funeral. The same type of elderly woman is used for the approach. When she has got the ear of the intended victim she tells this story:

#### Getting Information

"A friend of mine lost her mother about a year ago while she herself was sick and couldn't attend the funeral. She called in her best woman friend and trusted her with eight hundred dollars for the expenses, and this friend attended to everything. She even went west with the body and saw to the burial. When she came back she told this friend of mine that the eight hundred dollars had been just enough. My friend trusted the woman, and didn't question. But that very night her dead mother's spirit visited her and told her that her friend had lied to her. The spirit said the friend had held out two hundred and twelve dollars and twenty cents. When my friend went to the other woman and faced her she broke down and handed over the money. Wasn't that wonderful? Think of her mother's spirit coming back that very night!"

The effect of such a yarn on the overwrought nerves of one recently bereaved may be imagined. The spiritist who told me the yarn pretended that she had invented it, and was gloating over its huge effectiveness.

Some curiosity or lack of information may exist as to the method of getting data on spiritist prospects. In an ordinary case where general information only is required an operative on the intelligence staff of the list or of the individual medium is sent into the neighborhood of the expected dupe. The detective assumes the rôle of credit investigator. Going to the nearest grocer, he says:

"I represent Blank & Co., the big department store. Do you know Mrs. Frederick T. Jones, of 44 Dark Street, just round the corner? Yes? Well, Blank & Co. will appreciate a little confidential information. The Joneses have asked us for a charge account and we naturally want to know whether we will get our money."

The neighborhood merchant is almost bound by business ethics to give such information if he has it. The investigator finds out how much the Joneses spend for groceries and meats; how many servants they have; what rent they are paying.

From this he can gauge their circumstances fairly accurately. Do they pay by check? Are their checks always good, or does their account run low and lapse into overdrafts?

All this the merchant answers if he can. Then the investigator begins on more intimate details. He goes to the neighbors, where he plays on the impulse to gossip. If possible he finds some enemy or ill-disposed person. Here he gets a gossip's record of the family's movements, trials and troubles. In a few hours he can in this way pick up enough supposedly private information to dumfound any half-credulous person.

If even more detailed information is required an old favorite device is dug from the archives of the past. A relative of the prospective dupe is found and the detective is sent to this person with a story about a legacy left to a Jones family. The detective poses as a lawyer's investigator. He says that a fortune of forty or fifty thousand dollars has been left in chancery in England to the Joneses of the locality in question. In order to determine whether these particular Joneses are entitled to any share in the estate he must have a clear and complete record of the family, with names of its various members, a chart of relationships and most detailed history of the clan. Naturally all the penetralia of family history are invaded and the medium is placed in possession of information whose sudden revelation by a stranger is calculated to upset the judgment of all but the sophisticated.

In other cases the venerable woman is again employed to wheedle the last sops of hidden fact out of neighbors, friends and foes. This failing, she cultivates the intended victim herself, as in the case previously related.

#### A Language of the Craft

These old women are called feeders, or talkers-up. They talk up the merits of spiritism to their victims. They feed the poor dupe on miracles and breath-taking experiences until he has lost his sanity and is ready to be led to the séance. Which reminds me that the spirit underworld has an argot, or slang, of its own, from which I may as well give some samples:

Human progress is the term for spiritism and its aims; the raps is the slang for spirit tapping or knocking. Here are others: The hyp, hypnotism game; sitters, all suckers at a séance; shill, short for shillaber, the cappers used at séances to dupe the real spiritist followers; the nut, a person who first responds to the work of the medium and the shillabers in the course of a séance; feeder, or talker-up, or Foxy Grandma, the old lady used for purposes just explained; pitch, the man who makes the announcements at a spiritist sitting, a leader and announcer; big stuff, the larger game, that involving big money; junk, the smaller fry; ringing the bell, victimizing all the members of any given spirit circle without exception; dumping ground, the fake stock companies into which dupes are led to put their money; make a connection, establish communication with a spirit; under control, having the sucker completely taken in and under absolute domination; controls, the spirits summoned; short stuff, a quick spirit sitting for small money; having instructions, being in possession of the data on a victim; king, the chief faker of a spiritist establishment if he is a man; queen, the chief female functionary in such a place, often also the leading medium.

Many of these terms are used among all spiritists, but the majority are limited to the peculiar language of the crooks of ghostland.

We have now passed through the preparatory stages of fraudulent spiritist séance work. All this great machinery, all this involved roguery is necessary to the successful conduct of the mediumistic display. Without it nothing can be attempted. Once this work on the outside has been done through the list and the information bureau and the Foxy Grandma, the séance is ready to begin. Let us enter.

What strikes every unpersuaded entrant into the spirit shrine is the ritualism that has been built up about the act or pretense of establishing parleys with the dead. Nearly every item of this can be traced to the crooks who spread spiritism about the world. The terminology is theirs, the formalities which hedge the approach to spirit land are theirs, the rules of conduct in the séance or the spirit circle belong to them.

