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CAN GHOSTS BE PHOTOGRAPHED?

BY PROF. ELLIOT COUES.



HIS curious question would be met by most persons off-hand, in Yankee fashion, by asking another. Can ghosts be photographed because there are no ghosts. This is a matter in which we must assume a ghost, if we have it not, at the outset of any inquiry into so-called spirit photography; otherwise all inquiry would be absurd. The fact is, there are certain natural phenomena which have given rise to our notion of ghosts, be that notion a whole truth, or a half-truth, or no truth at all. We all mean *something* when we say "ghost." Different persons have different ideas about ghosts. For some, ghosts are naturally impossible, but supernaturally possible and practicable and actual, for they are the souls of the dead, temporarily apparent to our senses; they are veritable apparitions from the spirit world. For others, ghosts are neither natural nor supernatural actualities, but sheer subjective phantasms, mere hallucinations, the self-evolved delusions of a disordered imagination, as baseless, in fact, as a dream of the shadow of smoke. For others, again, ghosts are objective realities, having substantial or even material bodies occupying space-relations outside our minds, leading their own lives as we lead

ours, coming at times under the observation of our physical senses, and susceptible of scrutiny like other natural objects. Into whichever of these categories, or into whatever other category, ghosts may come, or be put, it is obvious that the real question is not whether ghosts are or can be, but *what* are they? It is idle to deny that scientific investigation of the "whatness" of ghosts is futile. Anything can be investigated, if only to discover that it is not what it was supposed to be. If a ghost, supposed to be an objective living entity, turns out on investigation to be a figment of the imagination, resulting from a delusion of the senses, it has certainly been a subject of investigation, and has been investigated with satisfactory result. It is as much of a ghost as it ever was, but a different sort of a ghost from that which it had been mistaken to be. If every ghost that ever was "raised" could be "laid" in the limbo of hallucination, that would not do away with ghosts; it would simply show what they are; the fact of phantasmal hallucination would remain as the result of the investigation, and as a very interesting field for further inquiry into the pathology of the human mind. Disorders of the mind, like disorders of the body, and like the orderly operations of both mind and body, have their causes, their processes and their

results; they depend on natural principles of the human constitution; they are subject to natural laws, and all these are matters of legitimate scientific inquiry, of great interest in themselves, and of still greater practical consequence.

Obviously, therefore, as I have said, we must assume a ghost, whatever he, she or it may turn out to be. Obviously, also, that something, that unknown quantity—call it x to the n th power if you please—can be and should be investigated. It cannot be eliminated from the equation of human belief in its function. The real point is, can its function in the equation be determined? The ghost problem has been attacked on all sides, by all sorts of methods, by all sorts of people, with all sorts of results. Ghosts have been evoked and exorcised with ceremonial magic, with prayer and fasting, with the assistance of angels, with the help of the devil. Their presence has been provoked by a considerable class of persons, the professional mediums, who make it their business to materialize the spirits of the dead, or otherwise to communicate with, by or through ghosts. Mechanical devices have been invented and used to facilitate intercourse with ghosts, as planchette, the psychograph and various others. Science has entered the field, booted and spurred, and mounted on the hobby of Psychical Research in the view-hilloa of a ghost hunt. Psychical societies have invaded ghostland with a determination that reminds one of the famous direction for cooking hares,* and that may be paraphrased "first catch your ghost, and then cook it." Among the means used to take ghosts in the very act of their ghostliness, is photography. The

camera has been brought into requisition for thirty years or more, and thousands of alleged, if not actual, "spirit photographs" have been produced. I have myself examined hundreds, in England and in America. Many have been pronounced genuine by men of great eminence in science. Nearly if not all spiritualists believe that photographs of spirits, invisible to us at the time, can be and have been secured. However insuperable the actual obstacles may appear to us to be, however invincible may be our skepticism in any case in which the result is alleged to have been actually effected, we should not have the hardihood to say that a ghost cannot possibly be photographed. That would be to imply that we know all the possibilities of sunlight and spirit-life, which would be absurd, for we certainly do not possess that knowledge. But a few years ago, photography itself was unknown; the making of sun-pictures of natural objects was unthought of. Another Daguerre may even now be living—who knows? There is no natural impossibility here; there is no logical improbability. If something—our assumed x to the n th power—can so act on the molecules of the brain as to make a man think he sees a ghost, there is no *a priori* reason why that same something may not interfere in the processes of photography with the inter-action of light and shade to the extent of producing a recognizable picture. The argument in the abstract is very simple and very logical; it is this: It takes a substance to cast a shadow. A shadow is cast, in fact. That shadow is cast by no known substance, and is cast in the recognizable likeness of a dead person, in the absence of that person's dead body. Therefore, a substantial "something" connected with that person has been present, has been operative, and has effected an evident result; as it is evidently not his body, it must be his soul or spirit, which is as much as to say that his ghost has been photographed. Mind, I am not com-

*Queerly enough, this very saying, in everybody's mouth, is itself a ghost, having no foundation, in fact. It occurs only in later editions of a certain cookery book of uncertain authorship, but commonly attributed to Mrs. Glasse. In the sentence, "first catch your hare," "catch" is a misprint for "case," case meaning "to skin." The sense of the direction is: "First skin your hare." The laying of this typographical ghost turns a feeble witticism into a very reasonable and matter-of-fact statement of what to do first in proceeding to cook a hare.

mitted to this theory; I simply state it for what it may be worth. If I do not believe it, neither do I disbelieve it; I neither affirm nor deny it. I am simply agnostic; I do not know. I do not deny the possibility of spirit photography; to do so would be rash, and very unscientific. But it is a question of fact, and of the evidence in the case. That evidence—direct

fully believed by the sayer, to be genuine. But I have yet to see one which, when I had ascertained all the facts in the case, did not prove to be bogus—a mere sham; a trick of the operator—in a word, a fraud.

