

How Spirits Materialize

Anonymous

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From "The Revelations of a Spirit Medium"—a book out of existence now, since the plates and all copies were bought up by "spiritualists" and destroyed. The following is given by courtesy of Mr. Hereward Carrington:

Reader, have you ever attended a "seance" for "full-form materialization?" Have you ever thought you had met your dead relative's spirit at these "seances"?

If you have never had the pleasure of attending a seance of this "phase" you have missed a rare treat. The writer has assisted at many a one and will relate to you some of the wonderful phenomena occurring at them and the means used to produce them. . . . There are hundreds of "materializing mediums" doing business in this country, who are swelling a good-sized bank account. Their business sometimes runs into the hundreds of dollars in a single week. This "phase" of mediumship is considered by the spiritualists as the highest possible attainable, and if you are a clever "full-form medium" your financial welfare is assured. . . . Many and various are the methods employed by the different "mediums" in producing this phase. It is in Boston, New York, and San Francisco that it is worked the finest. The full-form seances most often met with are very simply worked, and easy of performance by the medium. You are usually given a seat in a circle of chairs about the front of a "cabinet" made by hanging heavy curtains across the corner of the room. If you are a stranger or one who looks or acts as though he would "grab" the "spirits," you are seated at the farthest point from the cabinet; or, if there are two rows of seats, you will be given a seat in the back row. . . .

I made my way to the "materializing seance," at which my friends hoped to materialize. I was admitted to the seance room and found about twenty persons already assembled. I was seated in the front row of chairs. The cabinet used was a closet about six feet long and four feet wide. The ceiling of both the room and the cabinet was of wood. After a thorough examination had been made of the cabinet by all those who cared to do so, the sitters were rearranged to suit the medium. There were present now thirty-five persons. The seance room was very large. The door had been taken off the closet that served as a cabinet, and in its stead were hung heavy curtains. The floor of the room was carpeted with a dark carpet, as was the cabinet. The light was furnished by a lamp placed in a box that was fastened to the wall some eight feet from the floor. This box had a sliding lid in front, controlled by a cord passing into the cabinet. By this means the "spirits" could regulate the light to suit themselves, without any movement on the part of any of those in the seance room being necessary. When everything was in readiness the medium entered the cabinet, seated himself and was tied, and so secured to his chair that it was impossible that he could have any use of himself. He was most thoroughly secured to his chair, and his chair nailed fast to the floor by passing leather straps over the rounds in the side and nailing the ends to the floor. After it was shown to the sitters that he was utterly helpless, the curtain was drawn. The manager now placed an ordinary kitchen table in front of the door of the cabinet, so that it stood away from it about two feet. The table contained no drawer. On the table was laid writing materials, a guitar, and small bell. The manager seated himself close to one side of the cabinet entrance, and started a large Swiss music box. Before it had finished the first air the lamp was shut entirely off, making the room inky dark.

An illuminated hand and arm was now seen to come from behind the curtain, and played an accompaniment to the music box on the guitar. We could see plainly the movements of the hand, arm, and fingers, as it

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manipulated the strings of the instrument. It did not appear necessary to finger the strings on the keyboard, although the air was in a key that made it impossible to tune the guitar so that an accompaniment could be performed WITHOUT fingering. However, but one hand was visible, and it was picking the strings. After the tune was finished, the hand left the instrument, and moved out into the room to the front of the table, and from the sound we knew it was writing on the tablet that had been placed there. The arm was of bluish light and appeared to end just above the elbow, and to have no connection with the body. It finished writing and seemed to float into the cabinet near the top.

The light was opened and the manager requested those who had tied the medium to examine his condition and see if the ropes had been tampered with. The examination was made and it was evident that the fastenings were undisturbed. The communication was read aloud to those present, and contained the following:

"We are pleased to meet so many seekers after light and truth here this evening, and, from the conditions, as we sense them, we will have a satisfactory and pleasant seance. The way to obtain the best results is for each person to maintain a passive condition and take what we have to give. You may rest assured that our best efforts will be put forth to give you entire satisfaction. The Control."

