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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DO THE DEAD RETURN? A TRUE
STORY OF STARTLING SEANCES IN SAN FRANCISCO ***

Price, 50 cents

Do the Dead Return?

A Startling Story from Life



Crown Publishing Company
San Francisco
1900



DR. LOUIS SCHLESINGER.

DO THE DEAD RETURN?

A TRUE STORY
OF STARTLING SEANCES
IN SAN FRANCISCO

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CROWN PUBLISHING COMPANY
SAN FRANCISCO
1900

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INTRODUCTION.

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Before this little volume is read a few words of explanation should be carefully weighed, for otherwise the reader might go away with many false impressions.

The author desires to say that every word here printed is absolutely and literally true. Nothing has been added or suppressed, but the entire truth has been expressed, usually in the exact language of the distinguished gentlemen whose narratives make the bulk of the book. In most instances the witnesses summoned wrote their accounts with their own hands, and the original manuscripts are still preserved.

Though many years have passed since the events recorded herein transpired, all who witnessed the phenomena are still alive, and all are well-known and reputable citizens of San Francisco. It was only a few days ago that the author met Captain W. S. Barnes, who was District Attorney of the City and County of San Francisco in 1893 (the date of the occurrences with which the book deals), and he said: "What I saw in the presence of the medium has puzzled me all these years. I can truthfully say that the things that took place at Mayor Ellert's office are the most wonderful events that I have ever come upon. They are absolutely beyond my understanding."

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The circumstances with which the narrative deals are an important contribution to the history of psychic research, and they are presented for what they are worth while the witnesses and actors in the story are alive.

THE AUTHOR.

San Francisco, September, 1900.

CHAPTER I.

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THE AUTHOR'S STORY.

In the autumn of 1891, the author of this narrative was business manager of the Modesto (California) *Daily News*. One afternoon while he was engaged in an important consultation with the late Senator J. D. Spencer, one of the owners of the *News*, there was a knock at the door of the editorial rooms. In a twinkling an old gentleman entered; he was a venerable-looking, long-bearded man, with Hebraic features.

Before Senator Spencer and I could say, "Good day, sir!" the old man said something like this: "Gentlemen, I am Dr. Louis Schlesinger, the famous Spiritualist medium. It is well known that I can talk with the good angels, and I desire to have a series of seances here in Modesto."

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"Our advertising columns are open," I said, "and we shall be pleased to announce your meetings at the regular rates."

"I have no money to spare," he replied; "but I think you will say something about me when I show you that man lives after death."

The Senator whispered to me (on discovering that the old gentleman was quite deaf), "I guess he's escaped from the Stockton Lunatic Asylum."

Stockton was but twenty miles away, and I assented, but said, "Suppose we sound him before we send for an officer."

So we agreed to give Dr. Schlesinger an opportunity to convince us that he was a man of rare endowments, as he pretended to be.

Coming to the point, it was arranged that the Senator should retire to the press-room while I remained with the aged suspect.

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"Take eight or ten slips of paper," said Dr. Schlesinger, "and write one name on each—some of living, some of dead persons; and don't tell me or anybody on earth what names you have written on the slips. Roll them into little pellets—and come back here with your mind at rest, for I am not insane, as you think."

We were somewhat surprised, for both were certain that the old gentleman could not have

heard Senator Spencer's whispered doubt concerning our visitor's sanity.

In a few minutes Senator Spencer returned, bearing a number of paper pellets which he held in his clenched right hand.

Doors were closed and a table was rolled to the center of the room. Dr. Schlesinger closed his eyes and appeared to fall into a light slumber. At once there were many distinct raps on the table, as if some one had thumped upon it with a finger. This was rather singular, as we could see that our visitor's hands in no manner touched the table.

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Suddenly the old man opened his eyes and said: "Gentlemen, are you satisfied that I do not know any of the names on those papers?"

As Senator Spencer was as truthful and honorable a man as ever lived, one whose word was better than most men's bonds, I replied: "I am sure you have not seen the names and that you do not know one of them."

"And some of the names are not known to anybody in California," added the Senator.

"Then I'll have to show you that I can talk with the spirits of the departed," said Dr. Schlesinger.

Without further delay he said: "I see the spirit of your mother standing over you. She calls you Dillard, which is your middle name, and she says she died in Kansas City, and was buried in the old cemetery at Westport. Am I right?"

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Senator Spencer turned pale and said: "That is absolutely correct. Which one of the pellets bears her name?"

He then held the bits of paper between his right finger and thumb, and when he had picked up three or four of them, the medium said, "That is the one which contains your mother's maiden name."

I have now forgotten the maiden name of the Senator's mother, though I think it was Dillard. The answer, however, was correct.