Yet the reader must not be misled into hastily assuming, on the strength of this, that spirit photography is all a delusion and spirit photographs all



Fig. C—Portrait of Mr. X's Father. Keeler's work.

and demonstrable evidence—in my own person, I lack. Evidence at second hand, in the testimony of many persons of unimpeachable veracity, is abundant and easily accessible. This I accept as going far to show that genuine spirit photography is practicable, and has, in fact, been accomplished. I have been shown many ghost pictures which were said, and

fraudulent. The fact that I know, and can prove, all those which I happen to have examined with the necessary care, to be bogus, by no means warrants the sweeping assumption that all of those which I have not thus examined are necessarily also bogus. The logical inference—if any there be—is rather the other way, since the existence of a counterfeit

implies a genuine coin; and the staunchest supporters of spirit photography are among those to admit the most readily the ease with which spurious spirit photographs can be produced. The case is a very curious one, of which the more one sees the more bewildering it seems, and the more one learns, the less likely he will be, if he be wise, to assume infallibility either pro or con. Let him but turn to his authorities, in default of personal knowledge, and he is soon at sea in a fog; his perplexity grows hopeless, and he is likely to throw up the subject in sheer disgust. The literature of spirit photography has grown so voluminous that I should hesitate to add to its bulk, had I not some new material to contribute as the result of my own investigations. My main object in this article is to exhibit some spurious specimens of spirit photography, show when, where and by whom they were executed, and to explain the trick. It is obviously impossible, within the limits of a magazine article, to traverse the whole ground. Much will be gained if I can clearly detect and expose the sham, without undertaking to adduce the genuine. Our search for the latter will be facilitated if we first familiarize ourselves with the former. What a genuine spirit photograph is, or is supposed to be, has been well defined by Mrs. H. Sidgwick,* in terms which every spiritualist and every skeptic will admit to be fair. "Spirit photographs, or at least those species of them which I propose to deal with

here† are photographs representing figures or objects which at the moment the photographs seemed to be taken had no apparent counterpart in the field of new discoverables by the normal sight. A photographer with the faculty of producing such photographs would in taking a portrait of a human sitter sometimes obtain that of some other person on the same plate. If the sitter was fortunate, it would be that of a deceased relation. Sometimes persons possessing, or supposed to possess, the faculty of seeing spirits, said that they saw the form which ultimately appeared on the plate, hovering near the sitter, though invisible to ordinary eyes."

These propositions put the whole problem in a nutshell. Mrs. Sidgwick's review of the evidence in the case is, as we have seen, unfavorable. Upon the elimination of proven fraud, she finds the residuum hardly sufficient to establish a case to be tried, let alone proved. But now let us look at the other side, in support of which I will adduce the famous naturalist, the profound philosopher, and the pronounced spiritualist, Alfred Russell Wallace, who is one of the staunchest and most unflinching defenders of the proposition that genuine spirit photographs can be and have been obtained. He has advocated and upheld the affirmative side of the case for many years (to my own knowledge from 1874 till now). While I was in England in 1884 I had the pleasure and the honor of being a guest at his house in Godalming, near London, and was shown a large series—I think about forty—alleged spirit photographs, most of which Professor Wallace

*Wife of Professor H. Sidgwick, of Cambridge, England, president of the London Society for Psychical Research, in a careful article contributed by her to the "Proceedings" of this society. Part XIX, July, 1891, pp. 268-289. The article is a critical review, destructive rather than constructive in its tendency, and mainly negative in its conclusions. It is well written and historically valuable, both for those who assent to and those who dissent from her views. The writer's position is fairly put by herself in her opening paragraph, where, after stating that she had not before offered the paper for publication to the society, because its attention had not been specially called to the subject, and because her conclusions were on the whole negative. She adds: "It appeared to me that, after eliminating what might certainly or probably be attributed to trickery, the remaining evidence was hardly sufficient in amount to establish even a prima facie case for investigation, in view of the immense theoretical difficulties involved."

†"Mr. Wallace applies the name also to photographs of so-called 'materialized' spirits. In the case of 'materializations' however, it is not usually the genuineness of the photographic process, but merely the spirituality of the figure photographed, which the skeptic calls in question." It is important to bear this in mind. I am dealing in this article only with alleged spirit photographs which come within Mrs. Sidgwick's definition, and hence do not touch upon any such as those obtained with his own hands by Mr. William Crookes, F. R. S., from alleged spirit materialization visible to the ordinary eye at the time the pictures were taken.

believed to be genuine, and some of which he knew to be fraudulent. We examined and discussed the pictures together, and my good host took pains to point out to me what he considered the proofs of genuineness in the one, and the evidences of fraud on the other set of photographs.

that I have since satisfied myself that the signs of genuineness on which the eminent scientist seemed to rely, are actually fallacious, as I shall show in the sequel. From the vantage-ground of my own subsequent investigations I am convinced that every so-called "test" of genuineness can