The writing was exactly on the ruled lines although written in absolute darkness. The hand and arm, although luminous, did not give out a particle of light. The arm had been at least five feet from the cabinet opening and seven feet from the medium. Surely, it was not he. The message read, the light was again shut down and the music again started.

Once more a hand appeared, and floating out to the table, again began writing. Of a sudden the hand disappeared, and, after a few seconds, I was astonished to feel a hand thrusting a paper into my top coat pocket. Now appeared two hands and they played an air on the guitar. Now came three, then four hands were visible, bright as the day. Two of them began writing again, and, when they had finished, two more sitters were the recipients of sheets of paper. Soon the light was opened for an inspection of the cabinet, which was made, with the conclusion that the medium had not moved. Those of us receiving communications were afforded an opportunity to read them. We found them nicely written, as before, and all contained "tests." . . .

After the light went out again, more hands were seen; the table was floated about over the heads of the circle, as was the music box, which weighed at least fifty pounds. Another examination of the cabinet was made and everything found satisfactory. This time the light was not put entirely out, but a very dim light was allowed.

The music box was again set playing, and, while yet it was playing the first tune, a tall figure, robed in creamy white, with gleaming sparks in her hair, and on her head a sort of crown, issued from the cabinet. She was recognized by a gentleman present, a spiritualist, whose spirit guide she was, and who addressed her as "my queen." She stood a few seconds behind the table and then stepped out in the open space between the sitters and the table. The gentleman now arose from his seat and, standing beside her, holding her hand, conversed in a whisper with her for some seconds.

This was most assuredly a lady, if appearances go for anything. Her hands were quite small, and were warm and lifelike, as several, including myself, can testify, having been permitted to shake hands with her. At last she started to the cabinet, and, as she went, appeared to grow shorter, until, as she disappeared between the curtains, she was not much taller than the table. The manager now explained that the spirit had remained out rather too long and came near dematerializing before she reached the cabinet. Now came the spirit of a young man, dressed in a light suit of clothes, who gave his name and said his mother was present. She was, and had a few words of conversation with him when he disappeared into the cabinet. The lady said that it was unmistakably her son; but there was SOMETHING that was not as he had been, but what it was she was unable to describe.

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The next spirit to present itself was my son Eddie. He came out from the cabinet calling "Papa, papa." The manager asked "Who is your papa?" and he replied, "Mr. (Smith)." All this time he stood between the table and the cabinet, and only his head and shoulders could be seen. The manager told him to step out where he could be seen, when he came around to the front of the table.

It was rather dark, but I could swear it was my son. He was just the right size, with long flaxen hair and a very pale face. He wore a light-colored waist and darker knee-breeches and stockings, with a large black bow at his throat, Just as I remember seeing him last in health.

While Eddie was still standing in front of the table a large man came out and took him by the hand. Eddie spoke, saying:

"Must I go back, grandpa?" The form turned toward me, saying:

"My son, this is a great pleasure to us, but we must not long remain, as it is our first attempt at materializing." He turned to go when the manager said to him:

"If the gentleman is your son you ought to give him your name."

"The name of the child is Eddie, and my own is J. A. Smith," replied the form, as they vanished into the cabinet.

The manager suggested that it would be well to examine and see whether the medium had been out or not. The cabinet was examined and everything found satisfactory.

Spirit after spirit came from the cabinet, one or two at a time for an hour; some of them came to friends, and others were "controls" of the medium. Many of them were recognized by different ones of the sitters in the room. I, for one, could swear to the identity of my own son Eddie, while my father was plainly recognizable. . .