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# FUSES

were the first line using an inexpensive bare link for restoring a blown fuse to its original efficiency to be Approved In All Capacities by the Underwriters' Laboratories. This honor was not won on laboratory tests alone but largely because for many years millions of Economy Fuses have been giving dependable protection, high efficiency and working marked economies.

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## We Won the Boys

With a New-Grade Peanut Butter

We won the men with Van Camp's Beans, and Van Camp's Soup women.

Then our experts started to win the boys with a new-grade peanut butter. And no boy who tastes it, we believe, will ever forget Van Camp's.

### They Did This

They found the nuts which made the richest butter, then the nuts with the finest flavor. And they made a blend. No one variety of peanut could ever have made such a butter.

By countless tests they found exactly where toasting ought to stop. And they stop it suddenly.

They found that skin removal clarified the butter. They found that the germ—the nut heart—added a bitter tinge. So the skins and germs are now removed completely.

### Note the Difference

They made several delicate butters. But there was one blend which every boy liked best. And that exact blend is now found in every jar of Van Camp's Peanut Butter.

You have tasted some of Van Camp's fine creations. Now try this. Let any child compare it with other peanut butters. Then buy the kind the child likes best. We'll take his verdict on it.

# VAN CAMP'S

## Peanut Butter

Other Van Camp's Products Include:  
Evaporated Milk, Condensed Milk and Cream,  
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Prepared at the Van Camp Kitchen at Indianapolis.



Van Camp's Beans and Beans  
Baked as home can't take  
any, yet every bean is nutritious,  
healthy and delicious.



Van Camp's Tomato Soup  
A famous French recipe which  
has delighted the palates of  
millions.



Van Camp's Souffles  
A world-famed recipe from  
France with added in-  
gredients.

The very need of darkness is a thing surely more important to a charlatan than an honest, disembodied and inviolable ego.

The Cagliostro of psychism realize the vacuity of most of their ritual and have long ago invented explanations or justifications. They explain that what they accomplish is done by spiritual magnetism. At this very term may be detected the descent from the old hypnotic faker and Mesmer's animal magnetism. This spiritual magnetism is a force—an idea constantly repeated and accentuated by the orator who opens a spiritistic sitting attended by a group or circle. When the searching for communication begins all members of the circle must hold hands so that the magnetic force may circulate freely. One suspects that a more real reason for this precaution is to keep hands from skeptical investigations. This magnetic force is both positive and negative, according to the spool of the king, or master of ceremonies. Any antagonistic personality, especially any disbelieving mentality, will so upset the balance between positive and negative magnetism that the spirit cannot be reached.

The precautions taken to exclude the skeptic are too many to enumerate. In every instance, however, it is made clear that the presence of one unbeliever will disrupt the entire rapport and keep the apparition away. So the believers themselves route out any intruding Philistine. But the professional medium doesn't depend on such hit-or-miss arrangements. She or he usually seats the members of a circle about a large table, hands on the table and eyes on the medium. Then she searches earnestly the faces of all the strangers, and few skeptics can assume successfully a rapid entrancement of the devotee. The medium discovers the intruder and out he goes.

One of the even more effective methods formerly used for skeptic exorcism by the expert practitioners was not applied until lights were used and the communication was supposed to have begun. The first message that came was to the effect that there was an attendant guest present and that the spirit could not attend unless he departed. If even this did not move the doubter, a séance was resumed. This time one of the women slipped up behind the unbeliever, or was placed beside him. In the deep blackness of the séance she suddenly and fiercely jabbed a hatpin into the leg or arm of the infidel and a howl of rage and pain brought up the lights. It was explained to the class that the medium had stabbed him. He had better go before the ghost was angered to greater violence. At this point the bravest took the hint and departed.

### Setting the Scene

But to return to the vaunted spiritistic magnetism. This force was often demonstrated to spirit circles by physical means. Many fakers still use the plan. The sitters are formed in a continuous circle, holding hands, with the medium in the center. When she begins her incantations or attempts at communication she simply places her foot on a plug contacting with a galvanic battery. Instantly the spiritual magnetism is felt to flow through the group. Who can doubt it? And shortly thereafter the messages from the great beyond are flashed through the medium's pencil.

It is by the theory of spiritistic magnetism, too, that the need of darkness is explained. Light, it is asserted, consists of a series of waves or vibrations. These disturb the infinitely delicate waves of spirit magnetism, so no self-respecting lemur can respond in daylight.

In similar ways all the rules and regulations are justified: why hands must be held, why no one may move during a séance, why no one may ever be late for a meeting, why investigations cannot be tolerated.

The conduct of a modern séance by the most accomplished of the spool-and-crook needs to be described and understood.

The feeders, or talkers-up, have been at work for some time and have gathered a circle of twelve or fourteen men and women who have been excited to a receptive frame of mind. All these have been through an individual sittings with the medium, at which ordinary tricks of clairvoyance have been used and perhaps some of the information displayed that had been gathered by the list.