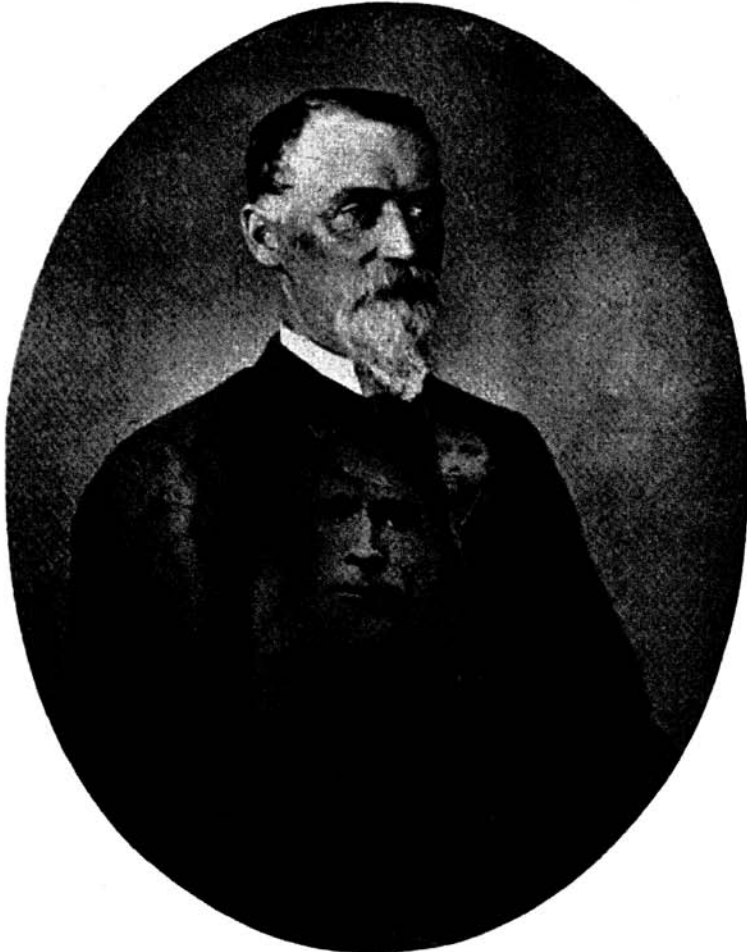


Fig. D—Portrait of Mr. X—'s Brother. Keeler's work.

This discrimination rested on the face of the several pictures and was independent of his knowledge or belief respecting the history of the process of production in the respective cases. That is to say, Professor Wallace seemed to me to be able to tell the genuine from the spurious on sight. But I fear I must add just here—as I do with unfeigned regret—

be fraudulently imitated to perfection. It gives my sense of the amenities of hospitality a twinge to say this; but it should be said, and Professor Wallace would be the last one to wish it unsaid, if I believe it to be true. Examination of this series of pictures excited my liveliest interest, and led me to further studies in spiritualistic phenomena; but it has convinced me

of nothing so much as of the scientific spirit, the transparent sincerity, and the robust faith of one whom I am proud to call friend. Passing by this episode, let us hear Professor Wallace's own statements of his mature conclusions on the subject of spirit photography. In a remarkable article, entitled: "Are There Objective Apparitions?" which appeared in the *Arena* for January, 1891, pp. 129-146, and which called out the courteous, though caustic, criticism of Mrs. Sidgwick's before cited, the distinguished naturalist adduces five different categories of evidence which either distinctly suggests or affords direct proof of the objectivity of apparitions. His fifth kind of evidence is, that phantasms can be and have been photographed. His words are exactly as follows:

"(5.) *Phantasms can be photographed, and are, therefore, objective realities.* It is common to sneer at what are called spirit photographs because imitations of some of them can be so easily produced; but a little consideration will show that this very facility of imitation renders it equally easy to guard against imposture, since the modes by which the imitation is effected are so well known. At all events it will be admitted that an experienced photographer who supplies the plates and sees the whole of the operations performed, or even performs them himself, cannot be so deceived. This test has been applied over and over again, and there is no possible escape from the conclusion, that phantasms, whether visible or invisible to those present, can be and have been photographed." (*Arena*, January, 1891, pp. 141, 142.)

This is Mr. Wallace's contention, in support of which he adduces much evidence, in part as follows:

"Perhaps the most remarkable series of experiments ever made on this subject are those carried on during three years by the late Mr. John Beattie of Clifton, a retired photographer of twenty years' experience,

and Dr. Thomson, M. D. (Edin.) a retired physician, who had practiced photography as an amateur for twenty-five years. These two gentlemen performed all the photographic work themselves, sitting with a medium who was not a photographer. They took hundreds of pictures, in series of three, taken consecutively at intervals of a few seconds, and the results are the more remarkable and the less open to any possible suspicion, because there is not in the whole what is commonly termed a spirit photograph, that is, the shadowy likeness of any deceased person, but all are more or less rudimental, exhibiting various patches of light undergoing definite changes of form, sometimes culminating in undefined human forms, or medallion-like heads, or star-like luminosities. In no case was there any known cause for the production of these figures. I possess a set of these remarkable photographs, thirty-two in number, given me by Mr. Beattie, and I was personally acquainted with Dr. Thomson, who confirmed Mr. Beattie's statements as to the conditions and circumstances under which they were taken. Here we have a thorough scientific investigation, undertaken by two well-trained experts, with no possibility of their being imposed upon; and they demonstrate the fact that phantasmal figures and luminosities quite invisible to ordinary observers, can yet reflect or emit actinic rays so as to impress their forms and changes of form upon an ordinary photographic plate. An additional proof of this extraordinary phenomenon is, that frequently, and in later experiments always, the medium spontaneously described what he saw, and the picture taken at that moment always exhibited the same kind of figure." (*Arena*, January, 1891, pp. 143, 144.)

These are strong statements, and these are the experiments on which, as Mrs. Sidgwick remarks, more stress has been laid than on any others which have been reported up to

this date. Professor Wallace introduced them in his *Miracles and Modern Spiritualism*, p. 193 (1874), saying then, as he still says in substance, that spirit photography "is that which furnishes, perhaps, the most unassailable demonstration it is

British Journal of Photography, 1872 and 1873. An account by the Dr. Thomson mentioned is given in *Human Nature* for September, 1874, by "M. A. (Oxon)." This is the well-known pen-name of my friend, W. Stainton-Moses, editor of *Light*,



Fig. E—Fraudulent Work of Mrs. F. V. Foster.