The room was again made dark. Suddenly there appeared on the floor, in front of the table, a light about as large as a baseball. It moved about in a circle of perhaps a foot in diameter and grew larger. It soon lost the shape of a ball and appeared to be a luminous cloud. Seemingly we could see into and through it. In the course of thirty seconds it had become as large as a six-year-old child; still there was no definite shape, only a fleecy cloudlike mass, turning, twisting, and rolling. At the end of perhaps a minute it was the size and shape of an adult person. The face could not be seen, but light, luminous spots were visible as though the hair and ears were decorated with gems. The shape spoke and requested light. As the light was turned on the luminousness disappeared, and we beheld a beautiful young lady clothed in a dazzling white costume. Her arms and shoulders were bare, and about her neck there was a necklace of what appeared to be very brilliant diamonds. Her feet were encased in white slippers, with straps across the instep. In her ears and hair glistened and shimmered beautiful diamonds. Her face and arms were as alabaster, and altogether she was one of the most beautiful women I had ever beheld. She was recognized by a lady and gentleman present as their daughter. They had met her here before. They were from the East, and were wealthy. The spirit requested that they come to her, which they did, and were each kissed and embraced by it. They held a moment's conversation with her and resumed their seats, when the lamp was slowly turned down. As the light became dim the spirit became luminous. The face and arms disappeared and the body became as a cloud again, turning and twisting and growing smaller until it was nothing but a small light spot on the carpet, which of a sudden disappeared entirely.

Immediately after this manifestation an examination of the medium and cabinet was made, and it was certain the medium had not been away from his chair. The light was again turned out and the music box started,

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when TWO bright spots appeared on the carpet, one at either end of the table. These went through the same process of development until, when the light was turned on, there was another beautiful female spirit at one end of the table, and a child of perhaps eight years of age at the other. The child was recognized by a lady present as her daughter, while the adult spirit was recognized and rapturously greeted by a gentleman who sat near me on my left, as his "darling angel guardian." They had quite a long conversation, in which they made use of very endearing language, each to the other. I supposed it was the gentleman's wife. . . .

The spirits did not disappear as the first one had, but, when the light had been turned off, the luminous shape revolved a few times, and on two occasions assumed the garb and shape of men, and when the light was turned on again, there stood the men with beards and men's forms. After some eight or ten of these materializations and dematerializations, before our eyes, the last couple completely disappeared.

The light was again turned down and a luminous shape came from the cabinet, followed by others, until seven of them stood on the floor. The light was turned up until we could see the seven spirits. Five were females and two males. They were of different sizes. The curtain at the door of the cabinet was pulled aside and we could see the medium sitting in the chair in which he was bound. The forms now filed into the cabinet again, while the music box played. After they had disappeared the light was turned up, an investigation made of the cabinet, and the seance was over.

There, reader, is a truthful description of what can be witnessed at the seances of mediums who are artists. None of your bungling, amateur work here. The work of such a medium is always satisfactory for the reason that if a man feels SURE that the medium is a fraud, he has been so well entertained that he does not regret the money paid for the opportunity to witness it. This is the class of medium also who frequently succeed in getting large sums of money from wealthy persons they have converted to spiritualism.

Did the writer not give you the true explanation of the manner in which these things were produced, you would probably say it was conceived by a very fertile imagination. If you believed that he saw these things you would perhaps offer the preacher's explanation, by saying, "it is the work of the devil"; or that of the scientist, by asserting that "it is the mesmerist's power over your mind"; or "the operator has discovered an odd force in nature"; or go off on a long dissertation on hypnotism and fourth dimension of space problems. However, it is not the work of the devil, neither are there any but NATURAL laws necessary to its production.

The seance described actually occurred and was described in writing by Mr. Smith in the language used, although it was not printed, and the writer was one of those who assisted in its production. He will now proceed to explain this particular seance. . . .