On the given night this spirit group assembles at the prescribed hour.

subjects are introduced two or three shells, or shellabars—usually at least one male and one female shell are employed. How important a part of the mystic game is the shellbar will appear in the following description of the capper in the gambling house, and doubles in other arts.

This party of ten or eighteen persons assembled, the king or queen begins the services. Hymns are sung, spiritistic poems are recited, spiritual prayers offered. The whole thing goes on at a high pitch. The excitement is fostered and brought up to the explosion point. Then one of the shellbars begins to recite, and the audience experience with spirits. When he has done another shellbar begins. By this time the excited sitters are working into something approaching frenzy. They take over the meeting and continue it with their own recollections and sufferings.

No pause is allowed. There is no time to think, to collect the wits. Something is happening every moment. If the sitters weary the work is taken up by the shellbars. If they exhaust themselves the king and queen begin their exhortations anew. Finally when the whole meeting has been worked up to a point close to emotional exhaustion the medium appears—mystic, wonderful, and wonderful.

Incense burns in censers. Low, mysterious piano music begins in the corner of the great room. The lights waver. The consciousness of the heavy odor of the many flowers which almost always adorn the rooms of a professional spiritist. Why? To touch the memories of the sitters with the mind with funeral memories. All the subjects are suffering from bereavement depression.

### Paging Mrs. Brown

The lights go out completely. The medium begins her exhortations: The subjects must concentrate. They must bring the spirit. It is up to them. Be tense, be concentrated, be taken up by the shellbars, concentrate! All this only adds to the receptivity of the poor sitters.

At last the spirit is felt. The wraith approaches. The icy stream runs down the spines. The first word flashes from the mouth of the medium. The sitters wish to send a message to Mrs. Brown. Who is she? One of the shellbars, to be sure, is asked to take up the wraith. He flashed back and forth between Mrs. Brown and the medium or the alleged spirit. They are intricate, deep, emotional questions and answers, and the sitters are filled with wonder and terror into the hearts of the sitters. And Mrs. Brown? How she raves, sob, and weeps. The sitters are finally upon the last vestiges of caution and sense in the other sitters. At last the spirit departs. Another must be summoned.

The lights go on very dimly. This time the medium will write the answers of the spirit. Sometimes a second bit of hocus-pocus must be resorted to. The spirit arbitrarily announced. Usually, however, the sitters, especially the bereaved wife, are asked to take up the wraith. At first suggestion of a second concentration to establish communication some one of the sitters is asked to take up the wraith. Mind many a poor sufferer has seen the hallucinatory apparition, heard the lost voice, and been so overcome by the force of this deception to the grave, unable ever again to disbelieve.

There is no need to go into full detail. Some of the sitters, in the presence of their departed and are answered by them through the medium. Others have to be told that a spirit is present with word for their ears. Now, to be sure, the medium calls on the intensive information collected in advance by the list, the information bureau and the Foxey Grandmas. She has the life and sufferings of all her subjects in her memory and at the tip of her tongue. She distorts simply into any emotion and any suffering. She delivers oracular utterances, Delphic evasions. She utterly undermines the sitters' credence in their own half-remembered minds of her victims. The séance breaks up with emotionalism, tears, overblowing gratitude.

A dozen converts have been made. That is unimportant. A dozen people with money have been put into position for trimming. That is the point.

Overtrought emotion is at once the explanation of many spiritist wonders and the great reason why the sitters are in this form of fraud. Any deception may be practiced upon the human being whose

It wouldn't  
make the tube  
bigger or the  
Cream better  
if I took a  
page to tell  
about it



Don't  
rub it  
in-use  
plenty  
of water  
not on  
cold  
skin.

THE MEN  
SHAVING  
CREAM  
TRADE MARK  
THE MEN  
COMPANY  
NEWARK

Don't  
rub it  
in-use  
plenty  
of water  
not on  
cold  
skin.

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feelings have got out of hand, carrying with them his common sense. The spirit flares and strives for this effect. One of the favorite tricks is to play upon the nerves of a room by a reserved and controlled voice, to leave one faint. The moment this happens at a distance the medium and male shillabers drive the rest of the circle away from the swooned woman.

"Give her air!" is the cry.  
The unconscious sitter is left to the tender ministrations of a single motherly old soul, again one of the Foxy Grandmas, now acting as a shillaber. As the fainted woman begins to revive the spirit leaves over to the whispers, "There, I knew you'd see your daughter! She wasn't changed a bit, was she? I knew you'd see her!"  
Anyone with the most rudimentary knowledge of psychology knows what is the effect of impressions formed upon the brain in this half-conscious state. It is at such a time that suggestion has its greatest power.