Next, without asking me to write anything down, the medium thus addressed me: "I see the spirit of your mother's mother. Her name was Eliza Johnson, and she calls you 'my son,' and says, 'Tell Anne that immortality is the glorious truth of human life.' Anne was the name of her eldest child—your mother."

If Senator Spencer was convinced that Dr. Schlesinger had told him the truth, I had the same kind of conviction in my case; for every word uttered was correct. I have never understood how this old man came to the results announced, nor have I ever seen any one who was able to explain his power.

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With the memory of my Modesto experiences fresh in mind, I decided, when I came upon Dr. Schlesinger in San Francisco, in 1893, to institute a series of daylight seances in the presence of some of the most distinguished citizens of San Francisco. As I was then a writer of the San Francisco *Daily Examiner* staff I found rare opportunities for enlisting the men desired in the experiments. I was not then, nor am I now, in any manner affiliated with Spiritualists, nor do I set forth the facts of this narrative for the purpose of making converts to any theory of mind or matter.

The manuscript from which this work is printed was written at the time of the matters recorded, on an order from the *Examiner*. Owing to the fact that Mayor Ellert afterwards regretted that he had allowed a seance to be held in his office, the *Examiner* was induced to suppress the story, which now appears in detail for the first time. It should be borne in mind that all that follows was written at the time of the events described.

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CHAPTER II.

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THE "EXAMINER" SEANCE.

That the reader may fully understand the origin of the experiments recorded in the narrative that follows, it is necessary to state again that I was a writer for the *Examiner* in the autumn of 1893, and that I was on the alert for what newspaper men call "stories," or special articles—things a little outside of the ordinary run of news.

Ambitious to arrange something of unusual interest, I approached Mr. Hearst and S. S. Chamberlain, who were in charge of the news department of the paper. I told them what I had seen Dr. Schlesinger do in Modesto, and outlined the plans that were afterwards carried out—seances at the office of Mayor Ellert and the Chief of Police, in the presence of prominent citizens. First, however, it was necessary for the editors to see the medium at

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their offices; for they feared there would be some failure, and that the citizens invited would be disgusted because of their loss of time in useless experiments.

For these reasons, therefore, the first sittings were at the editorial offices of the *Examiner*, where the editors were as much puzzled as anybody else. They were at once convinced that, however he performed his feats, Dr. Schlesinger was at least not a bungling master of the black art. Several intelligent observers were present, among them one or two of the brightest newspaper men in the city. The experiments were not only carefully noted, but they were viewed with grave suspicion. They were, however, wholly informal and merely preliminary to the more important and prolonged seances that followed at the office of the Mayor of the city, and later at the office of and in the presence of the city's Chief of Police. A few facts concerning the occurrences at the *Examiner* office are given that the reader may have the full benefit of the story.

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One of the investigators (Managing Editor A. B. Henderson) wrote a number of names on slips of paper, before Dr. Schlesinger arrived. They were not seen or known to any one save the person that prepared them, and the slips on which they were written were carefully folded and clasped in a bundle, by a rubber band or elastic. Great pains was taken by Mr. Henderson to prevent the medium from handling or seeing the slips. Without seeing the writing, Dr. Schlesinger at once gave the names correctly. One of them was that of Thaddeus Stevens, the eminent Pennsylvanian; and when the folded slip on which his name was written was touched by Mr. Henderson, the medium said: "That is the name of Thaddeus Stevens, who knew you well. He calls you Alexander, and sends you his love."

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Then the name of the sitter's deceased uncle was properly announced, though it had not been written on any of the slips. Correct information was also given concerning the uncle's religion while "in the flesh."

S. S. Chamberlain, now Managing Editor of the Philadelphia *North American*, (then News Editor of the *Examiner*) was one of the investigators. He wrote down, on separate slips of paper, the names of many living and dead persons, but, contrary to the medium's request, he did not write the names of persons he had ever known. In a few moments Dr. Schlesinger read the names correctly while the slips were beyond his reach, and firmly clasped in Chamberlain's hand. They were of such persons as John Ruskin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Shakespeare, Longfellow, etc.

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A faithful report of all that occurred was submitted to the managing editor of the paper, who at once decided that a series of similar experiments, conducted at the office of the Mayor of the city and others, in broad daylight, would make the basis for some interesting Sunday specials. Under his instructions I arranged the seances, and was present at all of them. I subsequently wrote a faithful account of what occurred, but the articles were rejected by the editor of the Sunday *Examiner* for personal reasons. This volume embraces the substance of what was then prepared.

CHAPTER III.

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SOME STARTLING DAYLIGHT SEANCES.

