

tures in a series of articles published in 1907, and with 'spirit writing' and other such phenomena in our issues of December 10 and December 17 of the year that has just passed 'afay in the ewigkeit.' The practical conjurer who, like us, has followed the progress and the methods of this baleful form of charlatanism, smiles a low, wise smile, or (according to circumstances) develops a sense of impatience and at times of indignation, as he peruses the crude dogmatism of well-meaning Catholic and other writers who attribute to preternatural agencies a varied assortment of so-called spiritistic 'manifestations' that are produced by the arts of conjuring and 'hanky-panky.' Such, for instance, are the thousand-and-one methods of the 'spirit writing' which is made to appear on papers 'precipitated' from above, or held upon a table, or thrown under the table, or placed in locked drawers or in sealed envelopes, or on the insides of slates tied or screwed together and protected, in addition, with the magic bits of impressed red wax in which, in this connection, the non-conjuring public place such a touching but wholly unwarranted trust. The reader who perused the leading article in our issue of December 17 can hardly fail to have gathered at least a general idea of the wiles and ways by which these forms of imposture are played (usually for a consideration) upon the curious or gullible folk that pit their sweet simplicity and ignorance of conjuring against the illusionist skill that directs the phenomena of the séance stage or parlor.

In our issue of December 17 we likewise made a passing reference to the wiles of so-called 'spirit' photography. We are glad to find that Father Hull, the learned, cautious, and able editor of the *Bombay Examiner*, refers editorially (in his issue of November 28) to 'the untrustworthiness of even the photograph test in cases of alleged hypnotic and spiritistic phenomena.' Father Hull has, by the way, already dealt in an extremely sensible way with the Indian rope-trick, of which we read at times such curious descriptions. Mopsa says in the *Winter's Tale*: 'I love a ballad in print, a life, for then we are sure they are true.' The superstition that trusts to the inerrancy of the printed page endures, to some extent, in the hinterlands of thought in our day. But the infallibility of the photographic plate enjoys a much wider vogue in our time. It is, to many, something more tangibly undeniable than the unfailing truth which simple-minded Mopsa found in 'a ballad in print.' This overweening faith in the photographic plate has been pressed into the service of mediumistic charlatanism, as a supplement to the trust which unwary writers on spiritism repose in locks and seals and knots and in the gummed flaps of paper envelopes. The result has been a wide range of frauds—some clumsy, many clever, and not a few brilliant—which have been wrought upon thousands of persons through the medium of the photographic camera. It is true only in a very qualified sense that 'the camera cannot lie.' It cannot, for instance, be persuaded to give true color-values. And it can, within its narrow scope, be made to play numerous puzzling pranks, and (in the matter of 'spirit' photography, so-called) to work as cruel and heartless deceptions as any trick of 'materialisation' or of slate-writing in all the capacious repertoire of the professional medium. We have in our possession some droll specimens of trick photography. One of the *Scientific American* publications, issued at New York in 1906, gives working details of the double-exposure, the black background, and other methods of producing the most surprising effects by the aid of the camera. Thus, we may have, on the same plate, a photograph of (say) John Doe, or of a group of John Doe and his family, in two poses, at different distances. Or John Doe's wife may be made to serve John Doe's head, upon a platter, to John Doe sitting in hungry expectancy at the breakfast table. Or John Doe may be made to decapitate himself by sword or saw—his own headless trunk beside him, while his brain-box lies upon the floor or on a table or in his outstretched hand. Or Richard Roe (with or without a head) may be made, in a photograph, to wheel his own head along in a wheelbarrow, or to carve his own head upon a dish, or to look at a reduced figure of himself enclosed in a picture-frame, or a bottle or a block of ice, or standing, in the relatively diminutive stature of a pigmy or a Lilliputian, upon the outstretched hand of the larger portrait of himself in the same print. Or your photograph (as in cases before us) may show you as a bust upon a pedestal, or with two heads, like the god Janus Bifrons of ancient pagan Rome. Or the trick photographer may (by the multiphotographic process) put your image upon the plate, at one exposure, in five different poses. The general reader may gain some idea of the ingenious methods and the bewildering effects of illusive photography in general, and of some of the wiles of so-called 'spirit photography' in particular, from a perusal of Walter E. Woodbury's *Photographic*