possible to obtain of the objective reality of spiritual forms." The Mr. Beattie mentioned had already published his own accounts in the *Spiritualist*, July 15, 1872; in the *Spiritual Magazine*, September, 1872 and November, 1873; and in the

president of the London Spiritual Alliance, and one of the foremost spiritualists of the world, whose good faith and vast experience in every department of psychical research no one could have the hardihood to call in question. Mr. Stainton-Moses has

in many places besides that cited, and for many years, adduced evidence for genuine spirit photography. Replying to Mrs. Sidgwick's strictures on the general credibility of this evidence, he says that this lady "sets forth to damage as much as possible the evidence on which spiritualists rely;" and, referring to her criticism of his own share in adducing the evidence, he maintains his ground, stating, with regard to what he wrote in *Human Nature* in 1874: "I have no desire to withdraw anything that I then wrote, and to minute criticisms on a subject respecting which we are all confessedly ignorant there is no reply to be made worth the making." These declarations are in *Light*, September 26th, 1891, p. 462, in an article by "M. A. (Oxon)," which cites and defends the Beattie-Thomson results on which we have seen that Professor Wallace relies so strongly, and which proceeds to comment upon and extract at length from a pamphlet publishing a lecture given before the Adelaide Spiritualistic Association by E. A. D. Opie.* The Beattie-Thomson results are also taken up by the great Russian spiritualist, A. N. Akhasof, of St. Petersburg, who, in his *Animismus und Spiritismus* (Leipzig, 1890), devotes a long chapter to spirit photography, and who, in *Psychische Studien* for May, 1886, p. 210, regards these results "as the foundation stone of the whole phenomenal region of mediumistic materializations in general and of transcendental photographs in particular."† This is stronger language than I have anywhere found even Professor Wallace using, and justifies us in at least listening to the demurrer Mrs. Sidgwick has filed. It appears from her account that there were concerned in

these experiments, besides Mr. Beattie and Dr. Thomson, several other persons. Two of these were Mr. Butland, "a good trance medium," and Mr. Josty, "a professional photographer." "This Josty was tracked to the workhouse;" "he was drunken, insolvent, and in money matters quite unscrupulous." "Under these circumstances," continues Mrs. Sidgwick, "deceit by Mr. Josty appears to me to be too probable to make it possible to attach much importance to Mr. Beattie's experiments in spirit photography."

I have dwelt on this case for two reasons: First, it seemed necessary to bring the whole subject upon the reader's horizon by citing the evidence upon which the strongest reliance has been placed by some, and to which the most strenuous objections have been urged by others. Second, it is a fair sample of the literature of spirit photography. No one magazine article can more than touch upon a tithe of what has been written. But it is all pretty much alike—a mass of minute descriptions of scenes, incidents, processes, results, precautions against trickery, affidavits of witnesses, and perfect reliance on the genuineness of the phenomena, on the one hand; of the proof of imposture in many cases, and the picking to pieces of all the evidence in the rest of the cases, on the other hand; of declarations and denials, of claims and counterclaims, of explanations that explain nothing, and of theories that count for nothing. By the time one has waded through it all, as I have, he may seem to himself to have chased an *ignis fatuus* in the night of his own ignorance, and perhaps conclude, not that a phantom can be photographed, but that spirit photography is itself a phantom of the mind. Yet what are we to make of the following case, cited by our most skeptical critic, Mrs. Sidgwick herself?

"I have still to speak of one series of experiments, that of Dr. N. Wagner, Professor of Zoölogy at St. Petersburg,

*Mr. Opie describes a case, which M. A. (Oxon) calls "a crucial piece of evidence," and in which is concerned a certain Mr. Hartman of Cincinnati, some of whose work is before me as I write. See the picture beyond.

†Quoted from Mrs. Sidgwick's paper—I have not myself seen the article in *Psychische Studien*. From her paper it also appears that sixteen of the Beattie photographs are reproduced in *Psychische Studien* for April, 1886, and in Akhasof's work above named.

made in 1881, and described in *Psychische Studien* for May, 1886, and in M. Akhasof's *Animismus und spiritismus*. Professor Wagner was making experiments in the hopes of proving a theory of his that when a person is hypnotized a psychical self can

resembling a hand, with part of a full sleeve, some distance on the plate, above the portrait of the hypnotized sitter, Madame de Pribitkow."

Whatever may be thought of this or of anything that has preceded in this article, the rest of our way is per-

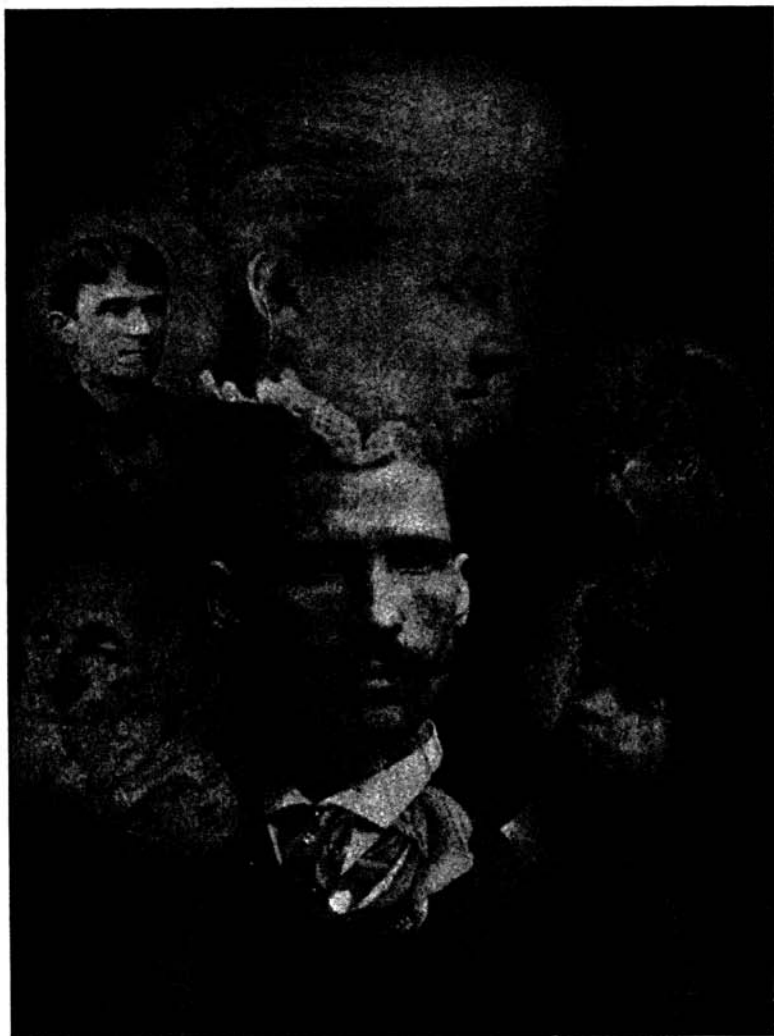


Fig. G—Done by Mr. S. W. Falls in Imitation of the Foster Frauds.