It was on September 4, 1893, that a number of the most prominent citizens of San Francisco held a daylight seance (at high noon) at the office of Mayor Ellert. The company had assembled in response to the *Examiner's* invitation, and all of the witnesses had agreed in advance to observe everything closely and write an absolutely fair account of what they saw, adding any theory or explanation that seemed sufficient to account for the phenomena.

It is as well to say that it was a mirthful assembly at the outset, and the newspaper man who had arranged for the experiments was the butt of many little jokes. The idea that the medium could do anything more than a little clever juggling seemed farthest from anybody's thoughts.

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Dr. Louis Schlesinger, then a man about sixty-one years of age, was the spiritualist medium who said he could convince all present that the dead return, and that he could hold communion with the living. The following spectators were present, and the written reports of some of them are given in full in the subjoined narrative: Mayor Levi R. Ellert, District Attorney W. S. Barnes, President Theodore F. Bonnet, of the San Francisco Press Club, Ex-President Grant Carpenter, of the same club, H. H. McCloskey, then a State Central Committeeman of the Republican party, and many other casual observers.

At another seance Chief of Police Crowley, Judge Robert Ferral, Dr. R. E. Bunker, and Attorney Charles L. Patton were the principal investigators, though Captain Wright and many others saw all that was done. At this seance the observations were conducted under the test conditions arranged by Chief Crowley, Dr. Bunker, and Attorney Patton.

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The reader should satisfy himself concerning the mental and moral qualifications of all the witnesses named by glancing at the biographical sketches elsewhere in this volume.

At the Mayor's office Dr. Schlesinger was announced as a resident of No. 1 Polk Street. He said he knew none of the committee, and nobody present except the *Examiner's* representative knew the Doctor.^[1]

"I can converse with the spirits of your deceased friends," said the medium, "and I am giving my life to this work. I gave up a great tea business to teach my fellow men that life does not end at the grave. My home is constantly filled with bands of angels from the celestial depths, but I am able to call a few spirits around any box, table, or desk. I want you to satisfy yourself that all that is done here is absolutely honest."

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Before proceeding further the Doctor produced a testimonial from Editor Will S. Green, of the Colusa *Sun* (afterwards State Treasurer), which explained that Dr. Schlesinger's performances could not be explained on the theory of trickery. A clipping from the *Sun* of September 5, 1890, gave an account of matters that had puzzled the people of Colusa. The investigations began, therefore, with a great deal of interest, and before their conclusion the old Doctor had greatly puzzled all present. They could not tell whether it was some psychic power by which he operated, or whether they had been basely deceived.

At his own request, Dr. Schlesinger was not introduced to any of the persons present. He soon called their names, however, and said they were given to him by the spirits in the raps that all could hear on the desk.

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The Doctor's favorite method of communicating startling information was to have the sitters write, before they came into his presence, fifteen or twenty names of living and dead friends. Each name being on a separate piece of paper, the visitors were requested to fold each slip tightly, so as to preclude any possibility of its being read by the medium. This done, the slips, all of equal size, were put into a hat and thoroughly shuffled. The Doctor would then say: "Pick out any slip yourself, and I will read it without looking and before you yourself know what the name is." There would then be raps, and in a few seconds the Doctor would give the name correctly. These names were written and folded in a room apart from the Doctor.

"Granting that there is such a thing as mind-reading," said Chief Crowley, "I do not think mind-reading would account for what was done for me, because he read things that were not in my mind, telling me my mother's maiden name and where she died."

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Dr. Schlesinger calls his gift clairaudient mediumship, and says his right ear is deaf to all terrestrial sounds, but quickened, as with a sixth sense, for communications from the other world. He says he can both see and hear spirits, and that bands of them encircle him, and at times, in the presence of some peculiarly "fit" visitors, manifest themselves with great clearness and power. To prove that the sounds he hears are celestial voices, he does many things which baffle those who witness the strange phenomena which abound in his presence wherever he goes.

It was with much difficulty that those who participated in these seances and whose accounts of what they saw are subjoined, were induced to give the medium a hearing. Chief Crowley was particularly opposed to giving serious attention to what he denounced as "trickery and sleight of hand," and afterwards called "marvelous and beyond power of explanation." Finally he wrote down a number of names on separate slips, as explained in the foregoing, and among those names appeared that of his mother—her maiden name. The medium at once told the Chief which pellet contained his mother's name, then read it, and in a few moments told where she died and where she was buried.

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A few minutes later the aged Doctor said: "The spirit of Detective Hutton, who died a violent death, hovers near you."

