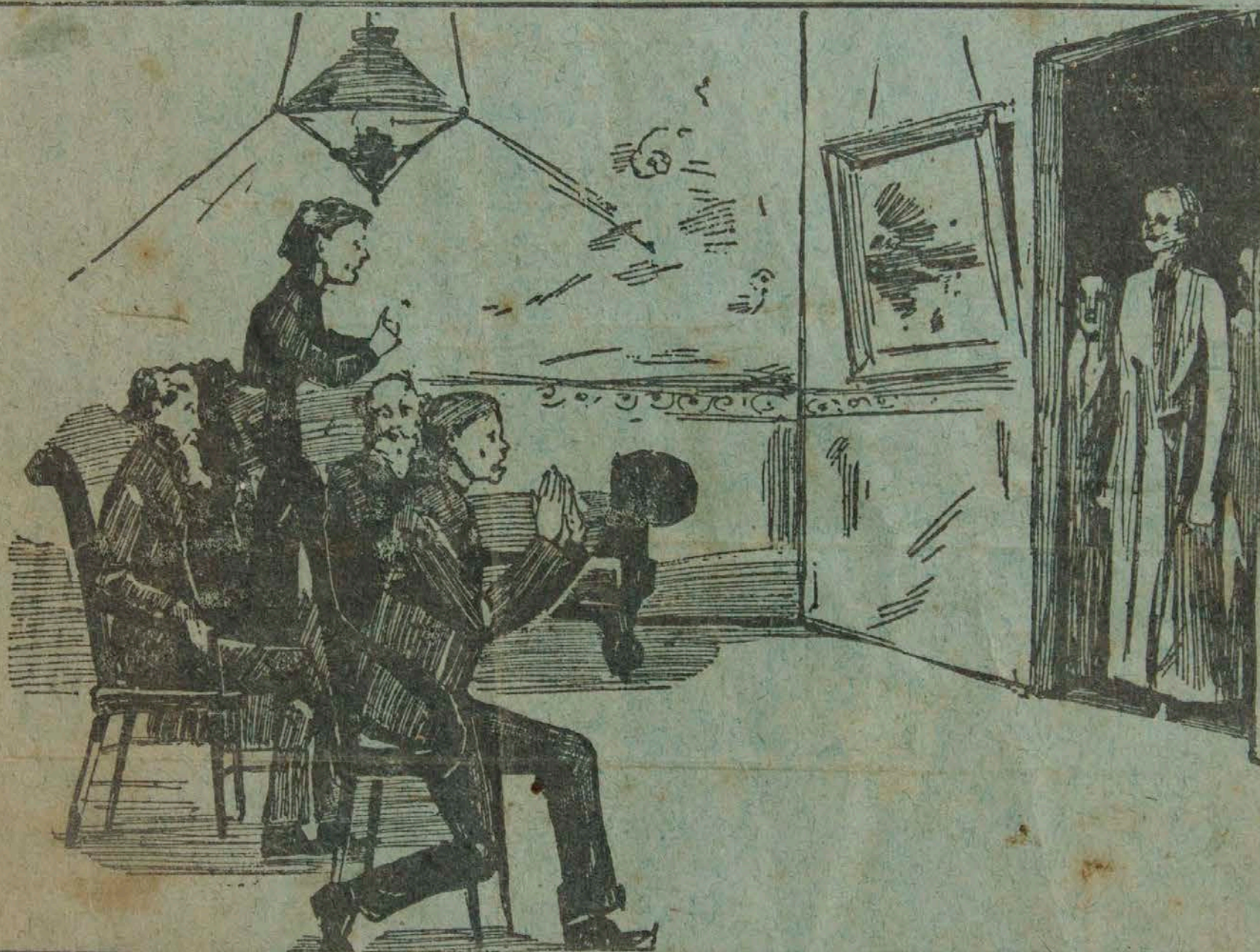


TWO YEARS

Among the Spirits

— IN THE —

Godless Town of Liberal.



THE EXPERIENCE OF THE FAMOUS MEDIUM,
DR. J. B. BOUTON, LIBERAL, MO.

"Lo, the freezing horror! The floor of the tenement opens, and the gray hair floats up; and the forehead, the eyes, the lips, the shoulders, the arms, the feet, the entire body of dead Samuel wrapped in sepulchral robe, appears to the astonished group, who stagger back and hold fast, catch their breath, and shiver with terror.—Oh, that was an awful seance!

TALMAGE.

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PAMS
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"HARK FROM THE TOMB A JOYFUL SOUND!"

—OR—

—SPIRIT ECHOES FROM "OVER THERE."—

A CONCISE HISTORY
OF THE
WONDERFUL MEDIUMSHIP
OF THE "WONDERFUL MEDIUM."
DR. J. B. BOUTON, LIBERAL, MO.

Price 25cts for single copy; five copies for \$1.00; 100 copies
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Bouton, Liberal, Mo.

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TWO YEARS AMONG THE SPIRITS
IN THE GODLESS TOWN OF LIBERAL, MISSOURI.

PREFACE.

I am aware of the fact that it would be folly in me to attempt to justify myself in the minds of some of the humiliated Spiritualists, who were so confirmed in the belief that they had been holding sweet communion with those who had only passed to a higher life, to return again, which they have learned to be a delusion.

I have practiced medicine for more than twenty years, and have often found it necessary in extreme cases to make the patient a little sicker, by giving medicine to remove the cause. Then, if they will take their medicine all right, there is no danger.

This thing called Spiritualism is a contagious disease, and a dangerous one. About four years ago, I discovered that it was spreading rapidly throughout the country, and was getting a dangerous hold here in Liberal. Seeing the necessity of a remedy, I prescribed what I then believed to be the only safe and effectual one—which was to give those afflicted a Liberal dose of spook syrup, and then show them the material of which it was composed. I administered the remedy, and the superstitious took it as greedily as ever a child took candy lozenges “and cried for more.” They had never taken anything half so sweet. But when the time came to exhibit the formula of which it was composed—as one of my patients, G. H. Walser, said in his struggle for revenge—“they vomited with shame;” yea, more, they foamed with rage, and a few of them have threatened to prosecute me for maltreatment, although Mr. Walser had declared publicly that “even if it was a fraud, it was a good thing, because it was bringing the people together and uniting them”—this was on the principle mentioned in “Holy Writ”—“continuing in sin that grace may abound.”

Up to the time that I became a medium, there was a variety of opinions or isms here in Liberal, it being a Freethought town, and claiming to be the “only one in the world.” Each ism striving for the ascendancy soon caused trouble. The time for the lion and the lamb to lie down together had not yet come. Seeing the necessity of something to counteract the unhallowed influence of the evil spirits in our midst, I concluded to introduce other and better spirits. These soon learned to know my voice, and would come forth in all their glory and grandeur. There was grace in their footsteps, heaven was in their eyes, and their faces (some of them) like Solomon’s of old, were dark, but very comely,—especially Uncle Absalom’s, Big Thunder’s, and Old Snag’s—one negro and two indian chiefs who were very noted characters at my seances. Bro. Walser, at that time, said he would give \$1.000 for one of the diamonds which ornamented Big Thunder’s wardrobe; but to-day, I suppose, he would not give a nickle for his whole outfit.

THE AUTHOR.

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INDORSEMENT.

We, the undersigned citizens of Liberal, Barton Co., Missouri, have a personal acquaintance with Dr. J. B. Bouton, and know him to be a man of TRUTH and a WORTHY CITIZEN.

We have been given the privilege of examining the conditions under which certain slate-writing takes place in said Dr. Bouton's house, alleged to be through the instrumentality of spirits. We have availed ourselves of said privilege, and have made a thorough examination of said premises, and we hereby pronounce it utterly impossible that said writing can occur through visible or tangible human agency:

C. W. STEWART,
D. P. GREELEY,
C. W. GOODLANDER, Jr.,
JOHN G. MAYER,
G. H. WALSER.

State of Missouri, }
Barton County. } ss.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, a Notary Public in and for the county of Barton, state of Mo., this the fifth day of June, 1885.

F. L. YALE, Notary Public.

HOW IT ALL CAME TO PASS:

In the fall of 1884, the Spiritualists of Liberal induced a medium by the name of Search to visit Liberal. It was expected by them that his seances would open the eyes of many unbelievers and cause them to believe in spirit phenomena. Search was said to be one of the best slate-writing and materializing mediums in the world. He held two seances. The first was among "believers" and gave such satisfaction to them, that several skeptics, myself included, were invited to attend the second. It is not necessary for me to describe the manifestations that night further than to say they were transparent. I told some of the believers present that I could beat that seance myself, without the aid of spirits, and the sequel proves it true. The skeptics present could easily see that it was a fraud, and a very weak one at that; but the Spiritualists pronounced it genuine, grand, wonderful, and convincing. This set me to thinking as to how far credulity and superstition could carry people when they once get started in that direction, and it gave me an inspiration. Other skeptics who were there thought as I did, as subsequent facts will show.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIUM.

Early in 1885, a few of my neighbors (some Spiritualists among the number) proposed to hold circles at my house. The Spiritualists thought by doing so they would get manifestations which would convince me and others of the truth of Spiritualism. A night was set for circles—Tuesday night of each week. For the first two or three nights we got very little evidence; the table would shake a little after sitting at it some time. At last I concluded to try my hand and see if I could not make it a little more interesting. We used a small, pine table, the legs of which were close together. It would tip very easily. By pressing down on my side I could make it raise from the other, and soon found in this way to make it rock as I desired, and to answer questions. We agreed that one tip meant "No," two "don't know," three "Yes." In this way we could have the supposed spirits spell out names or messages by going over the alphabet. When we got to the first letter of the name, if I knew it, the table would tip once, and so on, until the entire name was spelled out. It became interesting. Some one would say, "O, that is wonderful!" Then another would ask if any of their spirit friends were present. The table would generally answer "Yes," as it is supposed by believers that spirits are always present. "Can you spell your name for us?"—some one would ask. If I happened to know the name myself the table would spell it; if I did not, the answer "No" was given.

These were the only manifestations we got for about two weeks when they became stale with me; but all the rest were wonderfully delighted. I would often ask them if they really believed it to be the work of spirits. The answer would be: "Yes, it must be spirits. If not, what can it be? Any one can see that intelligence is there, and we are unable to account for it in any other way." I would say I was an investigator, and was not ready to give my opinion just yet. After the time arrived to break up our circles the members thereof would remain a half hour longer, rejoicing over our wonderful success, and even then reluctantly retire to their respective places of abode. I begun to think I was making pretty fair headway in my investigations. When we first begun our investigations quite one half of the members of my circle were Materialists; but now, firm "believers." Thus far I had all the evidence I desired and must prepare something new for the next meeting. When the time came all were promptly on hand. Each took his respective place in the circle. Soon the table began to tremble—this being produced by a quick, tremulous motion of the hands on the table. Mrs.

MY EXPERIENCE AS A MEDIUM.