separate itself and assume a form which, though invisible, can be photographed. He was entirely unsuccessful in this, but in the course of the experiments he obtained on one plate (out of eighteen taken under the same conditions) a white mark,

fectly plain and easy. It is simply the description, illustration and explanation of spurious spirit photography. All the pictures before me, about fifty in number, by various artists, are bogus. All are also frauds, made by swindlers, to impose upon

the credulity of their customers, excepting those by Mr. Fallis, who honestly made his pictures to show how the trick is done, and who has himself told me about his work. I owe nearly the whole of this collection to the kindness of Colonel John C. Bundy, editor of the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* of Chicago, who, some years ago, went to the bottom of the whole business of bogus spirit photography, and who generously

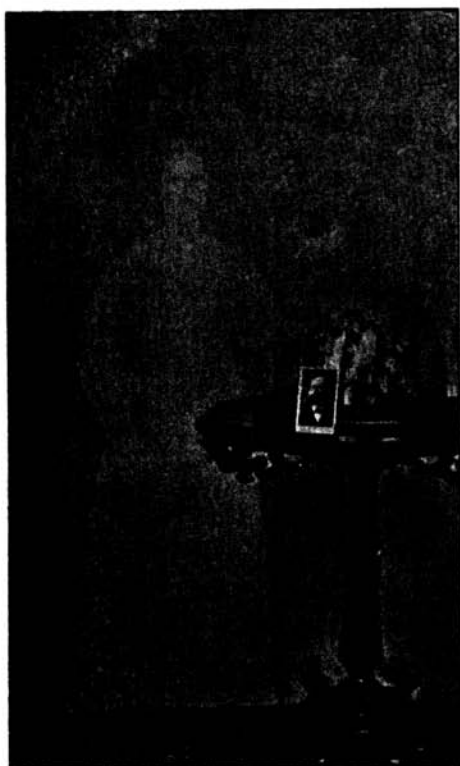


Fig. A—Mumler's Work.

placed all of his material at my service. No one in America knows more of the inside history of spiritualism than Colonel Bundy; no one else has done so much to denounce, expose and punish the frauds that operate under the name of spiritualist, and no one else has done so much to proclaim, uphold and defend whatever of truth there may seem to be in the theory and phenomena of spiritualism. I have never known Colonel Bundy to

be mistaken but once, in believing something to be a fact, which turned out to be a fraud; this was under peculiar circumstances (they must have been very peculiar to have deceived him!) and the mistake was promptly acknowledged, with explanation and apology that did honor to his candor and courage, in his own paper. He was mainly instrumental in breaking up the business of the notorious Fosters (man and wife) of Chicago, who made bogus pictures that Colonel Bundy succeeded in tracing and identifying with cuts published in certain magazines now before me, as I shall presently show. I assume that the reader who has had the patience to follow me thus far has not been left in such innocence that he cannot see that nothing is simpler than to get a good ghost picture of any historical person, or of any notable contemporary, from published prints; or that the actual photograph of any living sitter can be easily manipulated into a shadowy likeness, with a halo and all that. In the collection before me I recognize several persons I know who were alive and well at last accounts, and several other likenesses in the lot are of historical characters, which I should suppose most persons would recognize at a glance.

The oldest spurious photographs in my possession are a series of six which bear on the back this legend: "Specialty by Mumler, 170 West Springfield St., Boston, Mass." This Mumler began operations in 1862 in Boston, and I judge from the faded appearance of these samples of his swindle that they are some fifteen or twenty years old. As will be seen from the one selected for reproduction here (see *Fig. A*), they are very stupid impostures—merely a female figure in white standing by a center table on which is a glass case of artificial flowers (or something of the sort) against which rests the reduced actual photograph of somebody to whom she points. Such work as this should deceive no one; it probably represents

the infancy of the art of fooling people with ghost pictures. Mumler seems to have been the pioneer in this kind of fraud. At any rate I know of no one prior to him. He was caught at his tricks before the year was out, when it was discovered that some of his "spirits of the dead" were photographed from living people. He was, in 1869, in New York, arrested and tried for swindling, on the charge of obtaining money under false pretenses, but got off by some means. The reports of the case were published in the *New York Times* of April 22, 1869; in the *Spiritual Magazine* for June, 1869, and in many other places. An abstract of the evidence appears in Dr. Crowell's "Primitive Christianity and Modern Spiritualism," Vol. I, pp. 478-482. Professor Wallace and Mrs. Sidgwick in their respective papers already cited, both notice Mumler's case—the former the more mercifully, the latter the more judicially. Of his subsequent career, if he had one, I know nothing.

Fig. B, herewith shows the crude work of a bungler or tyro at the business of cheating by means of ghost pictures. It bears on the back this legend: "Specialty. By Jay J. Hartman. Proof of immortality. Individualized spirit existence. Power to return and show themselves [sic!] proven beyond a doubt by Spirit Photography. No. 100 West Fourth street. Cincinnati." It exhibits a blotched likeness of a man with a shadowy female figure in the background. I have seen much better photographs by this same artist, who is the Hartman earlier mentioned in this article as cited in the Adelaide lecture by Mr. Opie. Those who wish to see what can be said in Hartman's favor or defense may consult the *Cincinnati Enquirer* of date 1876, or *Light* of September 26, 1891. I judge the picture here reproduced to have been taken somewhere about the earlier date said, as it is much faded. I have no further information about Hartman to offer.