It will be remembered that the room and cabinet were carpeted with a dark carpet, and that the ceilings were of wood. The ceilings were decorated by being put on in panels. The ceiling of the cabinet would not have been like that of the room had the closet been a part of the architect's plans of the house. It was not, but was made by the medium. He simply built a lath and plaster partition from the corner of a wide chimney to the wall, thus inclosing a space of six by four feet. The panel in the ceiling of the closet was twenty inches square. This panel was "doctored" and could be displaced, leaving an aperture large enough for the "spooks" to get through with perfect ease. A light ladder which reached within three feet of the floor of the cabinet was hooked fast above and furnished the means of getting down and up again. There were eight persons connected with the seance described by Mr. Smith, seven upstairs and the medium in the cabinet. Of course it was not necessary that the medium get out of his fastenings, and the facts are that he did NOT. The table was placed across the cabinet door, not to lay the instruments on, but to be very much in the way should anyone make a rush and "grab" for the materialized forms. In case this occurred, the "spooks" above would close the light, making the room perfectly dark, and the manager would do his utmost to turn the table on end, or side, with the legs out in the room. Before the "grabber" could get the lay of things and get past it, the spooks

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would have gone through the trap, closed it, pulled up the ladder, and the "grabber" would have found the medium writhing and groaning and bleeding from the mouth. The bleeding was for effect, and was caused by sucking very hard on his teeth or gums.

The table also served a convenient purpose in the materialization and dematerialization through the floor. You now know where the spooks came from, in this particular house, and how they got in and out. Now let us see how they managed the materializations, and the properties used to produce them. The trap and ladder were practically noiseless in their operations, but the music box made assurance doubly sure that the least sound from the cabinet should not be heard in the seance room.

When the box began its first air the trapdoor was opened and down the ladder came a young man clad in a suit of black tights. He was entirely covered with black with the exception of his right arm, which was bare to a point a little more than halfway from the elbow to his shoulder. The bare arm glowed with a luminous bluish light.

This condition of things was brought about by powdering his arm with pulverized luminous paint. If you are not told the method of transforming the sticky paint to powder, you will not be able to do it, and will conclude the writer was romancing in this case. The most essential thing to you will be to know where you can procure this paint. The writer has been unable to procure it anywhere, except of Devoe Co., of New York City. It is put up in a package resembling six-ounce jelly glasses, and you will get six of them for five dollars. In order to reduce it to powder, thin the contents of one of the glasses with one pint of turpentine. When it is thoroughly cut and incorporated into the turpentine, soak strips of muslin in it and hang them out to dry. When thoroughly dry you can shake the powder from the cloth. In order to powder one of your arms, gather one of the cloths in your hands, and use it as a powder puff on your arm. You will not be able to get all the paint out, but the pieces will make luminous crowns, slippers, stars, and luminous decorations for your robes. You will be under the necessity of perfuming your robes each time they are used, for the odor of the turpentine will always remain to a greater or less degree. To illuminate a robe or costume (the mediums always say "robe") you proceed the same as in the powdering process, except that to the pint of paint you will add a wineglass full of Demar varnish, which will prevent its falling or being shaken off as powder. You are not to make the robe of muslin, but of white netting. Every lady will know what netting is. It is the lightest, thinnest material the writer ever saw sold in a dry goods store. Ten yards of it can be put into the vest pocket. Do not scrimp the material, but get as much of it into your robe as possible.

When he of the luminous arm steps from the cabinet into the dark room no part of him is visible save the arm. He picks the strings of the instrument with the illuminated hand and fingers the keyboard with the other. He makes a sound of writing on the tablet and tears off a leaf which he conceals, and, drawing a long black stocking over the luminous arm, places in the pocket of the sitter a communication that has been written upstairs in a good light. This accounts for the even, beautiful writing, supposed to have been done in the dark. He covers the luminous arm so that anyone so inclined could not locate it in order to "grab" when he is near enough. By mounting the table, that luminous hand and arm can be made to show as though it was floating about near the ceiling.