Weems, who took upon herself the office of speaker, said: "The spirit friends are here. Can you tell us who you are?" The answer "yes" came. "Will you give us your name on the slate if we call the alphabet?" "Yes." A slate and pencil were procured. Mary Rosecrans' name was spelled out. Mrs. Weems shouted for joy and exclaimed: "O, Mag! I am so glad you have come. This is the first time we have ever heard from you since you passed to spirit life. Now you want to tell us something—I know you do! Are you happy over there?" "No!" "I was afraid you were not happy. You are troubled about your children. If they were well cared for would you be happy?" "Yes." She would have asked many more questions, but some other spirit took possession of the table, shook it roughly, and thus caused much uneasiness among the members of the circle. The question was asked: "Who are you?" I gave the table a sudden hoist about six inches from the floor. This caused some alarm. "Is this Mag?" Another jump—"No." "Can you tell us who you are?" Another jump. "Will you let Mag tell us who you are?" The answer "yes" came, with three bounds of the table. "Mag, can you tell us who this strange spirit is?" Three gentle tips of the table, "yes." "Will you give us the name on the slate?" "Yes." Mrs. Weems called over the alphabet and the name Snag was spelled. I told them that I once knew an old Snake Indian by that name, when quick as thought there came three loud and distinct raps on the table, produced by pressing firmly the ball of the fingers on its surface, and pushing forward a very little at a time, which will cause a soft, but very distinct cracking sound. With a little practice any one can do this without fear of detection, especially when the light is turned down, so as to produce proper conditions. These raps were something we all had been anxious to obtain. Spiritualists think that when they can produce raps they are making progress toward development. The old Indian would always rap, but never tip the table. We all enjoyed ourselves that night conversing with old Snag. He was a very funny old Indian. At first we thought the old fellow was mad at some of the party; but after we got the conditions to please him he was very funny and communicative in his way; but we failed to get satisfactory answers to questions asked him. Some one made the remark that he believed Snag was drunk, when in an instant three loud raps were heard. "Yes," said one, "he is drunk! he says he is." I knew very well that he was drunk when he was killed; for I stood within twenty feet of him when he was shot dead from his pony in Montana. We could not get a straightforward answer to any question unless about whiskey or tobacco.

SNAG CHEWS TOBACCO.

That meeting was very interesting to all, myself not excepted. At an unusually late hour we broke up, with the understanding that we would meet at another house. The time came, and all were on hand. We found our old friend Snag present, and waiting for us. He took possession of the table and no other spirit was permitted to come near it. He gave us to understand that he wanted whiskey or tobacco. Mr. Mayer asked him if he would eat tobacco if some was given him. He said he would. A good sized piece was laid on the slate, and I held it under the table with one hand while I laid the other on top of it. The light was turned very low, so as to make conditions right for dead Indians to chew tobacco. I laid the slate on my knee, took the tobacco off and put it in my own mouth. We were told by the usual raps that the work was done. The light was turned up, and the slate laid on the table. The tobacco was gone. All exclaimed, "Is not that wonderful?" Mrs. Weems turned to me saying: "Now what do you think? Can you still doubt it?" I replied, It is very strange. I never saw anything like that before—I hadn't. Some one of the party brought a flower from the garden and laid it on the slate and asked Snag to get another like it and lay it by the side of the one on the slate. The light was turned down. I passed the slate under the table as before. Soon raps were heard. The light was turned up; but instead of the flower we found writing saying: "Go to hell with your posy! me want whiskey!" This brought the exclamation from all present: "It is wonderful; if we just keep up our circles, we will soon get materializations!" All agreed that they never saw anything like that. After the light had been turned down I laid the slate on my knee, wrote the message, and signed Snag's name. Mr. Mayer said, "If my father is present I want him to write his name on the slate." Three soft raps, quite different from Snag's, were heard. "That is another spirit—it must be my father," said Mr. Mayer. The slate was cleaned, and I put it under the table with one hand while the other rested on top of it. The light was turned down as before, and a song was sung. Soon raps were heard. The lights were turned on, and the slate brought forth with Mr. Mayer's father's name in full. He declared it was his father's own handwriting—he knew it was; for his father wrote a different hand from any one else.

After the circle was broken, nearly an hour was spent in talking over the grand success of the evening.

News of the wonderful manifestations spread through the town and surrounding country like wild fire.

MATERIALIZATION.

The next evening I was at the National Hotel kept by S. C. Thayer. He proposed to form a circle in the parlor. We did so. All present, except Mr. Thayer, were unbelievers. After sitting at the table a few minutes, Mr. Thayer said: "If there are any spirits friends present, please rap three times on the table." Three soft, yet distinct raps were heard. Questions were asked by members of the circle, and were answered by raps. About a year previous to this time, the landlady of the house had died, and it was naturally supposed to be her. She was asked if she would materialize. The answer came that she would. Mr. Thayer proposed to form a circle for materialization. There was a small bed room adjoining the parlor, and it was proposed to use this for a cabinet. After the circle had been arranged, I, by request, took a seat in the improvised cabinet, and Mr. Thayer took a seat at the organ. The light was turned down to make proper conditions. The question arose in my mind how to produce a spook. A thought struck me. I sat with my side to the circle, threw my arm out, raised my hand above my head and brought it forward to the door, when one of the party exclaimed: "O, there she is!" It remained but a moment and then disappeared. All thought it the most wonderful sight they ever saw, and believed it to be the spirit of the deceased landlady. It came and disappeared several times. Finally I took a white handkerchief in my hand and brought it forward. They could then see every feature plainly—one party saw the same dress she wore before she died and even the pleats in the dress. This seance created greater excitement than ever, and the hired girls of the hotel were alarmed and could never be induced to go to that room unattended.

After this I held a secret conference with several of my friends whose opinions of Spiritualism were similar to my own, and we agreed to form a Syndicate for the purpose of extending the experiments begun by myself. All were to be mutually interested in the result. All were to unite in gathering information to be used in manufacturing messages, and each was to carefully guard the secret and warn the others if in danger; and neither of us should "give it away" or publish it without the consent of the whole body, or take into our confidence any one unless first submitted to all. All agreed that I should continue to act as medium, while they would assist me in every way possible. We had a strong combination, and one little dreamed of by the people of Liberal not in the secret of it.

It now became necessary to prepare for business. My house was se-

ALL ABOUT THE CABINET.

lected as the place for work, because it was so constructed that we believed a safe and convenient place could be arranged over a small closet which was built in one corner of the dining room. The top of this closet was made of matched flooring. By making an opening in the top large enough for a man to pass through, we found that there was sufficient room for a man to sit or stand and work very comfortably. A trap door was made, just wide enough to answer the purpose, by using the boards full length (sixteen inches,) and reaching from side to side, so as to show no sign of a joint more than any other part of the closet roof. This door was hung on a hinge, and was lifted by a strap; and to prevent unnecessary noise in opening or closing, the edges were lined with cloth. At first there was no way of fastening down the trap door after the operator came from his office—the loft above the closet,—and to guard against the possibility of discovery, some means had to be provided for access to the office besides the trap door. Between the dining room and kitchen was a board partition which was once the gable end of the house before the kitchen was built to it. Below the ceiling it was lathed and plastered. Near the partition, over head in the kitchen, was a scuttle hole, through which to enter the loft in case of necessity. Through the partition, above the scuttle hole, we arranged a snug fitting little door, through which a man could pass to the top of the closet, and, when his work was done, he could fasten the trap door from above so that it would be impossible for any curious person to raise it from below.

I will now state how I came to use this closet for slate-writing: Those who were not Spiritualists, "dyed in the wool," were not always satisfied that the spirits did the writing when I held the slate under the table. I could not blame them much—I had no faith in it myself. The next regular circle was held at my house at which time the spirits positively refused to write if I held the slate. They seemed to be offended because none but those of the household of the faithful were willing to believe it to be genuine. We had some difficulty in ascertaining the exact conditions required by our spirit friends. Some feared they had gone back on us entirely. Mrs. Weems came down on them with such a flood of questions that the spirits refused to answer them. Some one suggested that I should talk to them. I then asked them if they would talk to me. There came three loud distinct raps, "yes." So I began: "Well, friends we are anxious to know what you desire in order to get the necessary conditions. Shall I lay the slate on the table?" "No." "Shall I lay it under the table?" "No." "O, they have gone back on us! it is

SLATE-WRITING EXTRAORDINARY.

too bad!" said the little Mrs. Weems. I again inquired: Are there any conditions under which you can and will write for us—I was very sure there were? "Yes." [To the company.] They say they will, and it remains for us to find out the proper conditions and provide them. I sat as if in a trance about one minute, facing the closet. My friends, I said, I have an impression; let us see if it is correct. I turned to the table and addressed the spirits as follows: If I place a slate and pencil in that closet and lock the door, will our spirit friends write on the slate? "Yes." Mrs. Weems exclaimed: "My God! will they do it? We can soon find out, I replied. A shelf was soon prepared and a slate placed on it so as to be most convenient to the trap door. The slate was placed there with all due formality and a proper amount of solemnity; then the closet door was locked. Everything being ready (the clerk at his post, the circle arranged in front of the door) I said, let us have some music by singing the "Sweet Bye and Bye"—sing it loud and lively. As much noise as possible was very essential at this particular time so that the secretary could operate the trap door without being heard. After the closet door was locked, I sat with my back and head resting against it so that I could more easily hear the raps. The singing continued about five minutes when three raps were given, and plainly heard by all in the room. A death-like silence prevailed in a moment. Bring a light, I said, and let us see what we have got. The slate was taken from the shelf, and to the unutterable surprise of all present, there was a message covering nearly one side of it, addressed to one of the party who readily recognized the perfect hand-writing of a dead relative. Such a time of rejoicing I do not remember of ever witnessing before—not even at a Methodist revival. The message was such as was calculated to make the recipient happy. It gave a brief description of their beautiful home in summer land. Some of the party seemed to be ready to sell out and go at once. It was some time before order was sufficiently restored to admit of our proceeding to business. At last the circle was again formed, and another slate placed upon the shelf. After a few minutes singing another soul was made happy by receiving a message from some dear one "over there;" then another, and another, until three or four more of the party were about ready to emigrate to the land of shadows. The slates containing the messages were carefully wrapped up, so that the much-prized treasures would not become defaced before they could be covered with glass, which was afterward done by their owners, and the slates hung up in the parlors where friends could see them.

"BELIEVE OR BE DAMNED."

Up to this time all seemed satisfied with one meeting per week; now they thought two would be much better. The day following this seance, on every street corner could be seen squads of men discussing the wonderful phenomena. One or two were holding slates, covered with glass, and containing messages. Some were swearing that they would not believe a word of it. Others got mad and called them damned fools because they would not believe that spirits wrote the messages. Quite a number of persons came in that day to see the place where the spirits did the writing, and to get permission to attend the next meeting. I agreed to admit a few outsiders, and set a time for a meeting for the accommodation of those who did not belong to the regular circle. When the night came, the house was crowded at an early hour. We formed a circle around the table, and were told by raps that the spirits were ready for business. Every person brought his own slate. One was placed in the closet, and the raps soon informed us that the writing was done; the slate was taken from the closet, and contained a message for a party in attendance. Part of those present were skeptical and made a very close examination of the closet, but found no possible chance for deception. All concurred in this declaration and concluded that it must be the work of spirits—these people went home happy in their delusion.

The next day my house was crowded from morning till night. Some came to congratulate me on my successful mediumship, and some for a very different purpose—they were hunting for trap doors. I told them to examine until satisfied. They did so and declared it wonderful indeed. Committees of Materialists came again to examine my house for some trap, trick or machine by which the writing was done; but could find no chance for fraud or deception.

The contagion spread rapidly through the surrounding country, and brought many Spiritualists to Liberal. At this the old members of the faith took courage, and general good feeling prevailed among them because of the success and triumph of Spiritualism over every opposition. Spook hunters could not down it in any way, and it grew and prospered. In fact, the excitement became rather alarming. Believers and unbelievers came from all parts of the country. Spies were lying around my house whenever it was known that a circle was being held; but owing to the vigilance of our Syndicate, they were foiled in their efforts; for some of our own little band were always on guard, and often in apparent league with those who were watching to catch somebody going in or coming out of my house from the back way.