"Yes, you!" mumbles the waking woman ecstatically. "I saw her! I saw her! So white! So beautiful!"  
Purely a funeral memory made vital.  
The shillaber knows that the bereaved mother has been thinking of the lost girl. She knows this thought has been an obsession with the sorrowing parent. At the first moment she sees her opportunity for this purpose. Forever after an otherwise sane woman nurtures in her brain this delusion. She has the seed of the ghost.

During the days of the Chicago psychic trust six or seven years ago, before one of the local dailies caused a clean-up, a young widow was brought to one of the mediums by the usual feeder—a nice old woman. The unfortunate victim had lost her husband six months before. Her name had been sent to the list by the sexton of a cemetery. She had erected a very costly memorial. She was the richest woman of considerable competence. The steerer was sent out, and he persuaded the widow to an interest in spiritualism on a considerable effort. This done, the data on the unhappy woman were perfected and she was led to Chicago, where a séance was given for her benefit, with six other persons present—all shills.

In the crescendo of excitement the victim faints. A woman sits by her side, and her husband that she had seen her husband, and the impression took root. From that moment the bereaved widow was under the domination of the medium and her lords. She returned every few days for communication with the shade of her departed spouse. Having often been made to believe she had seen this apparition, her own disturbed imagination evoked it again and again under the slightest excitement. At such times the medium delivered messages from the husband's wealth, both by written orders and by means of a concealed ventriloquist.

#### Fraud and Tragedy

After a time the dupe was sent to the dumping ground. That is, she was led to invest her whole fortune, perhaps sixty thousand dollars, in a fraudulent silver-mining company operated for this express purpose by the spirit flarer. These investments were repeatedly advised by the spirit. When the last drain of money from the victim's bank account was in hand the company ostensibly collapsed.

After months of struggle and starvation, after a long fight against the odds of city life for which she was not equipped, after descent into the dregs, the unhappy widow took a room in a cheap lodging house, wrote a pitiful letter to the medium, impeding communication for the spirit of the husband, and placidly blew out her life with a revolver. She had then gone to join him. The coroner's jury concluded that the woman was just an insane spirit worshiper. The crime remained concealed.

Except for ordinary mystification tricks such as were always used by clairvoyants the resorting to magic has hardly passed out of vogue. As a result the modern séance is more effective but nearly so colorful as its more antique relative. In the good old days the spirit flarer was used to float about the room, mysterious notes were dropped into laps and pockets, the queen, dressed in shimmering white and blazing with diamonds and sapphires, slipped into a blackened room and was seen as a faint ghostly outline with points of colored fire where her eyes required. The Moody stigmata were prevalent to the

point of downright sacrilege, were in high favor. It may be worth a few lines to explain the terms of the trade.

The arm of the medium is first soaked for a half, half an hour in a strong brine. The arm is then dried, some simple message or symbolical word is written on the skin with a dull-pointed stick. Perhaps a name will serve, or the brief answer to a question—two or three minutes later the traces of this writing disappear and the medium is ready for the test. The thing is plain and simple, and the question is asked. Here the medium pauses and says the spirit will write the answer in blood. At that moment the medium over the table, the medium is busy violently rubbing her arm with a bit of coarse toweling or the palm of her hand. The lights flash up. The answer is seen on her arm, blood-red, but not bloody. In an hour or two it disappears.

More complex tricks are, however, still in vogue. The very presence of these devices in spiritism shows not only the fraudulent nature of these mediums but indicates again the clear connection between the present-day ghostland crooks and the older clairvoyant swindlers and others. In fact spiritism is a mixture of the old and the new, all other forms of mysticism and magic in this country. Especially since the great post-war boom, the old and the new, all the older types of magic have deserted their native frauds and turned to the spiritism. The old and the new, all the clairvoyants have largely disappeared from the occult landscape. All have turned to the land of the shades.

#### Spooky Rough Stuff

This is the more remarkable where clairvoyants are concerned, for the expert mind reader and practitioner at second sight is not the least of the most interesting and levelist contempt. And there was some underworld justice in this attitude. A good clairvoyant understands the tricks of mental ball, of suggestion, and of unconcealed or subliminal impression. Many practiced clairvoyants are capable of remarkable feats of what may be vulgarly termed intuition. They come as near the supernatural or supernatural as human beings ever do. Their art, and it is a highly refined one, acquired through long and intense study. They are trained—the best of them—rigorously as the children of equilibrista. The clairvoyant may resort to the influence of environment for mystification. The rest of his or her art is accomplished by means of the keenest mental agility and insight. One of these people, looking upon the cheap frauds of the spiritist rogues and their resort to the lowest tricks and subterfuges of the medicine man, was naturally filled with a deep sense of superiority. But pride has been of no avail.

"Clairvoyance is dead," is one of its cleverest exponents told me a few weeks ago. "The people want that which looks new. Well, I'm giving it to 'em. Come round some day and have a good laugh."

Naturally, this person did not like to desert all their old tricks. Not long ago I saw the rather familiar note-reading trick done at a party. Many have seen it done, few know its secret.