The medium then spoke of matters that were known to nobody but Chief Crowley and the dead detective. This greatly puzzled the Chief, who was later deeply affected over purported messages from a son and others who had been dear to him in life.

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Speaking of the purported message from his dead mother the Chief said: "I cannot explain this, which is marvelous, for I do not believe a human being in San Francisco knew that my mother's maiden name was Elizabeth McCarthy, that she died in New Jersey and was buried in New York."

Chief Crowley then wrote down a list of years, among them the year of his mother's death. Dr. Schlesinger pointed to the year 1833 as that of her death.

"Correct!" replied Chief Crowley; whereupon the medium said, "and the name of your father, Patrick J. Crowley, is also here, and he comes with your son Lewis, who has not been dead long."

The Chief thought it the most wonderful performance he had ever seen. "He does marvelous and inexplicable things," said the Chief, "and I'll admit I cannot tell how it is done. While I cannot believe he converses with spirits, I am puzzled. I want to see him again and look into the matter further."

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EX-CHIEF OF POLICE P. CROWLEY.

The experiments with Mayor L. R. Ellert, who sprang from his chair and positively declined to be thrown into a trance condition when the doctor requested him thus to visit the spirit world, were fully as startling as those with Chief Crowley.

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Mayor Ellert took a chair in front of his official table, which had thus been dedicated to spiritual uses, and asked if any spirits desired to communicate with him, whereupon the medium grasped his Honor's hands and the line of communication with the spirits was declared fully established. Quite distinct raps were then heard on the table, and Dr. Schlesinger looked at the Mayor and said: "You are a medium yourself, sir! My, what a power!"

The Mayor was urged "to sit alone often and be patient," and was told that he could develop much power by such a course.



HON. L. R. ELLERT.

Mayor Ellert then wrote down ten or fifteen names of living and dead friends, on separate slips of paper. He refused to use the paper handed him by Dr. Schlesinger, but cut up an official letter head which lay on his own desk. As he began to write the names, the medium stepped away and engaged in conversation with District Attorney Barnes and Mr. Bonnet at the other side of the room, so that he could not see what Mayor Ellert wrote. The Mayor carefully folded the slips, put them in a hat, and shuffled them. He then brought one forth from the hatful.

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"That's a dead one," said Dr. Schlesinger. "Open it and see whether I am correct; but don't let me see it."

The Mayor obeyed the request, and answered, "Yes, this is a dead person's name!"

"Don't let me see it," said the mysterious visitor, "and I'll tell you what it is," whereupon he at once correctly pronounced the name of the Mayor's sister, which was not Ellert.

The Mayor then announced that he was unable to explain the phenomena. He watched the medium's movements and convinced himself that there had been no juggling in the shuffle, and said that his visitor out-Hermanned Hermann. He would leave the solution of the phenomena to others learned in the arts of divination.



CHARLES L. PATTON.

The outcome of the seances and the story of what occurred may best be told by those who were present, and the subjoined versions are given:—

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ATTORNEY PATTON'S STORY.

"I desire to preface what I have to say by remarking that while I have never been nor am I now a spiritualist, nor have I ever before been present at the performance of a medium, yet what I saw of Dr. Schlesinger's so-called manifestations from the spirit world is entirely inexplicable to me upon any scientific hypothesis with which I am familiar; yet at the same time I must admit that I cannot explain the phenomena exhibited upon any theory of legerdemain or sleight of hand within my knowledge. Therefore, I merely state that I have seen, or seemingly seen, and heard the following remarkable things, during the sitting or seance with Dr. Schlesinger, leaving it to others more competent than I to determine whether they are the manifestations of some psychic force at present unadmitted by scientists or the legerdemain of a sleight-of-hand performer.

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"The facts are as follows: At the request of the Doctor, I wrote eight or ten names of different persons on as many slips of paper, two of the number being dead, and folded the slips in such a manner that the Doctor could not read them; and so far as I can judge, the Doctor could not have had any method of knowing what names I wrote. I then placed the folded papers in a hat, and one of the other gentlemen present drew them out one by one. The Doctor, as each paper was drawn out, asked some question, such as 'Guide, is this the one dead?' Finally, after all the papers had been held up and the questions asked, some raps on the table, seeming to have indicated according to the Doctor that the persons whose names were on two of the slips were dead, I, on examination, found that he was correct in his judgment. He then without (so far as I could see) having had any opportunity to have seen the names, desired me to place the slips with the names on in my pocket. Presently he said: 'I see two faces over your shoulder; the name of one is J. B. The other says: "I am glad you have commemorated my name by writing it here," the name is V. C.;" the Doctor being correct in naming the deceased person in each instance, and the message being appropriate to the character of the deceased person. I will add, that, so far as I know, Dr. Schlesinger had no possible means of knowing the name or anything about either person. One of the names, I feel confident, was not known to any person in California outside of myself.