PROF. WIGFIELD SEES HIS MOTHER.

Owing to the intense excitement we often had to stop holding circles for a time, but we kept on with our plans for making my seances more interesting in future. When we resumed we had everything in readiness for both slate-writing and materializations. At our first one in this series, several persons present recognized their dead friends just as plainly as ever they did in life. One, Prof. Wigfield, saw and recognized his mother, and was so affected by it that he broke from the circle and with out-stretched arms exclaimed: "My mother! Oh, my dear mother!" But she was like Paddy's flea, the nearer he got to her, the farther she was off, and the Professor returned to his seat and wept bitterly. The spook that he was so confident was his mother, was a piece of board about the size of a woman's face, painted white, with a strip of white cloth on the top to represent white hair. This was manipulated by an operator in another room.

Having several assistants, we could carry on materializations and slate writing at the same time, and also have our pickets out to guard against surprise from the outside. We frequently had four bogus spooks behind the scene at one time, and sometimes more when all our assistants could be present. One night we had a room full of them, and if I could reveal their names, a thing which I have not the liberty to do, the people would be surprised at their numbers and their respectability. We had two Indian chiefs as our principal actors or characters; one of them was Old Snag, who ate the tobacco, the other, Big Thunder. The latter proved to be a prominent personage, though no one had ever heard of him before. He gave us a short history of himself on a slate, claiming to be the great grandfather of Pocahontas.

One thing which made my seances so satisfactory to all, was the fact that I always sat in the room where the circle was formed.

There were two front rooms in my house, each fourteen by sixteen feet. One of these rooms was used by my assistants. The other was the seance room. The one occupied by the spooks was made as dark as possible, while the other was made just light enough to see a person standing in the door. I have sat and looked at them myself when they made their appearance in the doorway, and then I did not wonder at others being deceived.

Our investigations were not confined to this kind of work, however. There were no less than fifteen or twenty as good mediums here, in their particular phases, as there are in the world. Circles were being held at all of these different places every week. Some of our "Syndicate" would

SPIRITS GATHERING BY THOUSANDS IN LIBERAL.

nearly always be present and have the mediums inquire of their spirit controls if they could tell, or if they knew, whether any or all of these wonderful manifestations at my house were really genuine spirit manifestations, and they were always informed that these were the real genuine article. I had some one at that kind of work all the time we were operating, and my work was always reported "first class;" so it became very evident to me that it was all a delusion from beginning to end, and that I was just as good a medium as the best. And in confirmation of my conclusion, all of the old Spiritualists who came to my circles said that they had attended the seances of some of the best mediums in the world, and they had never seen anything as satisfactory as that obtained through my mediumship. The different mediums who attended the meetings at my house, would often become entranced, and the spirits would talk through them and tell us that the spirits were making arrangements to gather in large numbers in the fall of 1886, and concentrate all their forces upon Liberal, hold a revival meeting, and through me, produce greater and more wonderful manifestations than had ever been witnessed in the world.

On one occasion, while a slate was in the closet, I made a mistake which came near proving serious and letting the cat out of the bag as effectually as the burning of my house did. It happened in this wise: I thought that I heard the signal raps, and opened the closet door too soon. The secretary overhead, had not replaced the slate on the shelf, but was just in the act of doing so when I opened the door, and thus revealed his hand at the top of the closet. I then thought the jig was up, and the devil would be to pay; but I closed the door quick as possible, and remarked that the spirit was just in the act of writing. "Yes" said one, "I saw a spirit hand.—It was the most beautiful hand I ever saw!" "Yes, I saw it" said another, "O, it was grand!" When I saw that all were satisfied that it was a spirit hand, I felt quite relieved. It was told all over town next morning and the scoffers tried to make capital out of it; but the only effect this had was to more firmly unite the Spiritualists in defending me from this "vile slander."

On another occasion a sealed letter was laid on the slate and placed in the closet for the spirits to read and answer. The reply was written on the slate in good style and the slate returned to its place; but the letter was forgotten, and retained by the operator up stairs. When the slate was taken out for examination several exclaimed: "Why where's the letter?" I confess I was bothered a little and would have preferred

to have been up stairs myself just then, instead of having to face the audience; but face them I must, so I remarked that the spirit must have taken the letter. "Of course they have," said one, "I have known spirits to do the same thing often." "Yes," said another, "I have too, and sometimes they never bring them back". "Perhaps," said the owner of the slate, "if you would place it on the shelf again, the spirit would bring back the letter." I replied that I was impressed that it would; and then placed the slate on the shelf, and requested the spirit to return the letter. The circle was formed again, and the first stanza of "John Brown" sung, when we heard raps. Now we will see if it has been returned, said I,—I was very sure the letter would be returned. I opened the door and took the slate from the shelf, and, sure enough, there was the letter in perfect condition, unopened, exactly as when placed in the closet. All agreed that the spirits intended this as a test of their powers. "I tell you," said one, "we are going to get something in a short time more wonderful than that!"

I have often gone to other places, by request, to hold seances. In all such cases I was prepared with pasteboard faces concealed about my person, because I never could have as favorable conditions abroad as at my own house. At such times I would have a curtain placed at the door about four feet high, and sit behind that in a dark room. Music of some kind was very essential, and we always had it. Some persons would sit close to, and at one side of the door. When so situated they could see the thin edges of the pasteboard spirit face when I held it up to the view of beholders, and I have sometimes heard them remark when these spirit faces came full into the door: "What a thin face that spirit has!" I would smile and think yes, it is rather THIN!. But well posted Spiritualists could always account for the thinness of the spirits. They said that in order for a spirit to materialize it must have matter of which to form itself, and that it was not always possible to gather from surroundings sufficient material substance to form a fully developed spirit. This they would say was the reason why these poor spirits were so thin; and those who did not understand spirit philosophy were satisfied with that explanation. These poor, thin spirits could never talk, but they could answer questions by a nod or shake of the head, which was very satisfactory. Sometimes a person would imagine the spirit to be a departed friend, a father, mother, brother, sister, child, or other relative, and inquire: "Is that father?" If the spirit nodded his head, the speaker would say, "yes, that is father; I recognized you as soon as you came to the

"BIG MEDA ALL RIGHT--ME GO!"

door. I am so glad you have come. Can't you come again sometime and materialize more fully?" Another nod from the spook. "Thank you! do come again." The spook would bow itself back into darkness behind the curtain and disappear. Then remarks like these would follow: "How can any one doubt Spiritualism after seeing the like of that?" "O well, another would say, "such folks haint got half sense." I would sit in the dark, behind the curtain, enjoying my own opinion in regard to their remarks, but I kept it to myself.

Slates, or paper and pencil, were placed in the room used as a cabinet, with a request that the spirits write a message thereon. If the spook would only write his name it would gratify them very much. When these requests were made and the spirits were unable to write, the medium came to their assistance, and got under control to a sufficient degree to enable him to find the slates and do the writing—that is if I happened to know the names of their departed friends whom they believed to be present, or the facts in regard to their history to a sufficient extent to enable me to formulate a message. But, thanks to our Syndicate, whose labor in hunting up information had been so thorough and exhaustive, I had plenty of material on hand for this phase of mediumship, and was seldom found napping. When the seance was over and the curtain removed, they would rush pell mell into the room, snatch up the slates from the bed or table, glance at the name written thereon, and press them to their over-joyed hearts, then return to the seance room to rejoice over what they had received. When the excitement which always follows the closing of a seance had subsided, a circle would be formed for my benefit, they would place me in the center, saying that the spirits had to draw heavily on me for power to materialize and write and this must necessarily exhaust me very much. One of them who was supposed to possess more healing power than the rest would rush into the circle exclaiming that some great healing spirit had come to restore what the spirits had abstracted from me in materializing. It was generally some Indian spirit—there would be a sort of pow-wow gone through with, lasting ten or fifteen minutes, when the actor would say: "Big Meda all right! me go." That finished that part. Then another one of the party would go off into a sort of cataleptic fit, and the company, of course, would think that some spirit had control of the person, and so whatever was said by the individual while under control, was perfectly reliable, and worthy of credence by all, and consequently much importance was attached to all this party said or did, by those present.

NO MEDIUM BETTER THAN BOUTON.

So while under this influence he or she, as the case might be, would act as medium, through which the spirit would talk, and generally give us a program for our next meeting. After ten or fifteen minutes this medium would come from under the influence; then the time and place for our next meeting would be determined. These meetings never amounted to much unless I was present; then they were "grand." The circles were held until a late hour, then the people would return home happy in the belief that they were attended by the good spirits which had been with them at the circle. The impression made upon my mind at these seances was quite different of course from that on other members of the circle, and every one was adding a link to the chain of evidence which would finally overthrow the whole business. Often when alone I have sat and wondered how men and women, some of more than ordinary intelligence, could become so thoroughly imbued with superstition, and so easily deceived. Then you may say: "You do not believe that trance mediums are influenced or controlled by spirits of dead persons?" No, indeed I do not! If they are thus controlled, all spirits are lying spirits or else extremely ignorant! I speak thus positively through knowledge obtained by a careful and thorough investigation of the subject. Note the following: At nearly all the circles held where they had all the conditions required for the best results and where the most wonderful manifestations were given, the question would be asked: "Are all of the wonderful manifestations produced through Bouton the work of spirits?" The answer was: "They are." The question was often asked by my confederates if I was a good medium, and if there were any better mediums than I. The spirits invariably answered through the other mediums to whom the question was put, "There are none better."

Now what do these facts teach us? Simply this: These mediums did not speak under spirit influence, or else their controls were no wiser or no more truthful than themselves. If the mediums were deceived by my work, it certainly was the duty of their controls to open their eyes to its fraudulency, instead of indorsing it, thereby giving fraud pre-eminence over all genuine spirit manifestation. Yet facts show that somebody, or some spirits, either lied or were mistaken; and to confess that a being possessing super-human intelligence could not detect the trick in my work, is damaging as well as absurd. Yet to argue that the spirits knew, but deliberately lied about the matter, is to admit that all truthful ones (if any) were too ignorant to discover the trickery and raise a dissenting voice, or were intimidated by the liars, hence kept silent.

HENRY REPLOGLE'S REPORT.

April 30th 1885, I held a very successful seance at my house, and the following is a report of it as published in *THE LIBERAL* of that date, by Mr. Henry Replogle, then its editor:

INDEPENDENT SLATE-WRITING,

UNDER SKEPTICS' CONDITIONS.