A small glass bowl was placed in the center of a table about which were grouped eight or ten persons. The king of the dummies was the argot, suggested that each person write two or three questions, each on an exactly similar slip of paper. The questions were then signed, the paper wadded into tight balls and dropped into the bowl. No lights were given, and no questions were visible from beginning to end. No one went near the bowl. The medium did not enter the room at all. The questions were written and placed in the bowl. No one left the room either before or after she entered. No word was said to her or no sign given. Neither did any of the writing masters leave the room or pass into the writing medium's hands.

She sat on a stool directly to the chair left for her, searched the faces of the sitters a little, asked that the curtains be drawn and she began to answer a few questions. At moments of concentration she took a wad from the bowl, held it loosely between her finger and thumb so that all could watch it, pressed it into a small square of temple for a few minutes and then read off the question and answered it. The person who had written the question was required to say whether an inquiry of his or hers had been asked

and whether the answer seemed correct. In half an hour the medium ran through a list of questions, and the sitters gave a satisfactory if general answers to all. She made not one mistake. The ejaculations of wonderment were numerous.

How was it done? Very simply. First of all there was one shillaber in the crowd. Second, every sitter had been looked up in advance and pretended to drop them into the bowl. When the medium pulled out the first wad and pressed it against her temple she was prepared to drop this wad so that the shillaber might have written on one of his slips. As she repeated the imaginary question the shillaber jumped up excitedly and said, "Correct, correct!" Then the medium answered this unasked question to further exclamations of approval and wonderment.

The medium now unfolded the first wad, looked at it, nodded and tore it up. The sitters supposed it to have been the question just answered. In reality it was the second question. The medium now took a second wad from the glass and pressed it against her temple, and so on. The questions were written on the first wad and answering it from her forehead knowledge of the sitters. Thus a device is made to the matter of the wads she ran through the whole wadful with perfect ease.

Another device is the use of the blank spirit portrait. An old trick is now being used very extensively and causing the utmost excitement. In playing this trick the sitters are told that a device is made to appear slowly on a canvas before the eyes of the sitters or sitters. This is done by the use of a device in which a picture of two blank canvases which has just been examined by the sitters.

The picture is a white cheesecloth or put on small stretchers and passed among the sitters for examination, care being taken that the picture is not seen of them in any way. A similar third canvas has been prepared in advance with an air-brushed portrait of the dead subject, as the picture of a dead subject. The picture of this portrait has been got from the home of the interested sitters by a picture-taker who has been in the room and connected with the spiritists but really in their employ.

#### A Halo for Good Measure

In working the trick a small table is placed near a window and the room otherwise well darkened. The picture is hidden in the folds of the draperies and quickly substituted for one of the blank canvases. The remaining blank canvas is now placed in front toward the sitters and the finished picture just behind it, the two being held several inches apart. The light from the window falls through the thin cheesecloth of the blank canvas as well as through the picture behind it at right angles. The manipulating faker now slowly moves the picture closer to the blank canvas through the thin cheesecloth. As the picture approaches the edges of the two canvases are brought together. The lines of the portrait are dimly visible, but they do not appear to be closed. Then as the canvases are brought closer they are seen to be open. Finally the stretchers are back to back and the spiritist is ready to answer the questions through the thin canvas before it. The finished picture is now laid on the table, and the picture is now visible to the sitters exactly the work of the wraiths!

All the time this demonstration has been in progress the picture is being changed to the whole mystery, representing the spirits as being invisibly at work on the picture, sustaining the excitement.

But when the picture is at the beginning of the hoax. The bewildered sitter whose lost child or husband or mother has been seen on the picture, and the spiritist is told that the picture is not done. The spirit sends a message that more details are in preparation and that the picture is to be shown the picture home with him. The spirit will finish it there just as well as here. Wondering and trembling, no doubt, the poor dupe is told that the picture is to be shown for the wall, fairly quaking with superstition. In a few days or a week he glances at it. He is told that the picture is changing to

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appear about the head of the dead relative. In another week it is there in plain daylight.

No need for either alarm or wonderment. The halo was drawn or air-brushed into the picture and the picture was then given some cheap enlargement studio. Afterward the halo was faded out with chloride of iron. Parts of pictures expunged in this manner chemically show a vein in a few days or weeks, according to the strength of the light that falls on them. Had the halo been faded out with cyanide, it would have returned. But that was not the purpose.

A silver spirit portrait is nothing but a silver-print enlargement of the original photograph, touched up with an air brush, provided with a halo, which is treated as explained and caused to appear mysteriously.

A negro once brought to an enlargement house a photograph of herself seated with a pickaninny in her lap. She wanted the thing enlarged, but wished the child taken out of the picture. It had died some time before. She had prospects of remarriage and did not wish to be known as a widow. That was the explanation she gave. The silver-print enlargement was made and touched up in great style. But some jesting artist took it upon himself to remove the pickaninny with lime instead of cyanide. The negro hung her portrait in her parlor and did not look at it for some days. One day she went into the room and turned up the lamps. There was the black baby staring at her from the portrait. She nearly went mad with superstitions. It was the cracking artist lost a very tolerable job.