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"CHAS. L. PATTON."

BARNES WAS PUZZLED.

District Attorney Barnes gives the following account of the seance:—

"I was completely surprised at the performance in the Mayor's office. It was the first seance I had ever attended, and I must confess that I had not the slightest respect for such manifestations other than a natural admiration for the quickness of the operator. I had always supposed that batteries, wires, a tolerable acquaintance with the sitter, all aided by darkness, were the causes of the effects produced by the medium. In this case, however, the seance took place in broad daylight, and no attempt was made, so far as I could see, to use any mechanical means. The medium sat two or three feet from the Mayor's desk, and only touched the desk occasionally with his hand, yet from that desk came the spirit rappings that were clearly audible to all of us in the room. I watched the others write lists of names containing each the name of some dead person, and saw the quickness with which Dr. Schlesinger picked out the persons who had passed away, and gave messages from them. When it came my turn I wrote a number of names on small slips of paper, folded them and held them in my hand. Among these names was that of a classmate of mine at Harvard, who died long ago at Philadelphia, who had never been in California, and whose name I have not mentioned for years. Hardly had I sat down when Dr. Schlesinger called his full name and gave me a message from him, recalling an occurrence, so far as I am aware, known only to the dead man and myself. To say that I was amazed but feebly expresses it; and when I asked the Doctor whence he got his information, he replied, 'It is borne to me on angels' wings.'

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ATTORNEY W. S. BARNES.

"Whether it was or not, it was a most remarkable thing, and deeply impressed upon me that 'There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of in our philosophy.'

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"WILLIAM S. BARNES."

Seven years after the foregoing was written, Mr. Barnes expressed himself as still deeply puzzled. "I cannot think of any experience in life so marvelous," he said, "so beyond my power to explain."

JUDGE FERRAL'S TESTIMONY.

Ex-Judge Robert Ferral's narrative largely corroborates what the others said. He presents the case in his own way.

"Having taken a deep interest from early boyhood in exhibitions of a marvelous nature, such as magic, legerdemain, mesmerism, hypnotism, mind-reading, and spiritualism, it was with pleasure that I accepted the kind invitation to visit Dr. Schlesinger and personally witness his experiments and manifestations.

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"I found the Doctor an aged, venerable man, in a large room, surrounded by a company of ladies and gentlemen, bright, cheerful, and intelligent, all apparently bent upon the rational enjoyment of this life, and happy in the belief of companionable intercourse with the realm of spirits.

"Retiring to more quiet quarters, consisting of an ordinary bedroom and parlor, the business began without waste of words or loss of time. Having written the names of half a dozen persons, living and dead, each name on a separate slip, carefully folded and looking precisely alike, which were tossed into a hat and well shaken up, the doctor proceeded to name the contents of each paper as it was drawn out. Occasionally he made a mistake, but in nearly every instance succeeded at the first or second trial. He first separated the living from the dead, without opening the slips, and sometimes not even touching them; then proceeded to give the names. Afterward, upon writing place and cause of death, age, occupation, etc., upon other slips, the same result followed. Some of the names submitted by me were peculiar, and I believe known to no one else in this city, yet they were announced—read off, as it were—with but little hesitation and generally exactly as written. The same thing occurred as to the diseases and places of death.

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JUDGE ROBERT FERRAL.

"During this manifestation of his power Dr. Schlesinger simply formed a circle or chain of hands, connecting with himself, frequently tapped the table, and appealed to an unseen 'guide' for his information. Raps were said to have been heard also, but of this I cannot bear testimony.

"How was this done? By mesmerism? No; for there was nothing in the nature of sleep or putting to sleep. Mind-reading? Possibly; although some of the slips of paper were read correctly when the contents were for the time forgotten and unknown to myself. Hypnotism? Don't know, having but a faint idea how far these phenomena extend. By sharpness of sight, trickery, sleight of hand? I cannot answer, at least for the present, remaining, as before, an agnostic on these matters; unable to give an intelligent explanation, but at the same time not disposed to jeer or scoff at what I do not understand. Respectfully,

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"ROBERT FERRAL."

September 5, 1893.

DR. BUNKER'S NARRATIVE.