We have been a few times invited to attend seances by our Spiritualistic friends, and have always reported them as we saw them, which was not always the most favorable to the purported phenomena. But we were true to ourselves by stating the facts as they appeared to us. Now that we have witnessed something that is more favorable to our friends' position, we are in honor, bound to acknowledge it, and again give the facts as we saw them, however much our senses may have deceived us. The accompanying circumstances are as follows:

Al. Weems and his wife, Mrs. Lora Rosecrans Weems, our materialistic friends and neighbors who had been investigating the so-called phenomena of spiritualism at circles among the confirmed Spiritualists of our town, and had failed to find anything satisfactory, were visiting Dr. Bouton and wife of this place one evening, and they proposed in a jest that they try sitting at the table and see what the result would be. As they say, with no hope of any manifestation, Mrs. Weems and Dr. Bouton sat by a small stand or table, when in a few minutes the table began to tip and act as they are said to do at seances. After this our friends John G. Mayer and wife, both confirmed Materialists, were invited to take part in the investigation of the phenomena, and after sitting regularly once a week for a few months, by means of a system of spelling by calling over the alphabet till the table tipped, when the letter was reached that the purported spirit desired to use in spelling out its sentence, several intellible, and some strange communications were spelled out, and finally that the spirits would write on a slate if Dr. Bouton would hold it under the table. A slate was cleaned and examined to the satisfaction of those present, and held by one corner under the table by the Dr. The company watched him till the rapping announced that the writing was done, when the slate was laid on top of the table. On it were found the two words "That's all." So skeptical were they that each accused the other of writing it to have some fun in having the other believe it to be genuine; but good faith was restored and it was decided to try again another evening. So these skeptics met at the residence of Dr. Bouton on Saturday evening, and through the usual tipping learned that if they would put the slate in a closet or clothes press that

REPLOGLE'S REPORT.

was in the room, that the spirit of Mr. Mayer's father would write on it. Mr. Mayer says up to this time he was as skeptical as ever, though he had asked for and received some marks upon the slate that he held under the table himself. He now cleaned his slate thoroughly making sure that no writing or marks were on it, and put a bit of pencil on it, and the Dr. placed it on a shelf in the closet and closed the door, came away and sat down while the company sang. In a short time rapping was heard on the door, and the Dr. opened it and handed Mayer the slate, on which were the words: "My Dear Son I am not dead I Still live John G Mayer." Mayer declares this was written in a hand exactly like his father's. This was the test that completely upset his Materialism, as he and his father had agreed that whoever died first would make known to the other the fact of a future life if there was any, and it was possible to communicate. After this, under similar conditions, Mrs. Booth received the following: "Dear sister your hard days will soon end and you will hear good news. Lizzie Gearhart." Mr. Branson, the following: "Dear Father, I am often with you. Francis." This is a condensed history of the phenomena produced by this circle as gathered from them. We have lived by them and known them for several years and never had any reason to doubt their honesty or truthfulness. All this in our Materialistic associates and friends, aroused our curiosity to see for ourselves, and upon invitation went with a number of others to a seance at Dr. Bouton's residence, and the following is what we saw to the best of our senses under what seem to us to be very fair conditions:

Arriving at the seance, we found Dr. Bouton, Mrs. Weems, Mr. and Mrs. Mayer seated around a small table which was answering questions by tipping, and would tip until the legs on one side would be one foot from the floor. To touch it produced a very peculiar sensation when it was thus controlled. After a few minutes it was learned through this medium that a purported spirit friend of Dr. G. Thompson was present, and would write on a slate if placed in the closet mentioned. As I was the "hard-head" of the occasion, I took a lamp and examined the closet to my satisfaction, after which Dr. Thompson having his own slate handed it to us, when we cleaned it thoroughly, placed a small piece of pencil on it no larger than a wheat grain, and handed it to Dr. Bouton, who took it by the corner, holding it up to full view of the company and slowly placed it on the shelf in the closet, closed the door, and locked it, sat down beside the closet, placing one hand against it, while the rest sang a few minutes, when a faint rapping was heard from the closet.

REPLOGLE'S REPORT.

All now ceased singing, and the Dr. arose, slowly opened the closet, and in full view of all took the slate by the corner from the shelf where it could be seen by us all, carried it to the table, and to our unutterable surprise there was in a full, bold hand three lines of writing as follows: "My son, I am glad to be able to say anything to you. Develop your wife, she will make a good medium. J. Thompson." It was tried again with other slates, but with no success. We were invited to attend another seance on Saturday evening, and wishing to satisfy ourselves better in regard to the closet, we went there and examined it as thoroughly as could be without taking it to pieces.

On Saturday evening we again went at the usual hour and found present, besides the four sitters, G. H. Walser, Mrs. Walser, and S. C. Thayer. It was but the work of a few minutes to get the table in full operation, from which it was learned that the spirit of Mary Rosecrans, sister-in-law of Mrs. Weems, was there and would write on a slate if placed in the closet. Mr. Walser being the "hardhead" on this occasion, as we had been at the previous seance, examined the closet to his satisfaction, and washed and dried the slate thoroughly. After he had satisfied himself that there was no writing on the slate, he carried it to Dr. Bouton, who, with one hand behind him, took it by the corner in the other and placed it on the shelf with Mr. Walser by his side in full light of the lamp, watching him closely. He then closed the door, fastened it, sat down in front of the closet with his back to it and his hands in front of him, while the others sang a few minutes, when rapping was heard on the door. The Dr. then arose and opened the door, and with Mr. Walser by his side took the slate from the shelf and handed it to Mr. Walser who brought it to the table and found to his unspeakable astonishment writing which read as follows: "Lora, I tried to show myself to you the other evening in my room, but it seems that you did not see me. - I will try again soon. Mag."

After this the sitters arranged themselves at the table and soon found that a purported spirit friend of Mrs. Walser was there and would write. Mrs. Walser had brought her own slate and Mr. Walser washed this and dried it thoroughly. He then placed a small piece of pencil on it and carried it to the Dr. as before and saw it safely on the shelf. The Dr. then closed the door and seated himself as before. After singing ten or fifteen minutes old and familiar songs, and still no raps, it was concluded there was no writing

WALSER HEARS FROM D. M. BENNET.

or that we had failed to hear the rapping. So the Dr. said, "If you have written, please rap on the door," when three low but distinct, measured raps came; just while all were breathlessly listening. The door was then opened as before, and the slate carried by Mr. Walser to the table, and to the astonishment of all, contained the following: "Friend Walser, I am glad to have the opportunity to say to you that there is truth in spirit phenomena and a continued life. DMBennet," with the D, M and B run together and the peculiar, crippled n's that characterize his signature. The signature was as perfect a fac-simile of his signature wherever we have seen it, as could be on a slate. After interested inspection and commenting, and some more tipping of the table, the hour having come to adjourn all went to their homes. This is what we saw, and as we saw it. Now it remains for some one to find out what we did not see; that is how the writing got on the slates, if no one present did it, and if they did do it, how they deceived our senses so completely that all failed to see the trick if such it was."

The above article was the first one of any importance published in regard to the seances at my house. It had been carefully planned to get friend Replogle to attend for the very purpose so fully accomplished. We believe that if earnest effort had been made on our part, he could have been entirely converted to spiritualism, and in fact some of our band, personal friends of his, took the pains to half give away the secret to him to save him from believing; but the object was gained—a free advertismment in the Liberal which would be noticed by other journals and thus give us an opportunity to test the general public's credulity, as well as that of our own little village.

The message to Walser from D. M. Bennet in the above article, was important in more than one direction. It was from one prominent Liberal dead, to another living. This message had been carefully considered several days previous to the seance. It was intended to flatter Walser without arousing his suspicion, and at the same time take him in; the subject matter confirming Spiritualism, to be of sufficient dignity and importance to preclude the idea that I, or any assistant I might have could have written it, and yet of such a nature that the Spiritual papers would give it notice—provided Walser was caught with the bait. It was a success in all these particulars; it accomplished everything, and even more than we expected—Walser "fessed up" and acknowledged himself a convert to Spiritualism, and was as proud of his message as a boy with his first pair of boots. It renewed the sensation in town, and

YALE LECTURES AGAINST SPIRITUALISM.

the slate was inspected by all who wished to see it. Letters from Bennet were compared with the writing on the slate, and all saw a great resemblance between them. The Spiritualists evidently would have staked their salvation on the handwriting alone, so well had my slate-writer succeeded; but the Materialists and unbelievers of all classes indignantly denied any similarity between them, and criticised the message sharply. And I might add that my slate-writer criticised it as severely as any of them, and I really feared that he was going back on us, but he didn't. One notable feature in our developments was the fact that they provoked the unbelievers as much as they elated the others. One would deny as vehemently as the other would affirm. Looking back to that time, it seems almost incredible that non-believers in ghosts could interest themselves so much in a matter of so little importance to them, and get so hot and excited over the success of my circles, but so it was; and we utilized this fact to spread curiosity, advertise our success, and increase the interest. To do this, the war must be kept up. Our Syndicate consisting of unbelievers, could do a great deal toward this by denouncing me as a humbug, and opposing the Spiritualists by well-timed criticisms and caustic comments and inciting others to do the same, which they often did to my own indignation and embarrassment, and I had to bear it from them; though in private I plainly told them that they carried the joke a little too far. In fact I was becoming the lion of the town, the center of attraction, and was either blessed or damned by every one in it—a position which it took no little dignity to maintain. But the Syndicate resolved to "go the whole hog or none," and make the most of it by increasing the opposition to me and my circles as much as possible, believing that the more war made on me, the more defenders I would have, the more adherents and the more friends.

To this end Frank Yale was induced to lecture in the hall in Liberal, against Spiritualism, with me and my circles as a text. How he was induced to do so it is unnecessary to tell. Like Truesdell, we must keep back one or two little secrets—even a secret teller has secrets that he wont tell. It is sufficient to say that he lectured, and he did his work so perfectly, abused me so roundly, criticised Spiritualism so justly, and gave my secrets away so candidly, that I began to think that he had overdone the thing and the jig was up with all of us; but our Syndicate had judged wisely, and the lecture was a success for us; for no sooner had Yale taken his seat than a dozen Spiritualists were on their feet to indignantly deny the accusations made against me by him. They stout-

ly defended me until a late hour and had a decided victory judging from a spiritualistic standpoint. Among my defenders on that occasion was Mr. Walser. Yale had so criticised his message from Bennet as to irritate Walser, and did it in such a way that a return fire from him was sure to come. This, we believe, was Walser's first public confession of "faith," and while he went on defending Spiritualism and me in an outburst of indignation, with satire, eloquence and pathos, I thought I never heard a man speak as this man spoke—I hadn't.

Yale's lecture, and the debate which followed, made matters so hot that I deemed it best to hold no circles that week, but on the next Sunday the matter was again brought up in the Spiritual Society's meeting, and discussed again, ending in a vote being taken on my honesty. It resulted favorably to myself with a single exception—Prof. C. W. Stewart protested that the vote was out of place and unnecessary. I found by this almost unanimous vote that I was rising in popularity as a medium rapidly. I will now give entire an article published in the Truth-Seeker, and written by Prof. C. W. Stewart, which describes the next important victory achieved, and which substantially fixed my standing on a solid foundation, viewed from a spookite standpoint:

DOCUMENTARY TESTIMONY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TRUTH SEEKER, Sir: Apropos of the discussion now going on between ultra Materialists and Spiritualists, I wish to briefly describe certain phenomena now going on at this place.

Some time last winter a few skeptics formed a circle for the purpose of independent investigation of alleged spiritual phenomena. They soon obtained raps, table-tipping, etc., and early this spring a slate was placed under a table and a message was written upon it. The rest of the circle accused the gentleman who held the slate of perpetrating a trick, and he was naturally indignant at the accusation. At the next meeting of the circle the raps averred that the spirits would write, and when asked where to put the slate, they said put it in a little closet built in the room where the circle was held, at the residence of Dr. J. B. Bouton.

Accordingly, the slate was placed in the closet and the door locked, Dr. Bouton taking a seat on the outside. Soon raps announced that the door should be opened, and a message was found written on the slate.

Mr. G. H. Walser took a slate then, and under the most rigid test conditions a message was found written, and the name of D. M. Bennet signed to it.

STEWART RECEIVES A MESSAGE FROM BENNET.