The ghost-seeking fakers have further done their best to make their work more purpose adapted to their special needs numerous electrical inventions. Before considering these it should be noted that the mediums now play a very small part in the séance. Formerly all sorts of devices were used—cabinets, musical instruments, gramophones, gas audions, wireless partitions, machines. But the public, judging as it is, no longer like mechanical appliances of the nature before it and its spectators. The presence of visible mechanisms is no longer tolerated. So though endless paraphernalia are still being made for the magicians, they are of little use, save in small amounts and certain kinds.

**The Sparking Crystal**

The listening-in device has been employed by fake spiritists for some years. The reception rooms of their parlors are now frequently equipped with the transmitting instruments concealed under the work partitions, machines. But the public, judging as it is, no longer like mechanical appliances of the nature before it and its spectators. The presence of visible mechanisms is no longer tolerated. So though endless paraphernalia are still being made for the magicians, they are of little use, save in small amounts and certain kinds.

The explanation is that the cloth laid over the table and touching a connection in the room contains a wire with a minute mechanism almost as flat as the cloth by which a spark is caused when the contact is broken at the switch. The crystal is held just over the spark arrangement. The medium or one of the shillabars works the concealed floor switch with his foot. The spark magnifies the sound.

But the wireless telephone threatens to bring about a revolution in spirit frauds. Certain electrical appliances have been used for some time for turning out a wireless equipment perfectly if not intentionally adapted to the needs of the spiritist. In New York and

other large cities are special electricians who do nothing else but manufacture or adapt electrical goods to the needs of magicians and occultists. These men prepare these small wireless-telephone outfits for the spirit parlor and install them at a cost ranging from four hundred to one thousand dollars.

The séance room is provided with four hidden receivers hidden under the wallpaper in cracks dug out of the wall on the four sides of the room. These receivers are connected by wires with the antenna, which is buried in the ceiling. In addition the floor of the séance room is equipped with five or six invisible plugs whereby the medium establishes contact with the antenna. She merely wears a special shoe and steps on the plug at the proper moment.

In another house, usually a square or two from the mediumist parlor, the sending end of the wireless telephone is installed. As the thing has been explained to me, a ground circuit is used instead of an aerial connection, earth or water being excellent conductors of the wireless waves. By this means all aerials and antennas are concealed and there is nothing in sight to betray the fraud.

In giving a séance with the wireless three persons—a man, a woman and a child—are placed in the sending room. In the séance room the utmost simplicity is observed. The usual ritual is employed to work the sitters up to high nervous tension and emotional excitement. The sitters are out of view comes the muffled eerie poignance of a violin.

"The spiritist!" announces the medium in a stage whisper.

**Spirit Voices by Wireless**

The séance has begun. The dullist imaginable will perceive the effect of voices coming from nowhere, calling in sepulchral tones for one sitter after another, naming his name, revealing his intimate thoughts, recalling his past life, and, in answer to his questions, commanding him with threats, uttering oracles. Nothing added to spiritist technique in many years has created such a sensation.

The ghostly, unearthly effect is got by sending the sound swimming about the room from nowhere, calling in sepulchral tones for one sitter after another, naming his name, revealing his intimate thoughts, recalling his past life, and, in answer to his questions, commanding him with threats, uttering oracles. Nothing added to spiritist technique in many years has created such a sensation.

But the final blow is left to the medium. She shortly announces that the spirit is about to speak through her—through her body without employing her vocal organs.

To make the demonstration effective the medium is securely gagged. She then seats herself, closes her eyes, goes through the usual rignarole of establishing a communication and waits. Suddenly a voice—male, female or child—comes from her mouth, hurling startling answers, dire prophecies and violent threats at the baffled subjects. The sitters are dumb with amazement. It is beyond explanation.

Yes, it is—until you know that the medium has a receiver concealed in her bosom and is speaking through her on the concealed floor plugs with her special electrified shoe.

One of my spirit-laid informants has already invented an improvement on this straight-out wireless séance. He proceeds by passing a wire from the antenna, right down to the sitters, and then by little sitters to write one or several questions. The sitters then tears from the pad his sheet of queries, just as we used to do in the days of Ask through her—through her mind-reading show. The sheet is folded and put into the sitters' pocket or carefully held in his hand. The sitters and pads are gathered up and unostentatiously removed from the room. Outside they are at once developed and read. The answers, registered on the pads by any one of the old-invented carbon systems, become legible. The sheets are now hurried out to the wireless sending room either by a messenger or by a messenger who slips out the back way. In a few minutes the voices of the shades, sending answers to every question, begin calling out the names of the questioners, repeating their queries and answering them. Words—All is wonder!

No doubt we may look for many other adaptations of the wireless game by spirit laid crooks.