The following is Dr. R. E. Bunker's account, written at his old office, No. 802 Kearny Street, just after the seances and while he was still in charge of the City Receiving Hospital:—

"I saw Dr. Schlesinger in company with the other gentlemen named, and I saw wonderful things which I am wholly unable to explain. The phenomena, manifestations, or things that occur in the medium's presence are not only interesting, but marvelous. I went possessed of something like eight or ten slips of paper, on each of which I had previously written (at my office) a name of some person I had known—some living, some dead. Not a soul ever saw the slips, for I was alone when I wrote the names. Furthermore, they were so folded that no one could possibly have read a single name. Dr. Schlesinger at once picked out the names of living and dead persons, while the slips were held between my fingers and when I did not know what person's name was on the particular slip that I held. He pronounced every name correctly while I held the pellet, or as it lay untouched on his table.

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"To say that what he did was by the aid of wires or batteries would be to impart to wires and batteries more intelligence than the greatest philosophers have ever possessed. This is no explanation; nor has any one ever been able to explain to me how these things were done. I

do not believe it was mind-reading (a term that conveys no intelligent idea to me anyhow), for I did not know the name on the slip under question—not until I afterwards unfolded it and corroborated the Doctor’s readings. You understand that the entire bunch had been thoroughly shuffled in a hat before any slip was picked up.

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“To come to specific instances, let me give a few cases as they occurred. On one slip I had written my mother’s maiden name, which was not known to anybody in San Francisco. It was placed among eight or ten other names of women—some married, some unmarried, some wholly fictitious. All slips were folded alike and placed in a hat under the table, which I held in my hands. Dr. Schlesinger asked me to pick out the pellets, one at a time and hold them between my finger and thumb. He would say, ‘That is not the name, throw it aside;’ and so on, until he hesitated at one pellet and said, ‘That is your mother’s maiden name; it is Emily J. Laumann.’

“The answer was correct, and in a similar manner he read other names and told me all about the persons. I had written the name of Dick Foster on one slip. Foster had died of consumption at the old Bella Union Theater, on June 21st. The medium did not read his name, but wrote a message backwards—that is, from left to right—very rapidly, and when I held it up to the light with the written surface from me, I could read the following:—

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I am glad to be here, and if I can obtain the appropriate conditions I will show my identity.

DICK FOSTER.

“This was a puzzling thing, and I should like for some one to explain how it was done, if there was not communication with some invisible intelligence. In regard to Foster’s name it should be said that the medium had not seen nor heard it, and that his hand flew over the paper very fast while he wrote the backward message. So far as I could see, Dr. Schlesinger was quite deaf and near-sighted. He was an old man of heavy weight and clumsy fingers. His manner was that of a devout believer in the genuineness of his theory. If any one can explain to me how these things were done, he will interest me far more than Dr. Schlesinger did, and it should be said that my attention to what he did was held without interruption from the start. There were several other like tests wherein he read for me other names by a process equally startling, making one feel that he had marvelous powers.

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“R. E. BUNKER, M. D.”

WHAT MR. BONNET SAW.

Theodore F. Bonnet, who was a reporter for the *Daily Report* at the time of the seance at the Mayor’s office, was a guest of the author during the seance. Mr. Bonnet, who is now editor and owner of *Town Talk*, an influential weekly newspaper, wrote the following account of what he saw and handed it to the author just after the seance:—

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“After witnessing the efforts of Dr. Schlesinger as a medium, one cannot but be impressed by his marvelous powers of divination. They are impossible of explanation on any hypothesis calculated to reduce his work to the vulgar plane of legerdemain. Yet the manifestations, as he is pleased to call his marvelous, puzzling and apparently supernatural revelations concerning matters with which he could not become familiar under ordinary circumstances, are after all, unsatisfactory to the person engaged in testing his power. I must give him credit, however, for having startled me by one message. I had written on small slips of paper, which were then carefully folded—all this an hour or more before the meeting. One of the names was Joseph Touhill, an Oakland burglar, who had been killed by a policeman who caught him robbing a saloon. I had known Touhill, and had been quite friendly with him in late years, but had never suspected that he was of the Jekyll and Hyde species. The medium did not at once direct me to the piece of paper on which Touhill’s name was written, but afterwards he suddenly said: ‘The spirit of the man with whom you wish to communicate is here now.’

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EDITOR THEODORE F. BONNET.

"I signified my willingness to hear from the spirit, whereupon the Doctor said, 'Old boy, I'm not quite as dead as you think.' Then he mentioned the name of Joseph Touhill. Now, this circumstance deeply impressed me, because the language was so characteristic of the dead burglar, it having been customary with him to address me as 'Old boy.' Mind-reading will have to be rejected as an explanation, because the Doctor subsequently read a name that was on a pellet that I had not opened, and knew nothing about until I subsequently read it. I picked up the pellet from the desk where I had put it with a number of others, and handed it to Mayor Ellert, who, without examining it, deposited it in his vest-pocket. Then came rappings on the table, and the medium said: 'Behind you stands the spirit of the man whose name is on that paper. He was an eminent person, and he died far away from here. He is waving a flag over your head, and on it is written the name of Victor Hugo.'