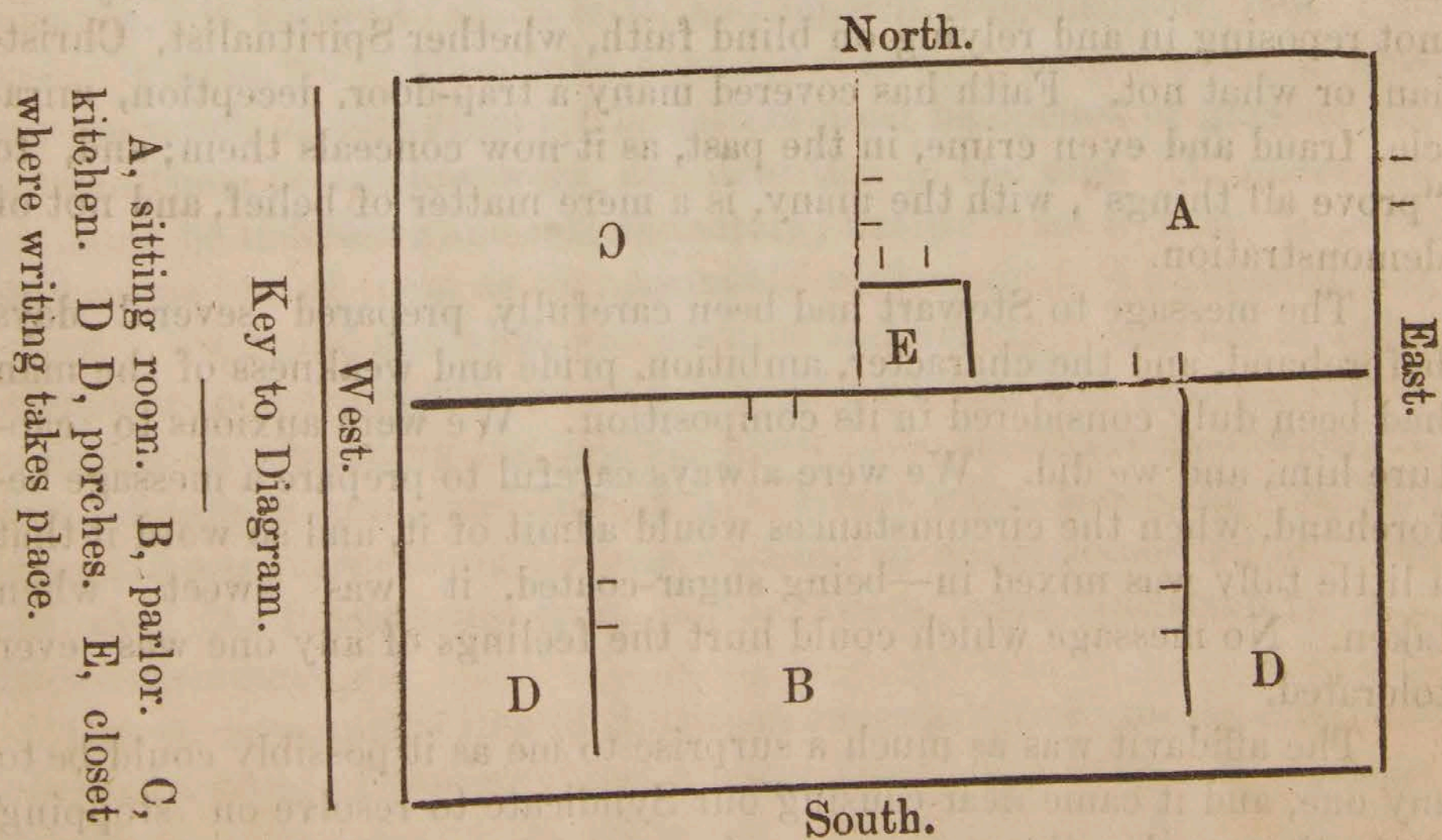
On Wednesday evening, June 3rd, I procured a new slate, and went to Dr. Bouton's residence, where I found some twenty persons assembled. After a thorough examination of the closet, and finding it to be as represented, we saw the slate placed on a shelf in the closet, and the door locked. Dr. Bouton took his place in the circle outside. The room remained lighted with full lamplight. Soon raps were heard on the door, and I took the light and stood at the closet door when it was opened, and saw that the slate was just as when the door was closed. But upon it was the following:

Friend Stewart:—I endeavored to make my influence felt and known to you in your debate with Braden. You are to do a great work; keep on and be brave in it. Yours, D. M. BENNET.

The writing and signature are almost fac-similes of specimens of D. M. Bennet's writing in my possession, especially the signature, there being just about the difference that would naturally exist between pen and slate writing.

On the following Friday I went, in company with Mr. Greeley, and made a most thorough investigation of the premises, going into the cellar, upon the roof, and through every room, and testing the strength of the floor, ceiling, and walls of the closet.

Following is a diagram of the house:



STEWART DESCRIBES THE CLOSET.

The closet is 17 inches deep, some three feet wide, and six feet high, being framed into the house, and as will be seen in the diagram, the walls of the closet being partly formed by the walls of the rooms. The ceiling of the room is formed on the rafters of the roof, and the closet at the top takes the shape of the roof, thus making it impossible for any one to be secreted above, while the floor of the closet is the continuous floor of the room. There is a ceiling in the closet made of matched flooring, securely nailed in its place.

I hereby append an affidavit made after our examination of the premises:—[See indorsement on 2nd page.]

Now Mr. Editor, as this communication is sufficiently lengthy, I will defer any comments on the subject for the present.

One thing, however, I will say, that if D. M. Bennet did write the foregoing message to me, he certainly assisted me in the debate with Braden, in overthrowing the position assumed by Christian Spiritualists and the whole metaphysical screed concerning the dualistic theory of matter and spirit, for my position in that debate was that there is nothing in the universe but matter and force, and that all phenomena in nature are referable to them.

C. W. STEWART.

This examination of my house referred to by Stewart, was the first one made in daylight, and was supposed to be thorough by those who made it; but they believed, and believing could not search, as Frank Yale had suggested in his lecture. The moral to this is obvious to any one not reposing in and relying on blind faith, whether Spiritualist, Christian, or what not. Faith has covered many a trap-door, deception, miracle, fraud and even crime, in the past, as it now conceals them; and, to "prove all things", with the many, is a mere matter of belief, and not of demonstration.

The message to Stewart had been carefully prepared several days beforehand, and the character, ambition, pride and weakness of the man had been duly considered in its composition. We were anxious to capture him, and we did. We were always careful to prepare a message beforehand, when the circumstances would admit of it, and so word it that a little taffy was mixed in—being sugar-coated, it was sweet when taken. No message which could hurt the feelings of any one was ever tolerated.

The affidavit was as much a surprise to me as it possibly could be to any one, and it came near causing our Syndicate to resolve on stopping all further work. Some were conscience stricken, and all of us were as-

NOT THEY INSISTED ON SWEARING.

tonished at our success. "Where will it all end," says one. "They will all go crazy," said another. We are getting too much responsibility on our hands," said a third. "I never expected it to become so serious," said a fourth. But the rest enjoyed it and insisted on going ahead. In fact, the situation was such that we dare not make an exposure then, and were virtually propelled on in the work by the momentum acquired.

Frank Yale, the notary whose name is attached to the affidavit, protested against swearing these parties to their statement in regard to me and my seances, and endeavored to persuade them to let the matter rest on their signatures alone, but they insisted on being sworn, were sworn, and we couldn't help it. How could we?

Stewart was proud of his communication, and wrote similar letters to Spiritualistic papers, which were published and added much to my notoriety and fame. Letters now came in from all parts of the United States and Canada in which particular inquiry was made in regard to me and my mediumship. Several lecturers on Occultism sent offers of partnership expressing a desire that I should travel with them, but as these propositions did not include my slate-writer and the Syndicate, they were promptly declined. Letters also came to be answered through my mediumship; these were generally sent to some friend in Liberal, as a precaution against fraud. They were all carefully sealed, they were to be intelligently answered by me without being opened or the contents known by any one but the sender. These letters were a difficulty and a nuisance. It is easy to seal a letter so that if it is opened the fact can readily be detected. Those who honestly sent such letters were expecting too much of a medium. The letters must be opened or guessed at. To open them meant low work, and detection in the end. A guess at best must be indefinite and unsatisfactory; but we tried it as an experiment on as few of them as we reasonably well could. We opened no letters. We found out what was possible concerning the writer and the letter, and then framed the answer in such a general way that it would surely hit on something the believer knew to be so; or the answer might have a double meaning and be read in different ways, according to the circumstances surrounding the sender, and depending somewhat on his faith also. As far as heard from, our answers were satisfactory and often convincing.

Our success in this line of Spiritism exceeded our most sanguine hopes. In proof of this we insert a letter from Dr. Hovey, of Springfield, Mo.

HOVEY'S SEANCE WITH DR. J. B. BOUTON.

EDITORS OF THE LIBERAL: I discover Dr. Bouton's seances have elicited much interest among the readers of your paper. Having visited and become acquainted with the Dr., I asked and obtained permission to make an examination of the house—but particularly the closet in which the mysterious writing was done. I was more interested in making an examination of the premises from the roof, having received a message in answer to a sealed letter sent there last Spring. The value of that message to me depended altogether upon the circumstances and conditions under which it was obtained.

When invited by a relative living at Liberal, to send such a letter,—addressed to some friend I had mourned as dead—giving it as his opinion from what he had witnessed at some of Dr. Bouton's circles, that I probably would get an answer to such letter, I complied, and wrote my letter and took it to the local agent of the Adams Express Co. I requested Mr. Topping, the Agent, with whom I was well acquainted, to seal it with the Company seal, and mark it in such a way, with his private mark, that he would know (when it was returned) whether it had been opened since leaving the office. On giving him a general idea of the nature of the experiment I was about to make, he readily consented to assist me. He sealed the letter as requested, remarking that he would defy any one to open and close it without his being able to discover it. This letter was addressed with the name of a relative but without giving any clue to the nature of the relationship. At my request Mr. Topping enclosed this in another envelope addressed to Mr. S. C. Thayer, Liberal, Mo., and put it in the Springfield post office.

When my letter was returned it was accompanied by a small slate, nicely encased, on which a nicely written message appeared, addressed to me in the handwriting (or certainly a very good imitation) of the party addressed and expressing the true relation between us in the same endearing terms as when living.

This package came by express. I took it to the agent, who opened it. The letter was carefully examined. Mr. Topping opened it, saw and read the message, and certified on the envelope that the seals were intact and the letter had not been opened since it left his hands. As the main point in my sealed letter had been answered satisfactorily in the message on the slate, it became a question of much interest to me to know just how it was done. Hence, on my first visit to Liberal after receiving the slate, I determined to make a thorough and exhaustive examination of the whole premises, including the closet, which, thanks to

HOVEY'S SEANCE WITH DR. J. B. BOUTON.

Dr. Bouton and his excellent wife, I was permitted to do. Other parties had preceded me in making a careful examination of the closet and its surroundings; but it was admitted that mine had been the most searching and thorough one that had been made. This was partly due to the ready assistance afforded by the Dr. and Mrs. Bouton who even tore up the carpet where once had been a trap door through which they passed their vegetables down to a small, temporary cellar, partly underneath the now celebrated closet. This was when they had as yet but one room of their now three room house. The west room or kitchen was built two years after the first, and the south room three years later. Under this south room I found a cellar 8 x 10 feet, thoroughly bricked up, but not reaching nearer than six feet of the room containing the closet. [See diagram on cover.] Every possible approach to the closet (above, below, all around, inside and out) was carefully searched, and I came out from under the floor with my lamp and clothes covered with the despoiled webs of spiders, and thoroughly satisfied that no human hand could get into the closet except through the door—unless it was done by breaking the walls. I have been thus particular in giving the facts in regard to the closet, for here is a point gained, and the "trick" must be located elsewhere. No one having made such an examination of the closet will care to look any longer for the mystery in that direction.