It is saved that many of the mediumistic fakers are criminals. In the ordinary acceptance of values it may be wrong to deceive and delude; it may be considered to spread ignorant superstition, but it is not criminal. Nevertheless I repeat the assertion. The fact is that many most flagrant and most brutal crimes have been committed to these evil spiritists.

To begin at the small end, the spirit oftened to come from sleep by false mediums seems to be Asmodeus, the demon of marital untruth and infidelity. The homes broken up, the families disrupted by mediumism are countless. Usually the thing comes about when a husband remonstrates with his wife for her mediumistic faith, or vice versa. The convert's natural reports to the medium the opposition of the spouse. Since the fake spiritist is always playing for money, no one need question the result. At the next sitting the spirit is made to advise the convert to be rid of his or her spouse. The first rule of this faith is "Obey the spirit!" Divorce follows like the quod erat demonstrandum.

This is, however, only the gentlest type of crime committed by the spiritist in his phase, spiritism as practiced by the crooks of ghostland is a glorified con game. It has the same end and the same purpose as the bunco play. The motive behind the spirit-laid crook is not to unsettle sanity or to get converts or to get five or fifty dollars for a mediumistic demonstration. The great purpose is always to strip the sucker: to get him to invest his money—and lose it. It is not so apparent a little doubt this trick was originally taught the fake father—old and new—by the con man and other swindlers. It appears little doubt this trick was originally taught the fake father—old and new—by the con man and other swindlers. It appears little doubt this trick was originally taught the fake father—old and new—by the con man and other swindlers.

**Oil Stocks for Spiritists**

Formerly the spirit crooks always operated, sending their dupes to Wall Street to invest their money in certain stocks which the summoned spirit was familiar with. The mediumist, however, has now handled one end of the deal naturally took all, and the rest went to the spiritist rascal. All, or nearly all, the old traveling shows have left the town and mediumistic work used to send their dupes to certain appointed brokers, where their money was taken—once and for all. Even the simplest sense must have raised the question which a farmer in his home town once asked a celebrated milk vendor:

"If you know all this stuff, why ain't you down there in New York makin' Morgan an' them fellers look foolish. What you doin' here, sendin' your customers to Wall Street?"

But by the time a duped spiritist fakes in ready to be guided to the slaughter the mediumist has already got on his feet and faculties. He can no longer think or evaluate. He falls and gets his coup de grâce. To-day the spirit-laid crooks are no longer no longer use Wall Street and the exchanges except in an emergency. They have their own companies organized to handle their dupes and to make their rogues' luck. A few years ago they had to support assorted companies—gold mines, land, and other things. To-day only oil concerns are used.

"Everything's oil now," a noted mediumist told me when he was falling for. You have to slip 'em the oil." So the central group, those who operate with the list, maintain several fake companies—have and control the Texas and California oil fields. Into these the money of the sucker is dumped. This plan has been used to get all the profit in the hands of the spirit-laid crooks.

How large are the annual takings of these con developers and swindlers, and how many one willing to make even a guess? They must, however, be considerable. One man who supplied some of the information for this article, and who has lived and worked in a Middle Western city. Ringing the bell, as I have already explained, in the term for victims, and every member of a spiritist group.

In this case there were fourteen persons in the group. The wireless séance was used

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(Concluded from Page 75)

on them in conjunction with mind reading and other feats of very clever mesmery, formerly a first-class clairvoyant. Every one of the fourteen men and women was completely taken in, led to invest money in the fake of companies and neatly trimmed. About sixty thousand dollars was got in this single coup.

Spirit fakers always set their goal at a bell ringing. It is the star to which the fakers' wagon is hitched. For when the bell is rung every worker who had anything to do with the set-up gets a substantial bonus, and there is revelry in ghouland.

But spirit faking leads to even worse crimes than fraud and robbery. One of the problems with which every medium has to deal comes up through the countless wives who come for advice and help in the matter of getting rid of unloved husbands. Here, to be sure, is a survival of the primitive magic, which is, as I have already said, the basis of spiritism. This same amiable desire to be off with the old spouse by witchcraft or magic—usually taking the form of some deadly philter—led to the savage treatment of witches in the Middle Ages and after; to the institution of suttee in India, and to many other barbarous methods of suppression. But women will hate their husbands and try to murder them by metaphysical means. Two examples, one based on the old and the new spiritism.

In Westchester County, New York, a few years ago a Sicilian woman with an able husband fell in love with a more or less young villain from her own clime. The spouse stood in the way. In this emergency she had recourse to a sorcerer in Jersey City, a descendant of the old miramir who practiced their primitive magic at Nem's sacred grove when Rome was yet a place of darkness. The sorcerer filled the liver with hundreds of pins and needles, chanting orisons, repeating incantations, uttering spells as he recited and repaired the innocent organ. Finally the liver was delivered to the wife with instructions to bury it under the path where her husband must walk over. Death would ensue at once—fee, ten dollars.