We come now to *Figs. C and D*, which I know all about, and which are among the best samples of ghostly (and ghastly) camera tricks that I have seen. They were kindly given to me by a friend, who authorized me to make such use of them as I pleased, but who, on my determination of them to be fraudulent, desired me to withhold his name. This gentleman, no longer young, and in sadly failing health, is a spiritualist;



Fig. B—Hartman's Work.

a braver man never fought for his life against the Apaches in Arizona; a more honest man I never knew. He freely believed these photographs to be genuine; he identified some of the faces that appear with deceased relatives and friends; he prized and cherished these pictures as evidences of a future life beyond the grave, and as proof of the communion between souls in this world and the next. He parted with them

to me in the sincere hope that I might through them reach the same conviction and consolation, and in return for this kindness, what could I do? Nothing but deliver a crushing blow to his most sincere beliefs and hopes. He took it with composure and thanked me for undeceiving him; for his stuff is of the sternest and he wants no nonsense. Yet I know he must have felt as he did once, many years ago, when a shot from ambush unhorsed him, and stretched him wounded in the dust of the road, and he sat up, unable to rise to his feet, whipped out his six-shooter, stood off the whole band of murderous Indians, covered the retreat of one of his companions (the other was killed already) and barely escaped with his own life. That is the pathetic side of this miserable, this cruel business of spiritualistic fraud, whether with camera or cabinet, or by what means! But to my story. *Fig. C* is the portrait of the father of my friend. *Fig. D* that of my friend's brother. I will call my friend Mr. X. He sent the two pictures with a letter I will quote in substance, for the information it gives, and for the purpose of showing how fallacious are the "recognitions" of deceased relatives or friends.

"CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA,

Jan. 12, 1892.

Dr. Elliot Coues—DEAR SIR: I send you the photographs of my father and brother, on which appear some spirit pictures. My father was a skeptic in those things and some time after he had his picture taken, my brother went to the same artist to see what he would get, and was as much surprised as my father had been. The upper picture over my father's left shoulder [see *Fig. C*] is my old grandmother and the one under her is R. S. Storrs, for sixty-two years pastor of the first parish of Braintree, and the father of R. S. Storrs, the Brooklyn divine. The picture on the right arm is the likeness of an old neighbor, who had been dead over twenty years, and was at once recognized by his widow upon my mother's showing her the photograph. I have got the grip too badly to write much, but from what I know of the case and from what my mother and others of the family tell me, the pictures must be genuine.

"Very respectfully,

"W— X—."

If the reader will now study *Fig. C*, the portrait of Mr. X—'s father, he will make out the three faces "identified" in the above letter, also, a second face, quite obscure, on the right arm of the sitter; also, a non-committal face low down on the left arm of the sitter; also, and especially, a well-developed portrait of a heavily bearded and moustached man, directly on the sitter's breast. The two faces, Mr. X—'s "grandmother," and "Rev. Mr. Storrs" are in the background. I call special attention to the faces *on* the person of the sitter, because I have often been told and find it to be generally believed, that one test of "genuineness" is the appearance of ghostly figures *upon*, as if in front of, the actual sitter's person. But this is emphatically not so. Whether you see the sitter through the "ghost," or see the "ghost" through the sitter depends entirely upon which is the darkest and which is the lightest of the two pictures in the parts where they are superimposed by the operator in the successive exposures required to produce the fraud. The operator can of course plant his ghost figures anywhere he pleases on the plate, and put as many of them in as he pleases. I have samples of more than twenty thus put in one photograph, but those which he places anywhere within the boundaries of the actual sitter's figure will show in front of, or behind, that figure, according to their relative lightness or darkness. Still it is quite a trick to impose a spirit face *on* the person of the sitter. It was some time before the imposters "caught on." The spirit forms were generally hovering shadowy over or to one side of the actual form; and when they were fixed apparently in front of the figure of the sitter, this arrangement was studiously paraded as a "test" of their genuineness. The scamp who executed the frauds of *Figs. C* and *D*, became expert in this particular. Examine *Fig. D*, for example and see how squarely he has planted a

large, strong full-bearded face on the breast of Mr. X—'s brother. Observe also, another large but dimmer face on the right shoulder and a sharp small face on the left shoulder, apparently of a woman or child; and compare the large, blurry face, quite dim, off the left shoulder (on your right as you look at the photograph.) There is here yet another face, slyly

could identify the artist. I had some years before seen the same handiwork in the possession of my brother, Medical Director S. F. Coues, U. S. Navy; and some time before that had seen pictures like these in a large miscellaneous lot owned by a certain camel-swallowing ghost hunter in Washington, D. C. Among them were ghost pictures of George Wash-



Fig. H—A Fair Anonyma and her Attendant Spirit.

tucked away, making five in all on this photograph, besides the sitter. Can you discover it? And can you puzzle out a seventh and an eighth face, besides that of the sitter, in *Fig. C*, the photograph of Mr. X.'s father? They are there!

When I received these two photographs, at Prescott, Arizona, in January of this year, I thought they looked familiar, and I was sure I

ington, obviously taken from one of his best known historical portraits, and others as obviously reproducing that wood-cut of "Lydia Pinkham," whose medical advertisement, in half, if not all, the newspapers in the United States, has familiarized everybody with her features! The following March I was in Chicago, and found that Colonel Bundy had a literal "rogue's gallery," (the rogue

being the artist) of a dozen or more photographs identical with these two of mine, in every particular of style and make, and certainly by the same hand. The artist is a fellow calling himself "Dr." William Keeler, who operated for years in Boston and elsewhere. I have seen him perform some of his cabinet tricks in Washington. He has a brother, styled "P. L. O. A." Keeler, who has long lived comfortably in Washington, on a varied repertory of tricks, which includes the slate-writing trick, the cabinet materialization trick, and a peculiar modification of the latter, which he works to great advantage, but which it would take too long to describe here. I was therefore not surprised, after I had made this identification of the Keeler frauds, to receive, at Chicago, the following letter from my friend X—:

"CAMP VERDE, ARIZONA,
March 15, 1892.