My next visit to Liberal was rewarded with an interesting seance at Dr. Bouton's, giving me an opportunity to investigate the case in other directions. The room was well lighted, so that every move made by any one in the room was under the inspection of every other person present. All were seated as marked and numbered in the diagram, an examination of which will help the reader to a better understanding of the whole matter [See cover of pamphlet.] A slate was washed and made clean, handed in and passed around the circle, given to Dr. Bouton and by him passed into the closet and laid upon a shelf, the door shut and fastened with a latch. Now all joined hands and a few common songs were sung, when three distinct raps were heard apparently on the door. This was understood to be the signal for opening the door of the closet, which was done by Dr. Bouton, his every movement being watched by the members of the circle. He brought out the same slate he had just a few minutes before put in there perfectly clean, and the following short message was found written thereon, and in precisely the same handwriting as that of the first before mentioned.

"Dear Husband:—I can't write very much at a time, but I hope to be able to write to you often in the future, and even talk to you and show myself to you.
Carrie Hovey."

DR. BOUTON YOU DON'T TREAT ME RIGHT--BIG THUNDER.

Another slate was then cleaned and placed in the closet, and when it came out we found written thereon the following to Mr. Scoville:

My Dear Son:—I hope you will not be discouraged. You can do well in future; for Liberal is a little in the future. Be patient and all will be well. Your mother, Margarete.

This was written in a very different hand from that of the preceding message. Again, another slate was placed in the closet. On its removal we read the following, quite blunderingly written and in strong contrast to the foregoing messages in every respect:

“Dr. Bouton:—You don't treat me right. I want to materialize—show myself to pale faces. i can. big thunder.”

This closed the slate writing phase of the seance, and arrangements were made to gratify the wishes of the crude but well-meaning chieftain from the wigwams of the upper world. I cannot at present give any description of this latter phase of the seance. In fact, this phase with Dr. Bouton was new and merely at its commencement, as I understood. At present, however, I learn that the materializing phenomena are very interesting.

Now a word of Dr. Bouton and wife. No one having any acquaintance with them would be willing to risk his reputation for sharpness in judging human character by reporting them as probable frauds. In fact one soon finds himself disarmed of all suspicion of fraud, as do those also who attend their seances under such precautions as I have mentioned, of any necessity for it. If our good and clear-headed Elmina (who does not doubt the honesty of Mr. Walser, but persists in doubting the medium) will go to Liberal and make the acquaintance of Dr. Bouton for herself, keeping clear of all interested parties and especially those who have written a book against all mediums and mediumship, and want to write another, trusting her own judgment and her (more than) common sense, she will leave Liberal a wiser woman and, in time, most certainly a happier one. I am well aware that many who have spent their energies in a life time opposition to the claims of the clergy and the demands of the church, would feel humiliated in admitting so much as the continuity of life beyond the grave, even where it is demonstrated to them beyond all reasonable doubt. And further, that there are those who would be loth to make an investigation, fair, manly and thorough, where the probabilities pointed sharply to the overturning of their labors of a life. But Mrs. Slenker does not belong to that class of workers, especially to the last mentioned sub-division of the great body of noble workers for the free-

"THE CONTINUITY OF LIFE A GRAND PROBLEM."

dom of the human mind.. But when she learns that nature has builded better than we knew, and that it is all in accord with her own divine arrangement of matters and things that the interior life of man continues, being just as indestructible as any of the other forms of force and a nearer approach to the last analysis—if not itself the ultimatum of all refinement, of all matter and all the various forms of force—it will afford full compensation for any concessions we find ourselves compelled to make. But simple theory will no longer do. We want facts, not fancy nor faith. We demand sensuous demonstrations conducted on scientific principles. The continuity of life is the grand problem of the present. It has its scientific side and is now attracting many of the best minds of the old as well as the new world. See A. R. Wallace's "Defence of Spiritualism," Wm. Crookes' "Researches," Zollner's "Trancendental Physics," Dr Hare's "Scientific Investigation," Butleroff, Flammarion, Kardec, Edmunds, and many others. But a patient, candid, continuous and thorough investigation of the facts and phenomena themselves and for ourselves, is the best of all methods for arriving at truth.

E. HOVEY.

Springfield, Mo.

The answer to the letter referred to by Dr. Hovey was merely a shrewd guess founded on very meagre information gained from S. C. Thayer to whom the letter was sent. We use the entire letter for reasons obvious to the reader, although it is lengthy, and a repetition of much contained in other letters. I will now give one from Mary A. White, on the same subject, which is shorter and more pointed:

ANSWER TO SEALED LETTER THROUGH DR. BOUTON.

EDITOR LIBERAL:—That which we see and know we have a right to tell; and I will tell. Soon after my arrival in Kansas, I dreamed that I saw my former husband, and he met me with a coldness unknown to his earth life. In thinking it over next day, I wondered if the short space of 17 years had caused him to forget the earnest and deep affection of his former life. Then the idea occurred to me to write to him and see if I could get an answer in Dr. Bouton's little closet.

Having examined that closet, and having been present and seen clean slates put in it, and read messages written thereon when the same slates were taken out, I know that no human hand did the writing. In proof of this I had while in Liberal, received a message six lines in length in answer to a mental question (untold to any one) as my own clean slate was being put therein. This was at an impromptu seance; there being

HEARS FROM HER FORMER HUSBAND.

none present but the Dr.'s family and the two friends who went with my husband and I. This answer to a mental question could not have been answered by collusion, if there had been any way to get a human hand in the closet—which there was not.

I will say with reference to the message from my former husband, that I had never attempted to communicate with him through any medium; and yet I asked (in my sealed letter) why he had not sent me some kind of word while I was in Liberal; if he had forgotten or ceased to love me; if Pearl (our daughter) was happy; if she heard me talking to her every day; and if he would give me any advice on business matters.

Each of these questions was answered clearly, explicitly, and emphatically, in the style and language peculiar to my said husband. This answer was returned to me with my sealed letter unopened. For the benefit of the skeptical, I had placed small strips from the edges of postage stamps across the margin where the envelope adheres, so that it could not have been opened without my knowing it. Mr. White opened and examined my letter, and said, "It has never been opened or tampered with, though he answered your questions exactly." This may not penetrate into the mental crust of a determined "know-nothing," but it is true.——"Glory, glory hallelujah! as we go marching on,"

We know there is another home where those we love are gone.

In reference to the independent slate-writing at Dr. Bouton's, Mr. John G. Mayer (one of the most honorable and upright citizens of the town,) who received the first message, is willing to testify under oath to all the facts connected with the reception of that message. So would Mr. Walser or any one else who has enjoyed that privilege.

Yours for truth, Mary A. White.

The answer to the letter, as well as the answer to the mental question referred to, are two of those strange coincidents which happen only occasionally—nothing more. The message at the seance was prepared the morning before. The publication of these letters, and similar ones, strengthened my reputation and puzzled the scoffers not a little to account for the pertinent and satisfactory answers. They couldn't do it. Neither can I further than has been done in the foregoing.

Among the skeptics abroad who took a deep interest in our circles is Mrs. Elmina Drake Slenker, of Snowville, Virginia. She is a leading Liberal, a Materialist, and for some time edited the children's corner in "The Liberal" once published here. Up to the time that she began to oppose my seances, and deny the genuineness of the manifestations, all Liberals in Liberal were her friends; but as soon as her first article ap-

**“CONVINCED AGAINST HER WILL”---“THAT’S WHAT’S
THE MATTER WITH HANNER!”**

peared in denial, then trouble began, and many indignant letters in reply were sent to “The Liberal” for publication. The fight finally narrowed down to Elmina and Mary A. White, with only an occasional shot from other parties. We give a few of these letters to show the arguments pro and con, and how warmly Spiritualism and I were attacked and defended:

“Will some friends of Truth visit a few of the seances held at Liberal by Dr. Bouton, and write out the experiences for Elmina? Some who are not believers, and who will be allowed to investigate in a careful yet kindly manner—who will be given chances to find out the facts. I am more interested in the ism at Liberal than at any other place. I am not able to go there at present, and I want to be sure before going that I shall see something real. Truly, ELMINA.

Aunt Elmina wishes to obtain the testimony of some “unbelievers in spiritual phenomena,” as evidence regarding the manifestations of spirit power given through the mediumship of Dr. Bouton, which she admits would be more agreeable and convincing proof to her of the genuineness of the phenomena, than is the word of believers, which has time and again been given her in evidence of the fact.

“Consistency, thou art a jewel,” but thy name is not Elmina. Who would be considered the most reliable witness in a court of justice in proof of an individual’s handwriting (one phase of spirit identity)—a novice in the art of chirography, or an expert? Who the better judge of spiritual manifestations (all things considered,) the person who has carefully and impartially investigated the phenomena in all its varied phases, witnessing these manifestations under the most strict test conditions, noting observations and deliberating for a period of twenty years or more before making a verdict, or the individual who witnesses a few seances with a single medium and gives his decision of spirit power,—or rather his ignorance in a limited degree. “Convince a woman against her will, she’s of the same opinion still.” We are inclined to think friend Elmina fears that the “court is against her,” or she would not resort to the last extreme of defeated argument, that of calling an incompetent witness as testimony in the case, in the vain endeavor to explain away a fact so well authenticated by persons who in any other case she would not hesitate to accept as reliable witnesses, and proof positive of this great truth and whose veracity is unimpeachable.

Spirits tell us their time is too valuable to fritter away in the useless endeavor of giving convincing tests to those who refuse to believe their bona fide word, as to their existence. Life to them is of too much importance; and in the wide extended field of action beyond mortal jurisdiction or dictation, time is of too great moment to spend in vainly trying to impart a truth which in a short time will of necessity be positively proven to each and all who live, and who willingly or unwillingly will be forced to acknowledge the fact.

Man lives to die, and dies to live again. “One short sleep past, we wake eternally.” HANNAH M. WALSER.

ELMINA OF THE SAME OPINION STILL.

I wrote my note for "The Liberal" in all honesty and sincerity, and with a full desire for truth. I don't think I said the evidence of unbelievers would be more "agreeable" to me than that of believers. I left out the agreeableness altogether, for I wanted facts; and to get at facts one must hear the evidence from all sides; for and against.

I have had pretty full descriptions of several seances held at Bouton's, but all from believers. Is it a wonder that I now ask some one who does not believe to go there and give me his impressions? It takes a deal of testimony to convince me of what seems incredible. If Mr. Slenker should tell me there was a cow in the kitchen, I should think it strange, but should not doubt that the cow was there; but if he told me that a ghost was there and said it was his mother's, I should say he was deceived. I have no idea how much evidence it would take to make me believe it. But I should not disbelieve he really saw, at least mentally, what he believed was his mother.

I don't see where the "inconsistency" comes in when I keep in the same line of inquiry all the while. Would you take the evidence of a Catholic who would say that he had seen the Virgin Mary? Yet we have the testimony of hundreds of them that they have seen her and miraculous cures have been wrought by her for them.

La Roy Sunderland could make people believe and do almost as he chose, while they were under his influence psychologically. He could throw them into cataleptic sleeps. He could tell them he could pull teeth and cut out tumors without pain; and if they believed it, no pain was felt. How do I know but "youens" see spirits through psychological influence? I do not deny that you do see, hear and feel them just as you say, nor believe it all a trick; but ask some outsider who is there on the spot to go and investigate for me, because I am not there. No doubt you are as candid and honest as myself, but I doubt the honesty of your medium. He may be a medium, but I do not believe all he does is honestly done; yet may be mistaken. I have no way of telling; and is it wrong in me to want some one to investigate what I cannot?