Amusements (published by the Scovill and Adams Company, New York; in 1896), and by reference to Book V. of *Magic, Stage Illusions, and Scientific Diversions* (published by Munn and Co., New York, in 1906). But for the later and more recondite tricks and pranks and 'hanky-panky' of the camera, the investigator must apply (as the present writer does) to the leaders of the conjuring profession and to the few and far-apart photographers who, for amusement or otherwise, have made a specialty of the misnamed art of 'spirit photography.' The present writer knows personally of two first-class adepts in this craft—one in Sydney (New South Wales), the other in Chicago. Both alike depend entirely for their effects upon trick photography. The Chicago man's handicraft enables him to produce some marvellously clever illusive work. And we are informed, on apparently excellent authority, that his 'faked' 'spook' pictures are regularly used in spiritistic circles (by many, perhaps, in good faith) as evidence of the power of mediums to call spirits, at will, from the vasty deep.

We have digressed somewhat from the 'spook' photography which excited the distrust of our learned confrère of the *Bombay Examiner*. He quotes at length from an unstated source two of the many methods of the 'spirit' photographer—one of them the method of the double exposure. We give hereunder the substance of the quotation: 'The camera is now produced. For preference it should be a simple one of a well-known brand. If any member of the lady's family owns a camera it is an advantage to borrow the apparatus. This looks most convincing. The lady should now be seated at a piano and requested to play something while the camera is being made ready. When all is prepared the photograph [of the lady and the piano] is taken, the lady departs, and the picture is promised on the following day. When she has left the photographer calls in a friend. The friend should be wrapped in a white sheet, and made to stand by the piano. The pose should be artistic; the ghost should appear to be listening with the rapt attention peculiar to spirits. Now another exposure should be made on the same plate or film in the camera, which, of course, has not been moved since the first picture was taken. Some careful photographic judgment must be used at this point. Suppose the first photograph required an exposure of six seconds, the exposure for the white figure would be about one second. This short exposure of one second will have practically no effect upon the image of the lady, but it is advisable to remove anything white on the piano, such as a piece of music. Nothing now remains to be done but to develop the plate or film. When this has been done a most realistic spirit photograph will be the result. The "ghost" will not appear solid, but transparent, as all the details impressed on the plate by the first exposure will show through its vague figure. . . . Occasionally investigators have insisted upon buying the plates, putting them into the dark slides themselves, and watching the development. Even under these circumstances it is possible that tricks may be played. One photographer painted the inside of the dark-slide with a luminous preparation which made an impression on the plate before and after the actual exposure. This trick was very effective (until discovered), as the photographer was able to use plates that had been bought and marked by the investigator, who could be present during the entire operation from the taking of the photograph to the development.'

Thus far the *Examiner*. Two of the methods of 'spirit photography' are here described. There are others galore. And, as in the ingenious impostures of 'spirit' writing, nearly every new year sees a new method of extorting shakels from the weak-minded and the unwary by means of the camera that, in the popular estimation, 'cannot lie.' We may here refer to a few other of the commoner methods of perpetrating this cruel imposture. (1) While the sitter is serenely and unsuspectingly facing the camera, a 'pal' of the medium's or of the photographer's quietly appears for a few moments, suitably attired in ghostly draperies, behind the sitter. He disappears rapidly and silently, and, his image being under-exposed and somewhat out of focus, it presents in the print the fuzzy and shadowy appearance which 'touches the spot' with those who are impressed with this particular form of spiritistic 'manifestation.' (2) In regard to the first method described in the *Examiner*, we might mention that, in the second exposure of the plate, after the sitter has gone, the 'spook' is made to pose in a suitable position in front of a dark background. A magnesium or other proper light is thrown upon him. He is sometimes taken out of focus, but a more successful ruse practised by the 'meejum' or photographer is this: he places a fine piece of muslin gauze close to the lens of the camera—this gives the hazy, indistinct appearance which the art and craft of spiritistic

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