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"The name was correct. Subsequently the Doctor correctly read the name of William Cullen Bryant, which I had also written. The Doctor quoted the spirit of the poet as saying that he was delighted that I was interested in demonstrating that there was a world of spirits. Dr. Schlesinger's feats are bewildering to the human mind. If he is a mere trickster he possesses in a marvelous way the skill to disguise his character, for his appearance and demeanor are those peculiar to fanaticism or strong faith in a cause.

"THEO. F. BONNET."

MR. M'CLOSKEY'S VERSION.

The following is the narrative of Mr. H. H. McCloskey, a resident of Merced at the time of the seance, but now a San Francisco lawyer:—

"I did not attend the little seance at the Mayor's office by appointment. I was on my way to finish up some business and catch the 4-o'clock boat, when District Attorney Barnes suggested that I drop in and see the fun. Intending to remain but a few moments, I accepted the invitation, and have no reason to regret having done so. As to what happened there, while I remember perfectly well what was done, and kept careful note of all that I saw, I am unable to account for it on any other hypothesis than that the Doctor was, as he claims to be, a spiritual medium. At the same time I am not prepared to admit that much.

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"What I saw I saw clearly; it was real and devoid of illusion. There being no one present but the Mayor and thoroughly reputable gentlemen, collusion by which a portion of the events of that afternoon might be accounted for is, of course, out of the question; and neither collusion, mind-reading, nor anything else could account for all that occurred.

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"The Doctor requested me to write on seven slips of paper, one on each slip, the names of six acquaintances, five of whom were living and the sixth dead. On the seventh my own name was to be written. I had never seen the Doctor before, and have no reason to suppose that he had ever seen me. I used my own pencil in writing the names, and wrote upon paper furnished by the city and county for the use of his Honor the Mayor. When writing the names I was twenty feet away from the Doctor, and as I wrote upon each slip I folded it up carefully, so that I myself could not see anything of the writing, nor tell one of the seven slips from the others. Five of the names were those of intimate personal friends, the sixth of a man whom I knew in a business way, but for whom, while I was not at all intimate with him, I had always a great regard. This man is dead, and has been so for a couple of years.

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"In obedience to the Doctor's request, I placed the seven slips on the table. Taking the hand

of Mr. Barnes, I holding the hand of the latter, the Doctor proceeded to take the slips one by one from the table. The first he held a second and dropped. The second he handed to me saying, 'This contains your name.' Upon opening it I found the Doctor to be correct, and asking him what my name was he promptly told us.

"I confess I was a little mystified, but the Doctor didn't stop there. Continuing, he picked up the other slips until the fifth one had been reached. 'This is the name of your dead friend. His name is V. C. W. Hooker—not exactly, but a name very similar. I can't quite make it out. He says he will talk to you at another time.' As you saw when I opened the slip it showed as I had written it the name of V. C. W. Hooper, a man who was quite prominent in Merced during his lifetime. Just how the Doctor found that out I leave to others who were there to explain when they have time after accounting for the mysterious things that happened to themselves. I cannot and will not pretend to. It was not mind-reading, however. Of that I am satisfied. For as he picked up the fifth slip and said, 'This is the name of the dead man,' he did not get that information by reading my mind, for there were two more slips remaining, and I couldn't say which was which. That is beyond any explanation. Mind-reading will not fit it at all.

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"One of the party—I think it was Mr. Barnes—wrote the name of *two* dead men in his list. Leaving out the first problem—the picking up of the right slip—putting that aside, how is it to be explained that the Doctor chose the right name of the two dead ones? Mr. Barnes did not know. He had not opened the slip; therefore the Doctor could not read his mind. For myself, I give up the conundrum.

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"Very truly,
"H. H. McCLOSKEY."

CHAPTER IV.

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CHARACTER OF THE NARRATORS.

To any one who has a fair knowledge of human nature, a glance at the line pictures of the gentlemen who participated in the events with which this book deals will tell that they are men of character and keen observation. In San Francisco and throughout the West many of them are as well known as the Governor of the State.