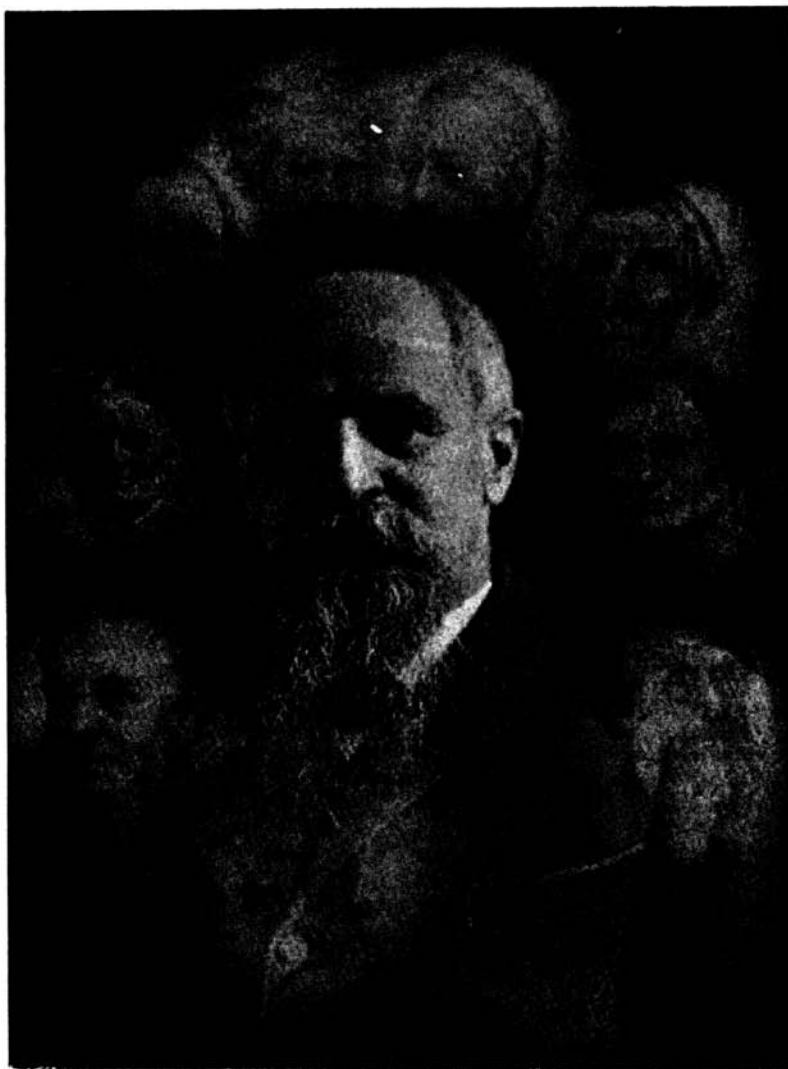
"*Dr. Coues*—DEAR SIR: In regard to those photos, my brother says that the artist's name was *Keeler*, and that he was located on Dover street, near Shawmut avenue (in Boston). * * * The photos were taken six or seven years ago. * * * I am, yours, etc., W—X—."

Dropping Keeler now, let us take up another candidate for our own rogue's gallery. *Fig. E* resembles *Figs. C* and *D*, but has a style of its own, particularly as to the grouping of the faces about the sitter's face, and the management of the halation of light around them. Besides the eight heads arranged around the sitter, there are several others imprinted on his coat, as in the Keeler pictures. The sitter I do not know, neither do I recognize any of the "ghost" faces. Perhaps some reader of the magazine may be able to identify one or more of them. They are likely to be the portraits of several now or lately living persons, taken from actual photographs of these persons, or else from prints in some periodical. This photograph is the work of one "Dr." Stansbury, late of San Francisco, late of Chicago, late of elsewhere.

The first and last time I saw him was at Onset Bay, Mass., in the summer of 1889. He had a sign out "From here to heaven by telegraph," or something to the same effect, advertising some huggermugger business he worked inside, though his forte just then was the production on closed slates of spirit messages and spirit drawings in colored pencils, said drawings being prepared for him by a confederate who lived on the same street. This swindler came to Chicago in or about 1888, practiced spirit photography for awhile, and then made over the trick of his trade to certain parties I shall speak of next. I should not have mentioned so obscure a scamp as Stansbury except for this connection of his with the operations of the Fosters. The balance of the lot of photographs in my hands, over twenty in number, consists: First, of Stansbury's frauds, like the one I have selected for illustration; second, of frauds perpetrated by Mr. F. N. Foster and wife, after learning the trick from Stansbury; third, of honest imitations of the Fosters' work, done by Mr. S. W. Fallis, of Chicago (residence, 587 West Ohio street, office Baker & Co., engravers, corner Clark and Monroe streets). With a letter of introduction from Colonel Bundy, I called upon Mr. Fallis, in Chicago, last April. He was very communicative, and told me all about these photographs, with permission to make such use of the information as I might wish. He spread before me perhaps fifty of his own make, similar in all respects to the Foster frauds. He laughed at the simplicity of the trick, at the same time stating that easy as an ordinary photographer might think it to be to produce just these effects, it was not so easy after all, unless one had learned how to manipulate the plates. But that is a matter of photographic technique into which, for obvious reasons, I do not intend to enter. My reader must rest upon my assurance that it is easy enough, *si scias artificium*, if you

"catch on." It is a matter of prepared plates, repeated exposures and peculiar management of the lights and shades. Any one can do it who can catch a live sitter for the center-piece, acquire a number of photographs or printed cuts of other people, and apply

lying before me, sworn and subscribed to before a notary public, by three persons, one of whom is Mr. Fallis himself. It is headed thus: "At the request of Mr. and Mrs. F. N. Foster, special photographers, we held a STRICT TEST SEANCE with



Alleged Spirit Photos by Dr. Stansbury of San Francisco.