When four hands were visible there were two spooks at work with both arms illuminated. . . . You can readily understand the forces that floated the music box and table above the heads of the sitters, and an explanation is useless.

When the first female spirit appeared it was, in reality, a young woman, dressed in a gorgeous white costume without paint, hence the light was turned up instead of down, in order that she be visible. Rhinestones and Sumatra gems being cheap, she was plentifully supplied with "diamonds," although many of those who are the queens or spirit guides or "controls" of wealthy spiritualistic fanatics wear real diamonds, the gift of their wealthy charge, or "king" as they usually call him.

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When she started for the cabinet she used her hands to keep her robe from under her feet, and as she went stooped lower and lower, until, as she disappeared in the cabinet, she went on her hands and knees. This is what caused the appearance of "dematerialization."

When Mr. Smith's son, Eddie, came from the cabinet, he was represented by a boy of about eight years of age, the son of one of the female "spooks" upstairs. He receives two dollars a night for his services, the same as the larger spooks. He was powdered until he was very white, a blond wig put over his own hair, and dressed as most boys are at the age Mr. Smith's son died. Mr. Smith recognized him by his size, his light complexion, and flaxen hair, and the fact that he called him "papa" and gave his correct name. His father was "made up" from the description given by the medium, and acknowledged by Mr. Smith as correct. Of course he knew his own name, for it was given him by the slate-writer. . . .

We now come to a part of the phenomena that all spiritualists who have witnessed it will swear by. What is referred to is the materializing and dematerializing of the spirit from the floor and before your eyes. In this you see first a small light, which grows larger and larger, until there stands before you a fully formed female or male spirit, as was described in Mr. Smith's experience.

In order to accomplish what he witnessed, the same spook who had before been recognized by a gentleman as "his queen," prepared herself in the following way: Divesting herself of all clothing she donned simply a long chemise that reached her shoe tops. She drew on a pair of white stockings, and over them a pair of white slippers. Into her hair and ears she put rhinestone diamonds, and around her neck a necklace of the same beautiful but valueless stones. On each ear lobe and around her neck were put small spots of the luminous powder to represent the diamonds while it was dark. Her face was powdered and her eyebrows and eyelashes darkened, while a dark line was drawn under each eye. She now took a black mask that covered her head, and her "robe" in her hands, and went down to the cabinet. Arriving there, she put the black mask over her head, to prevent the luminous diamonds being seen until the proper time. She carried her robe in a black bag. Crawling from between the curtains and under the table, she exposed on the floor a small part of her robe. This she shook and moved about, allowing it to escape from the bag until it was all out. She was now from under the table and on her knees, and it was time the head show on the form, so, getting close to the robe, she threw off and under the table the black mask. The shape was now the size of an adult; she adjusted the robe to her person, and rapped for light. As a matter of course, when any light was made the luminousness of the robe was drowned, and she appeared in simply a white costume. The necklace and eardrops could now be seen, but when the light was such as to reveal them, the luminous spots had disappeared, leaving the spectator to think the ones he now saw were the ones he had seen in the dark. The process of dematerialization will now be apparent, and a description will only tire the reader. One small spook was all that was required, as he could be made to represent boy or girl as was desired, by clothing him in the garments of either sex.

At the close of the seance, the full force of "spooks" came into the room. After disappearing, they shinned up the ladder, drew it after them, closed the panel and the trap in the floor above it, replaced the carpet and pushed over the place a heavy bedstead from which they took the castors. They now carried the ladder downstairs and concealed it in the coal house as they went through it on their way home. They will get their pay next day.

Should ever so close an examination of the cabinet be made, you would not find anything wrong. This particular medium has taken investigators into the cellar beneath the cabinet, and the room above it, scores of times, yet nothing was discovered.