Their names need no introduction, and since they have been representative men for many years it is not necessary to say much about them. For the benefit of persons who know nothing concerning them, however, the following information is submitted:—

PATRICK CROWLEY, Chief of Police, was born in Albany County, New York, on March 17, 1831. When quite young he went to New York and worked in different printing-offices. He came to San Francisco in 1850, and worked in the mining-camps for two or three years. He was engaged in the boating business here, when in 1854 he was elected to the office of Town Constable on the Democratic ticket. He was re-elected on the same ticket in 1855, and from 1856 he was re-elected every two years on the old People's Party ticket till 1866, when he was elected Chief of Police. He held that office by election for six years, when he quit the force and went into the brokerage business. In 1878, by an act of the Legislature, the Board of Police Commissioners received the power to appoint the Chief of Police. The office was tendered him, and after considerable pressure he reluctantly accepted it, as he was making an excellent living at his business. He held the office by election or appointment for twenty-four successive years. His wide experience with criminals, bunco-men, and all sorts of tricksters gave him excellent training and amply fitted him for a thorough inspection of all that was done during the seances. In fact, it was his boast at the beginning of his sitting with Dr. Schlesinger that he had helped to trap the Eddies and other disreputable mediums, and that he would soon expose the fraud in the case in hand.

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WILLIAM S. BARNES, son of the eloquent and famous General W. H. L. Barnes (known all over America as the greatest living after-dinner orator, and known all over the United States as a Republican orator), is a graduate of Harvard and a man of fine legal attainments. He is one of the most prominent Native Sons, and is famous for his shrewdness as Prosecuting Attorney for the great City and County of San Francisco. It was he who prosecuted and convicted Theodore Durrant in one of the most marvelous criminal cases of the century. He was also the star lawyer in the prosecution of the great Sydney Bell footpad case. Mr. Barnes was the organizer and president of the Association of District Attorneys of California; is an active member of California Lodge No. 1, F. & A. M., a member of the Pacific-Union Club, also of the Union League, of which he is one of a committee on political action, of the Juarez Manufacturing Company, of which he is President. Thus his mastery in the legal profession is no less equaled in his social and business associations.

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Attorney CHARLES L. PATTON is Grand Master of California Masonic fraternity, and is a

gentleman of the highest personal and professional character. He was a strong competitor against Mayor Phelan, and was chosen by the Republican party a few years ago as the best candidate against the present (1900) Mayor of the city. Mr. Patton is a man of much erudition and wide experience with men and books. He, like all his associates, and like the writer of this book, was and is a skeptic regarding the truth of so-called spiritual phenomena. His account speaks for itself.

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MAYOR L. R. ELLERT is a man of legal attainments and of wide business interests. He was a popular reform Mayor, and was in office at the time of the occurrences narrated. He is today one of the best-known and most highly respected lawyers and business men of San Francisco. For many years he was a skillful pharmacist, and his wide knowledge of drugs and physiology was useful in the attempted solution of the various problems presented by the medium.

Judge ROBERT FERRAL is the warhorse of Democracy, and one of the Nestors of the California bar. He made some of the most spirited races ever entered upon for Congress, and polled the largest vote ever known for an unpopular political party in the old days. As a judge and criminal lawyer of wide experience, as well as by reason of his unexcelled literary attainments and extended experience in the science of hypnotism and kindred phenomena, the Judge was an invaluable spectator and participant, especially as his native wit usually enables him to see through many things that puzzle other men. Here, however, he stood dumbfounded.

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Dr. R. E. BUNKER is a regular physician of high reputation and personal standing. He was at the time of the matters recorded in charge of the City Receiving Hospital, and was considered one of the most careful and competent observers at the seance. Like all others named, Dr. Bunker's word is absolutely above reproach, and there is not a more competent man in the country.

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THEODORE F. BONNET was at the time of the seance a reporter for the *Daily Report*. He was afterwards elected to the important position of License Collector, and is now editor and owner of *Town Talk*. This is one of the best weekly papers in the United States, and its success dates from its purchase by the gentleman named. Mr. Bonnet is an Elk of high standing, and a man of good family and social position. In addition to all these facts, it should be borne in mind that his long training as a reporter fitted him in a peculiarly advantageous way for the duties of trying to detect what was done by the medium.

H. H. McCLOSKEY was a casual visitor at the seance, being the guest of District Attorney Barnes. Mr. McCloskey was at the time a resident of Merced, and was a prominent lawyer and politician. He was also a Republican State Central Committeeman and was considered one of the ablest of the party. He is to-day a well-known San Francisco attorney. His account of the seance explains just what occurred.

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These facts, with some of the pictures, will give the reader an idea of the men whose narratives he has doubtless read with pleasure.

In conclusion, it should be remembered that this book is sold by the publishers only. It will be sent to any address for fifty cents. If you have enjoyed reading it, recommend it to the next friend you meet.

Footnote: [1] He now lives in Boston.—Editor.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK DO THE DEAD RETURN? A TRUE STORY OF STARTLING SEANCES IN SAN FRANCISCO ***

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