Mr. Fallis' methods of manipulation. To show how utterly worthless (as worthless as my friend (X—)'s "recognition" of deceased relatives) are affidavits and the like in this case, I will adduce a printed statement

them, November 18th, 1888, of which we make the following statement:" The statement which follows, a page long, is so worded as to make it appear impossible that any fraud had been perpetrated—the pictures must

be of ghosts. On questioning Mr. Fallis about his signing such a statement, he explained to me how every word of it could be and was literally true, and yet the fraud could be perpetrated, as it in fact had been, on the very persons who subscribed the affidavit; he simply had not learned the trick then. But he soon found it out for himself, and produced a great many pictures, just like those with which the Fosters cheated their customers, for the amusement of himself and his friends. The public exposure of the Fosters' fraud followed promptly in the *Religio-Philosophical Journal* and doubtless in other papers.

The very large series of the Foster shams, and of the Fallis imitations in good faith of these shams, which I have inspected, enables me to speak with absolute confidence. Here are hundreds of faces of historical personages, authors, artists, actors, soldiers, reformers and others of the world's great people, all taken from known printed pictures, and all recognizable by those who have seen their portraits or have known the originals in life. Here are scores of ordinary mortals, some lately dead perhaps, but some certainly alive still, and all retaken as ghosts from their ordinary photographs. Here are Lowell and Longfellow—here Thackeray and Byron. Here is Mrs. Maud Lord Drake, whom I have known for years, whom I met in San Francisco last December, and who was very much alive last March when she had that dreadful time with a wicked newspaper man in Kansas City, Missouri. Here I find my quondam friend, Mr. McDonald, formerly of Chicago, whom I last saw walking down the street in Washington, some months ago. One venerable "ghost," whose name I have forgotten, though Mr. Fallis gave it to me, appears repeatedly with his flowing, patriarchal beard; he was evidently kept in stock to do duty as the deceased ancestor of numerous customers. Here on one of the fraudulent pictures, along with the

standard graybeard just mentioned is the ghost-photo of the saint-like Mrs. Elizabeth Fry, a noted character in her day, taken from the cut on page 399 of *Harper's Magazine* for August, 1882, illustrating the article entitled "Some Worthies of Old Norwich!" Here is Adelaide Varese Pedrotti, taken from the cut on page 696 of the *Century Magazine* for March, 1882, illustrating the article "Opera in New York," by Richard Grant White. Mrs. Austin is here, too, from page 694 of the same article. Here, again, is Parepa Rosa, from the cut on page 199 of the *Century Magazine*, for June, 1882. Here, once more, on a bogus photo, by Foster and wife, taken in 1888 in Chicago, is the portrait of the ghost of the "Indian maiden, Marquette," from the cut on page 339 of *Harper's Magazine* for August, 1882*. She appears in company with a Mr. G. S. Hubbard, an old Chicagoan who died recently, but was alive when he sat for the photo from which this portrait of his ghost was taken, and with three other ghosts who hover about the actual sitter, the latter being a Mr. Dresslein of Chicago. But why protract these desultory remarks? They only occur to me as my eye roams over the rogues' gallery that nearly covers my desk. Space presses and I have yet to call the reader's attention in particular to two "spirit" photographs, which I select from the lot as good examples of the whole.

Fig. F is an egregious fraud perpetrated by Mr. and Mrs. F. N. Foster in Chicago, in 1888. The actual sitter is a Mr. Martin of the firm of Case & Martin, pie-bakers, corner Wood and Walnut streets, Chicago. He is supposed to be surrounded by his "spirit-band" of Indian "guides" and "controls." Now, if the patient reader will turn to the *Century Magazine* for August, 1882, he will find, on page 526, an

*Col. Bundy was put on the track of these published originals by a friend who took unwearied pains to hunt over old files of magazines for the purpose. He handed the magazines themselves to me. They are before me as I write, and I have examined and verified each reference.

interesting article entitled "An Aboriginal Pilgrimage," in which my excellent friend Mr. Frank H. Cushing and the Zuñi Indians, which, as everybody remembers, he exhibited all over the country, are written up by my other friend Sylvester Baxter. On page 528 stands Cushing at full length in the Indian tog he affected on occasions of ceremony; and on pages following are the portraits of several Indians of the tribe of Zuñi, used by Foster and wife as the original of these "ghosts." The pretty female face, marked "1," over the pie-baker's right shoulder, is the same Maiden Marquette already mentioned in connection with a different photograph, as taken from *Hesper's* for August, 1882, page 339. The hideous face which looms up over the head of Sitter Martin is simply an enlargement of a small portrait like any one of those of the other Indians. The enlargement leaves it irre recognizable, but has this advantage, that it clearly shows in the dotted lines, the marks of the tooling of the wood engraver, who executed the original of the cut from which it is copied! Sometimes I wonder which is the bigger fool in these cases—the sitter, sure to be cheated, or the operator, sure to get caught.

Fig. G is one of the great many pictures made by Mr. Fallis, in good faith for the purpose of exposing Foster's fraud, by showing how easily it could be imitated. It is beautifully executed. The sitter wears an immense rose on his chest, partly *over* his coat and vest, partly *under* his turned-down collar, verifying some-

thing that I explained earlier in this article about the relative positions of lighter and darker shades when superposed. Over his head is a spiritualized and very pretty face, artistically managed. The young man's face, marked "1," is that of one John Slater, a reputed medium, now or lately living. The face marked "2" is that of the noted medium, Mrs. Maud Lord Drake, of whom I have already spoken, in connection with a different photograph. These, and all the rest of the "ghost" pictures are taken, as I need scarcely repeat, from actual photographs of the living sitters.

I cannot bring this article to a better close than by noting my own humble share in the line of promoting spirit photography. I happen to have, in Chicago, a young relative who shall be nameless, though he sometimes dabbles in amateur photography. This young gentleman has a young lady friend, and this fair Anonyma, no doubt, has a guardian angel somewhere in the spheres. After looking over my gallery of ghosts they seemed to be suddenly seized with a mutual idea, which caused their abrupt disappearance together. There is an amateur camera club, or something of that sort, in Chicago, I believe. At any rate, my young relative returned that day with the portrait of a very pretty girl, attended by a very nice spirit. I am not in the secret of this mysterious affair, and I would not tell if I were. But here (*Fig. H*), is the portrait, to speak for itself, and if the attendant spirit could do the same, perhaps we should hear the rest of the story.