You are not always to search for the trap in the ceiling, nor yet in the floor. A trap is not possible in the ceiling except a closet is used as "cabinet," and the ceiling is of wood. Where this condition of things does not exist, you must search elsewhere. The floor is a very likely place when it cannot be made in the ceiling. If you do not find it there, examine the base or mopboard. If it is in the mopboard you will find, upon

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examination, that there is a joint in it near the corner of the cabinet, but you will find it solidly nailed with about four nails each side of the joint. This appearance of extraordinary solidity will be absolute proof that it is NOT solid.

The nails are not what they appear, but are only pieces about one half inch in length, and do not even go through the board. The piece is fastened on the other side with a couple of bolts that hold it very firmly in place. There is a corresponding opening in the mopboard in the next room, although no attempt is made to so carefully conceal it, as no one is ever admitted to it. Through this trap the "spooks" enter the cabinet by crawling and wiggling. It is not a very desirable trap, for the mopboard is scarcely ever wide enough to permit of a trap that the spook could get through in a hurry; besides, they must assume their costumes after they get into the cabinet or tear them to pieces. You can see how this would make it very inconvenient.

If the room is wainscoted the spook will have all the sea room necessary in his trap, for it will extend from just below the molding on the top of the wainscoting to the floor behind the strip of quarter-round. . . .

It is next to an impossibility to detect these traps by examining in the cabinet. They were constructed to avoid discovery, and no pains spared to make them so absolutely perfect that not one chance in a million is taken. The proper place to seek for traps is in the adjoining room, upstairs, or in the cellar. One is foolish to undertake to find a trap by thumping the walls or floor; for, if you happen to thump one, the medium who is smart enough to make use of a trap is also sharp enough to make provision for its being thumped, and your sounding method goes for naught.[1] Bear in mind that when you are examining the cabinet, you are seeking at the very place that is prepared most effectually to withstand your investigations. . . . Do not forget the MANAGER in your search. He or she is never searched, or never has been up to date, which has been the cause of many a failure to find the "properties" of the medium when the seance was given in a room and cabinet furnished by a stranger and skeptic. Do not be deceived into a belief that all of the sitters are strangers to the medium. There may be from one to five persons present who pay their money the same as yourself, and who may appear to be the most skeptical of anyone in the room. They will generally be the recipients of some very elegant "tests," and weep copiously great grief-laden tears when they recognize the beloved features of some relative.

[1] It must be remembered that it is occasionally possible for the medium to do away with traps altogether, either by having a confederate in the audience who produces all the phenomena—the medium sitting bound meanwhile—or by some such simple device as the following: Suppose the seance room is closed at one end by a pair of folding-doors; these doors are locked, the key kept by a member of the audience, while the keyhole is sealed, and strips of gummed paper are also stretched across the crack between the doors, sealing them firmly together. Confederates enter the room, in this case, by merely pushing BOTH doors to one side, they being so constructed that this is possible. A small space is now left around the end of ONE door, through which the medium's confederate creeps!

They are the most careful of investigators, and, when the medium's trap is located in the door-jamb, will pound the walls, and insist on the carpet being taken up, when they will get upon their hands and knees and make a most searching examination of the floor. They are the closest and most critical of investigators, but they are very careful to examine everywhere EXCEPT WHERE THE DEFECT IS LOCATED. Because one or two men seem to be making such a critical investigation, do not allow that fact to prevent you making one on your own responsibility. Wait until they have finished and then examine not only where they did, but more particularly where they did NOT. Their examination is only for the purpose of misleading others. Their "tests" are received in a way to cause those about them to think they admit them very unwillingly, or because they were so undeniable that they could do nothing else.

A great many will probably deny that confederates are ever employed. They are not, by mediums who are not smooth enough to produce that which appears so wonderful as to make a good business for them. The writer

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would advise those mediums who give such rank seances to employ a few floor workers (they are easily obtained), and see what a difference it would make in the amount of business they will do. Get good ones, those who know human nature, and know when they have said all that is necessary. Most of them are inclined to say too much, thus causing the ordinary man to suspect that they are confederates.