Methodists, like La Roy Sunderland, used to throw great numbers of their congregations into cataleptic trances during revival meetings. They would tell marvelous tales of heaven after coming out of the trance but never described the "Summer Land" of Spiritualism because they had not heard of it. These spells were called "the influence of God's Holy Spirit." You can easily see that this was a delusion, and why censure me for thinking that this phenomenon reported by you also depends upon mental and physical conditions? If Bennett lives, he can surely write me a letter in his old time hand and style, and one that I should be compelled to accept as his work. He could write hundreds of things that only he and I know; yet I have had five communications purporting to be from him, and not in a single one of them could I see a trace of the noble, true, and generous man whom I loved so well. Dear friends, if Bennett is there, if he is anywhere, he knows how my heart goes out to him and he will respond. Affectionately yours for frank discussion and a kindly exchange of opinions. ELMINA D. SLENKER, Snowville, Va., Jan. 26th '86.

MARY ASKS, "WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH ELMINA?"

"Will some friends of Truth visit a few of the seances held at Liberal by Dr. Bouton, and write out the experiences for Elmina? Some who are not believers, and who will be allowed to investigate in a careful yet kindly manner—who will be given chances to find out the facts. I am more interested in the *ism* at Liberal than at any other place. I am not able to go there at present, and I want to be sure before going that I shall see something real.

Truly,

ELMINA.

"Some friends of truth" have "visited a few of Dr. Bouton's seances" and "written out their experiences." They were "not believers," and were "allowed to investigate in a careful, kindly manner." They were "given chances to find out the facts." They did find out "facts." What is the matter with Elmina that she is not satisfied? What more does she want? Will she contend that G. H. Walser is not a "friend of truth"? Does she take him for a fool or a knave? Many others as good and as truthful and as unbelieving as Mr. Walser, enjoyed the same privileges at Dr. Bouton's, and wrote their experiences for the world. They wrote the truth; I being an eye witness testify that they did.

But they were not written for Elmina. They were not the kind of "write out" that she yearns for. Clark Braden, if he had a chance, would write it out to suit her. So would Truesdell. So would other "fraud hunters." The honest people of Liberal are not so base as to palm off tricks on mediums and then pretend to expose them. Such practices are usually confined to "lovers of the Lord." This is a popular and paying business with some; but they are not in Liberal. Why are you interested in the "*ism*" in Liberal more than elsewhere, Elmina? Is it the interest that hawks have in chickens? Why do you call a demonstrated fact an "*ism*?" We who were eye witnesses to these facts never saw any "*ism*" in them.

You want to be sure before you go that you "will see something real." You will never be sure, Elmina. All the "friends of truth" in the world could not make you sure of anything when you doubt your own senses. Besides, there is no use in going to Liberal to see "something real" at Dr. Bouton's, after insulting the Dr. and his family and all his friends, as you have done in the above little squib. If you don't mean in that that you believe Dr. Bouton and family (for they must be in the plot, if there is one) to be the grandest of frauds and rascals, you can't mean anything. You would not be invited to Dr. Bouton's now if you were to visit Liberal. The Dr. and family have not been running around begging people to come to their seances. None go there but as invited guests, though their invitations have been numerous. Would you have the "cheek" to push yourself into their company after the insinuations you have herein made against them? You were invited by

MARY "NOT ANGRY" WITH ELMINA---OH, NO!!!

friends to visit Liberal when I was there. Your call for "friends of truth" to investigate for you, after the same friends who had invited you had done so, is an insult to their honesty and intelligence. You surely would not presume to accept their invitations after thus insulting them, would you Elmina? I wouldn't. I don't blame you for wishing to investigate for yourself; but when you call for "friends of truth" to investigate for you, you insinuate that those who have are not "friends of truth," or else fools. Who do you call "friends of truth," Elmina? Those who believe just as you do? That is bigotry of the deepest dye—worthy of a Christian. The "dog of a Jew" style of dealing with Spiritualists is getting rather thin for this enlightened age and free country. Spiritualists have rights that should be respected. To accuse one of fraud is to insult him. Dr. Bouton, with the kindest good nature, threw open his house to his friends and neighbors after the manifestations begun, and allowed them to scrutinize it from cellar to garret. With the consciousness of integrity, he did not care how much they searched for "trap doors and hidden hands." And those whom you call "friends of truth" were on hand, Elmina. They were not alone in searching for the "trick," and the good Doctor and his lady-like wife only smiled, and let the investigating committee investigate to their heart's content.

As these things were published several times in THE LIBERAL, you read them, Elmina, without a doubt; and yet you are calling for "friends of truth" to find out the "facts" for you, as though you were the center of the universe and no one needed truth but you. Why didn't you name the friends of truth who are to do your bidding? If the good people who have carefully investigated the facts at Dr. Bouton's are not friends to truth, you will have to have them imported. Would Truesdell and Bundy suit you as friends of truth? I guess these worthies are interested in the ism at Liberal just as you are. If Dr. Bouton exercises the discretion that I think he will, you three (triumvirate of truth and wisdom) will still remain "interested in the ism"—on the outside. You would never bring the unholy influence of your attendant spirits into a spirit seance of mine. I don't want to hurt your feelings, Elmina; am sorry if I do. It is the truth that hurts, and I am a friend of truth—one of those whom your shallow insinuations have insulted. I am not angry with you because I tell you the truth. You were not obliged to tell the friends of truth at Liberal that you thought they were fools and knaves. It was not smart in you to do so, and I for one tell you so.

Good bye, Elmina. I hope I'll be there when you go to Liberal to see something "real." Will Truesdell pay for the trip?

MARY A. WHITE.

BOUTON NEVER SAID IT WAS SPIRITS.**ELMINA'S RESPONSE TO MARY A. WHITE.**

Every argument and fling made by Mary A. White at Elmina, for her request that others will investigate the phenomena at Liberal and report to her, has been again and again given by those making claims for other "isms and ologies." "Examine our testimonials; read our god book, interview our converts, as others have done, and you will find that there are no delusions or deceit in our claims."

But just as the Catholics and Protestants have presented their claims for 1800 years, and doubters still exist and skeptics disbelieve, while bona fide whale swallows are only found among the most credulous,—so does it seem to me with regard to spiritual phenomena. I do not for a moment doubt Mr. Walser's honesty and truthfulness, or his belief that the phenomena is genuine; but I claim that he has been duped and deceived. My little "squib" did its work, and I have a pile of responses from outsiders and unbelievers, (some of whom have attended the seances,) others giving general impressions gathered from conversation with those who "ought to know," and among all the letters, not one has come from a believer. The letters come from New York, Kansas, Liberal, and its vicinity, so I think I am in a fair way of arriving at the facts. "The Liberal" gives its quota as well as the letters. Some tell me that Bouton like Truesdell, never claimed the phenomena as the work of spirits, and that during seances where there is any chance for investigation, writing never comes on slates. It is no "insult," therefore, to the Doctor to say that he is probably acting the thaumaturgist, either for profit or out of curiosity, or in the role of detective.

As to my proposed visit to Liberal, I am already promised enough to secure me chances for investigation should I find anything worth investigating. I have had the money laid aside for the trip for over a year though I see no reason why I should not accept contributions from Truesdell and others if proffered; for I will gladly contribute toward any other investigator's trip whom I might deem worthy of it.

I don't call anyone a "fool"—only claim that all are liable to be deceived when asked to believe phenomena outside of known laws of nature. Should you tell me our river had suddenly gone dry, I could believe it without much evidence, for it might find an underground passage and suddenly sink out of sight. But when you tell me D. M. Bennett lives and writes such messages as I have received in his name, I need proof piled upon proof mountain high.

ELMINA SEEMS TO KNOW "WHAT'S THE MATTER" WITH MARY.

I wrote Bennett's name in large script and in plain sight here in my room, nearly two months ago, and have asked medium after medium to tell on what it is inscribed; and yet this simple test is beyond their powers. If Bennett still lives, he could come and see it and tell any of you all about it in five minutes.

I never denied all phenomena, but I deny 89-100ths of it, and that the dead perform any of it. I don't doubt Mary's honesty, but I think she is so glad to "believe" that her reason and judgment are SUBORNED TO HER FAITH AND CREDULITY.

I don't mind flings and hard words. I want truth, facts, and hard pan realities. I want just one good reliable test. Bennett can give it if Bennett is still himself. My old friend and correspondent, Elizur Wright, can give it if he writes and says the things the "Banner of Light" puts in his mouth. Orson S. Murray, the good old man who pioneered our cause of Liberalism for a long life time, and who put the first letter of mine in print, but always protested against spiritology, can now undo it all by giving us only a few of his strong, striking, sound-sensed ideas from "over there."

Am I unreasonable? I think not. I mean only to ask and give pure facts and truth. ELMIMA DRAKE SLENKER.

Feb. 26th, 1886.

Elmina intimates her intention in this article to visit Liberal for the purpose of investigating me and my seances. She had some time before sent a letter to Walser to be placed by him in my little closet to tempt the spirits to answer. The letter had been carefully sealed and a cloth wrapped around the envelope, and sewed through and through with a sewing machine. It would have been a hopeless task to have got at the contents of that letter without detection, and we didn't try; but we guessed at an answer, and it seems that we guessed so close that her mind was at once made up to visit Liberal to investigate in person. I have not a copy of the message, but it seems that she had written the name of D. M. Bennett on something in her room and in her letter requested an answer as to what it was on. The answer, as nearly as I remember, was:

"Friend Elmina: Your question is unimportant compared with the truth of a future life beyond the grave. I desire to assure you of that fact. Your Friend, DM Bennett.

Here, by another coincidence, we had hinted disparagingly at her question and given the name written in her room,—more evidence and a better test than thousands of Spiritualists have staked their faith upon.

ELLA GIBSON SARCASTICALLY SAYS SHE IS NO "DEADHEAD."

Aunt Elmina was startled a little, no doubt, at the closeness of our guess; but being a sensible woman, and little given to superstition, she desired further evidence, and so resolved to come to Liberal to find it; but here is a short letter from Ella Gibson which explains why Elmina did not come:

Mr. WALSER:—Please say to Mrs. Elmina Drake Stenker, through your columns, that I will comply with her request, and "go" to Liberal "and investigate for me" (her,) the same as she did for others.

Besides, Mr. Editor, I have a special invitation from you to investigate at Dr. Bouton's, under test conditions, volunteered and arranged by yourself. Having been conversant with the phenomena in all its varied forms, for thirty-five years, and not believing that spirits exist, I think Mrs. Stenker ought to admit that I am an "unbeliever," "outsider," which, as I understand, are the only conditions she stipulates.

I regret I cannot go before warm weather; but when I do come I will bear my own expenses, and not deadhead myself upon believers or unbelievers—neither friends or foes—provided I have the latter.

Yours, for Truth and Honesty, ELLA E. GIBSON.

Barre, Mass., Feb. 17th, 1886.

But Ella didn't come! Reason:—We had concluded that the farce had continued long enough, as all of us were tiring of it, and we were intending to ease down on the seances, for the benefit of the Spiritualists, so as to break as few of their hearts as possible, when the catastrophe of an exposure was presented them. Shortly after the publication of Ella Gibson's letter I announced that no seances would be held during the Summer. So Ella deferred her visit.

We cannot refrain from giving one more letter, from Canada, to the LIBERAL. This letter is characteristic, decidedly radical, and although from a skeptic, is quite a contrast from the two just quoted. Here it is with the heading as published in "The Liberal:"

ILLIBERAL LIBERALS.