But the husband did not die, and the wife got the knot of Gaudy by employing a couple of gangsters who strangled and beat him to death. For this crime five or six persons went to prison for life.

#### Brahms' Spirit at the Piano

The parallel case came to light in the West recently. A handsome but ignorant woman was in love with another man and wanted her husband removed. She went to a spiritist faker, who saw fit to drag out her case and extract all possible money from her. At each new séance the spirit professed to act against the husband. But as no fatality followed the woman grew impatient, placed her own interpretation on the words of the medium and proceeded to feed her husband powdered glass. A physician to whom the suffering husband went discovered that he was in love with the woman, was arrested and examined. She asserted that the spirit had moved her, and was very properly committed to a public sanitarium. Nothing could be proved against the medium.

In another case in the Middle West a broker was robbed thirty-eight thousand dollars by a mediumistic circle. Crazed by his losses, he attempted to kill his wife and maintain the theft. He succeeded in badly wounding two of his children, when his wife woke and managed to disarm him. He was treated for a long time in private sanitariums and finally committed to the public insane asylum incurably mad. His family was left in destitution.

Several years ago a professor of music in a Western college suffered the death of a beloved one and was by that blow drawn into spiritism. The crooks soon heard of him and easily got him to their sittings. In order to render their work more effective these plotters decided to work on this man game based on his two passions—love and spiritism. Accordingly the stage was set for him.

The crucial séance was given in two large connecting rooms with a wide door between. The professor and several sibilaters were seated about a table in one room. In the other was a grand piano at which was seated a highly accomplished young woman pianist who was said to possess occult powers. Her claim was that she sprang of great dead musicians applied to her and guided her playing—a claim often

made up by a long succession of spiritistic Tributes.

The queen of this establishment busied herself about the two rooms and then took her position beside the professor, where neither could see the musician in the next room. The professor was then to write the names of piano selections he desired to hear. The musical medium agreed to find out what his wishes were through the spirits and to play the selections, guided by the hands of the dead maestro, whoever he might be.

In preparation for this séance the musical professor was thoroughly looked up and it was found that he was a Brahms enthusiast. It was now convenient to have the simple to have the talented woman pianist memorize a great body of the Brahms piano music. A little clever deduction guided her in selecting the pieces likely to be called for. She reasoned shrewdly enough that a musical professor in testing out an occult claim would call for the unusual and obscure compositions of his favorite master. These she studied thoroughly and memorized. In addition to much of the better known Brahms music and her already large repertoire of other pieces.

The memorized selections were now written on a slip and numbered, the queen and the mediumistic pianist each committing the list and corresponding numbers to memory. The queen then arranged by which the queen signaled to the pianist the number of the professor's selection. A complicated but ingenious system was devised which looked like part of the decorations of the rooms was used for this purpose. The queen's hand played to the pianist's Number One. Placing her finger to her mouth indicated Number Two, and so on through the list.

#### The End of the Tragedy

As explained, the queen sat beside the professor in the séance and asked him to write out on a tablet the musical pieces he wished played. Naturally the queen saw what he wrote. He hid the queen's slip and held it firmly in his hand, being asked to concentrate his mind on the name and personality of the composer and the name of the musical composition. Very little mediumistic hocus-pocus was used—just enough to stir the emotions and cause a bit of goose flesh.

The professor strained and concentrated, trying to summon the spirit of the old lion of Hamburg. Suddenly the pianist in the adjoining room began to play. The selection was correct, the playing excellent. Still the music was not what he wanted. He began, as expected, to call for obscure, early, little-known Brahms compositions. They were played correctly and as demanded. He began to ask for the most involved of the philosophic composer's music. It was promptly forthcoming.

The trick was all gone and reverence the professor went down on his knees and wept. He was thoroughly convinced that the great Olympian had appeared and from his quiet Austrian grave led to a sordid side street to convince an obscure pedagogue of the truth of his own words.

A musician may wonder how a professor of music was so lightly deceived. Did the girl at the piano play in the manner of the Brahms of twenty, the full fall of fine as flame, or the Brahms of fifty, with his weak climaxes and watery technic? Was it the composer himself, the Schenker in E. F. Minor or the absolute musician of the Schickel called that guided the hands of the pianist? At least one may care speculate.

The professor did not. It was a simple matter to pluck him of about forty-two thousand dollars by convincing him that the spirit of the dead maestro was being summoned and advising him as to his investments. When he found himself ruined he wrote to me and appealed. He began to besiege the mediums with pleadings and threats. They laughed at him. Late one night he appeared at the mediumistic parlour in a violent rage.

"I am ruined," he said dolefully. "If I can't get back enough to save my honor I must kill myself."

He explained that the spirits had extracted from him money that was not his. "You won't say I am a quack," said the spiritist queen, showing him back into the night. "You fellows like yourselves too well for that."

Two days later the deluded music master threw himself into the river and was swept down into the land of the silent ghosts.



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