EDS. LIBERAL: Sir.—You may stop my paper any time, as I will subscribe no further for it. I see from the unmerciful handling without gloves, Mrs. Stenker got at the hands of Mary A. White and others, that it is best to be candid and plain. To one who does not believe in it, it is all whimsical and quite unbearable.

I used to be pleased to pass "The Liberal" to my friends, but now I conceal it carefully, as I would not for anything in the world have one think that I countenance any such tomfoolery. Mary White is rather

WALSER ON THE SIDE OF THE FENCE THE GHOST IS ON.

rude with Elmina, yet there is some truth in what she says about Elmina insulting the Spiritualists. Elmina uses very good language, but nevertheless she denies, and denying the claims of Spiritualists is evidently making out that all mediums are frauds, and the rest dupes. Every one who does not believe that the writing is done by spirits must necessarily believe that all mediums are frauds, some of their adherents with them, and the balance all fools;—and right here let me tell you I am one of the disbelievers. Take my expressions for what they are worth, from a scientific point of view. The frauds are not all intentionally dishonest; some of them may have quite justifiable reasons for giving assent to the delusion; but inasmuch as they admit as facts what they know not, or don't positively know to be, they may properly be called frauds. For about 20 years I have seen about all the Spiritual goblins offered to the reading public, and the more I read of it the more disgusted I become with it.

In my opinion, any man or woman that says writing is done on slate or paper, without being effected by a human being (one that never died,) is either a willful and impudent liar, or a fit subject for the asylum; and I am ready to back my opinion any time with a hundred dollars. If I were rich I would say \$10000. I wish the town of Liberal and the paper success. I retire with no ill feeling except of disappointment. I had formed a very high opinion of the place and of the paper, especially of Mr. Walser, who, I really expected would soon put an end to the farce, but to my disappointment it did not so turn out. He must have been placed between two great evils to have chosen this as least of the two. It is useless to tell me he believes in the nonsense. He must have been pressed into circumstances where he could not refuse to harbor it. At first he sat on the fence and as he could not stand the fire, aimed at him from both sides, he had to come down; and for some reasons that he probably knows best, he alighted on the side the ghost is on. He had a right to do as he pleased. I write just as I think, I don't like to give offense, but I can conceal my thoughts no longer. Good bye! CHAS. LAPERCHE.

Alexandria, Canada.

This little book would hardly be complete without a word or two from some of my partners behind the scenes. I am permitted to make the following extract from the private journal of one of the ghosts, who describes the inside workings of one of our most interesting circles:

[NOTE FROM PUBLISHER:—Page 35 is numbered 32—blame proof reader.]

It was a dark night. No moon was shining. We approached the house with our usual caution. The friends of Bouton were having a surprise party within. The assembly was large and comprised of Spiritualists. They had not notified him of their intended visit, but he had "caught on" and we were there for the entertainment of the company and ourselves. After placing our pickets out as usual we went to the kitchen door, our place of entrance, and unlocking it, found to our surprise that it was bolted from the inside. We were puzzled. It was the first time this had happened. There was the circle already formed in the parlor, and they were singing the "Sweet Bye and Bye" with all the solemnity of a Methodist meeting. Bouton was anxiously waiting for the signal from his attending spooks. Now it must be a failure, all that company disappointed, and Bouton nonplused and chagrined. But, no! a happy thought seized me. As the singing ceased I approached the north window of the room allotted to the ghosts and listened. Soon Bouton's usual inquiry was made: "Are there any friends present? If so, please make it known?"

I rapped the answer, "Yes," from the outside of the window.

"Will you show yourselves to us to-night," asked Bouton.

I promptly rapped out "don't know,"—and I didn't.

This surprised him; for he expected yes as an answer. Then he asked: "Will you write for us then?" I answered promptly, "don't know."

Bouton, suspecting something was wrong, asked: "Are the conditions such as suit you?" "No," I responded. "Do you want more light?" No. "Do you want it darker?" No. "Do you want more music?" No! "I can't imagine what is the matter. Sing something; perhaps that will mollify them," said Bouton. They sang "Over There" until it seemed to me that the journey could have been made by an energetic ghost "over there" and back again several times. But Bouton at last caught on and asked: "Shall I sit in your room to-night?" Yes, I responded. He did, and as soon as he got into the darkened spook room, he quietly slipped into the kitchen, unbolted the door, and then returned. Conditions were now so much better that he soon joined the circle. Three ghosts now entered the kitchen. One, the slate-writer, went into the pantry and lighted a lamp—the other two into the spook room to raise ghosts. Old Snag gathered up the slates and albums scattered over the bed and table and took them to the slate-writer, whose light (so necessary to creditable work) was concealed from the view of others by the pantry where it had been placed for his use.

"THERE THEY SAT, SILENT AS THE GRAVE!"

I, in the meantime, as "Big Thunder," was playing the agreeable to the circle in the other room, where they were singing "John Brown's Body." As "Big Thunder" approached the door and began to loom up to their vision in all his shadowy magnificence, armed cap-a-pie, and with his feathers on, the voices began to tremble and the song lagged. It made me feel like a veritable ghost to hear the tremor of their voices. The song soon ceased and the spirit of John Brown was, for a while, at least, as dead as his body. There they sat, silent as the grave. They were in the presence of a denizen of the other world, therefore it was a solemn moment. I stood motionless in the door a moment, and then to break the spell that bound them I offered to shake hands with the young lady whose voice trembled so much in the last echoes of "John Brown," but she recoiled in horror. I had just turned and was patting Walser on the cheek, when a hand was laid on my shoulder from behind. I was startled as much as if it had been a real ghost and came near running over the young lady just mentioned to the renewal of her fright; but I quickly remembered that it was "Old Snag" who had just come in from delivering the slates, and was now ready to assist me in getting up a waltz for the occasion. The circle soon got over their fright when they realized that we wouldn't tomahawk and scalp them, and soon became so familiar as to ask impertinent questions. One asked Old Snag if he wanted whiskey, thus insulting him at once; for he had foreseen that the spirit of Local Option was hovering over Liberal, and that to retain his popularity under the altered circumstances, he must pretend to be a prohibitionist; so he immediately vanished (left the room,) to the great disappointment of the young lady with the tremulous voice, who seemed to admire him as much as she abhorred me. By this time the slate-writer had finished the messages and turned the slates over to Old Snag to replace where he had found them, came in and materialized in the door. He was at once recognized as D. M. Bennett, an old friend of some of the circle—a "familiar spirit" in fact, and very popular. Big Thunder was taken no further notice of, and vanished more disgusted than Old Snag at the mention of whiskey.

I don't know much about the interview with D. M. Bennett, for I was in the kitchen during that time, dematerializing Big Thunder into a spook that would be more attractive to the young lady,—for even ghosts have sympathies, and my heart went out to her when I heard the pathos and quiver of her voice in "John Brown's Body" etc. A signal on the outside of the kitchen door next attracted my attention, and I opened the door and admitted three spooks from the outside, who, having found everything safe, desired to come in and help us amuse the circle and enjoy themselves. While they were materializing into "shape" I went

BIG THUNDER KNOCKS OLD SNAG DOWN.

back to try my luck again and thought I heard D. M. Bennett telling the circle that he would publish an account of the seance in the Truth Seeker, edited by him in Summer Land, and he would send them a copy at their next meeting. I am not certain as to the communication, but if I'm right, he was giving them taffy; for he never run a paper, and is not dead yet. I went forward and tried my luck again, and was at once recognized as the young lady's deceased, although I was dressed as a dude, and had a plug hat on—one borrowed for the occasion. I was more disgusted than ever, and immediately vanished. In going out I run against Old Snag, who was coming in, knocking him over. He swore about it and so did I. Those in the other room heard us, and next day reported all over town that Old Snag came to the seance drunk, and Big Thunder had to knock him down and drag him out of the room. This report made old Snag so mad when he heard it that he swore that he would never attend another seance, and he hasn't. When we run against each other we were hurt, and, as I said, swore about it. This brought a warning signal from Bouton to be careful, which further provoked us, and we retired to a corner of the cabinet room and kept up a continued rapping and discord for the next half hour, while the others were flitting in and out like Puck's faries, and, figuratively speaking, putting donkey heads on half the members of the circle. As it was now getting late Bouton kept repeating his signals for us to vanish; but we had resolved to pay him back for locking us out and wouldn't vanish. In answer to his signals we responded with a volley of raps from all parts of the room. Bouton grew uneasy and began to ask questions. Each one was answered with a volley of raps as contradictory as they were numerous. This pleased the circle, as we could easily ascertain by the remarks made, and was a further confirmation of the wonderful powers of the wonderful medium. They fancied the dark room was full of the spirits, and one member of the circle shouted, "Hallelujah!" another, "Praise God!" We were elated as much as Bouton was becoming concerned.

Three of us now went to the kitchen for the prepared faces to exhibit in the final act. Old Snag was with us. He accidentally found on the kitchen table a bottle of wine brought in by some of the visitors, and showed his prohibition proclivities and "injun instinct" by taking it out of doors and promptly emptying it. He then went home. We returned with the faces, passed them around, and each one took a patent face in each hand, and we arranged ourselves before the circle in the dim light so that fifteen angel faces could be seen at a glance. This electrified the circle, and made them supremely happy; but the scene lasted only a moment. We gave Bouton the signal of our speedy departure, and vanished. The curtain fell and all was over.

As already stated, we had concluded to ease the seances down during the Spring and Summer, giving a finish in October or November. Toward the close we expected to give one or two special circles to the Spiritualists to revive their interest, then admit all who desired to come, charge an admission to remunerate us for time and money expended in preparing for, and giving spiritualistic seances, and keep this up as long as the interest justified it, giving a full expose, and finally publishing it. We were anticipated by fate, however, for my house caught fire and a portion of the roof over the little closet was consumed, revealing the secret. I quote the following from the LIBERAL:

"On last Thursday the house was discovered to be on fire from the roof, having caught from a defective flue. In a short time men, buckets, and water were in full service. With the aid of axe the shingles were cut away and the flames subdued, revealing the fact that in the top of the closet was a neatly fitting trap door, lined on the edges with cloth so as to be opened without noise, with a strap attached to raise it by. This was fastened down by adjustable braces from above, so completely keeping the trap door in place that it was impossible to detect the fraud from below. In what seemed to be the solid partition between the kitchen attic and top of the seance room was found an adjustable door."

This sufficiently explains the closet business, further than this, the closet itself had not been used for slate-writing purposes for at least the last half of our work. After the first six months most of the writing had been done in the kitchen, the slates being taken in there for that purpose. The spooks had written a few messages on the table placed in front of the circle in full view; but as this was deemed unsafe, it was done only on a few occasions.

I now quote from the LIBERAL Mr. Walser's last remarks in regard to my seances, made immediately after the fire:

"For near two years we have been giving to the world from time to time the wonderful spiritualistic manifestations through the mediumship of Dr. J. B. Bouton, an old resident of Liberal, who was universally looked upon as a quiet, unassuming and unpretentious man. He has been holding seances at his house, producing wonderful independent slate-writing. * * * But the slate-writing seances were not all. There were materializations more natural than life. These would occur in an adjoining room while the Doctor sat with the spectators in another room. There were two doors to that room, we all knew that the Dr. was perfectly reliable and would not degrade himself by any false demonstrations. We knew too that no citizen of Liberal would be mean enough to attempt a fraud on the credit of the dead. That is where we were fooled again."

G.M. Scott 8-17-2005 4328

CONCLUSION:

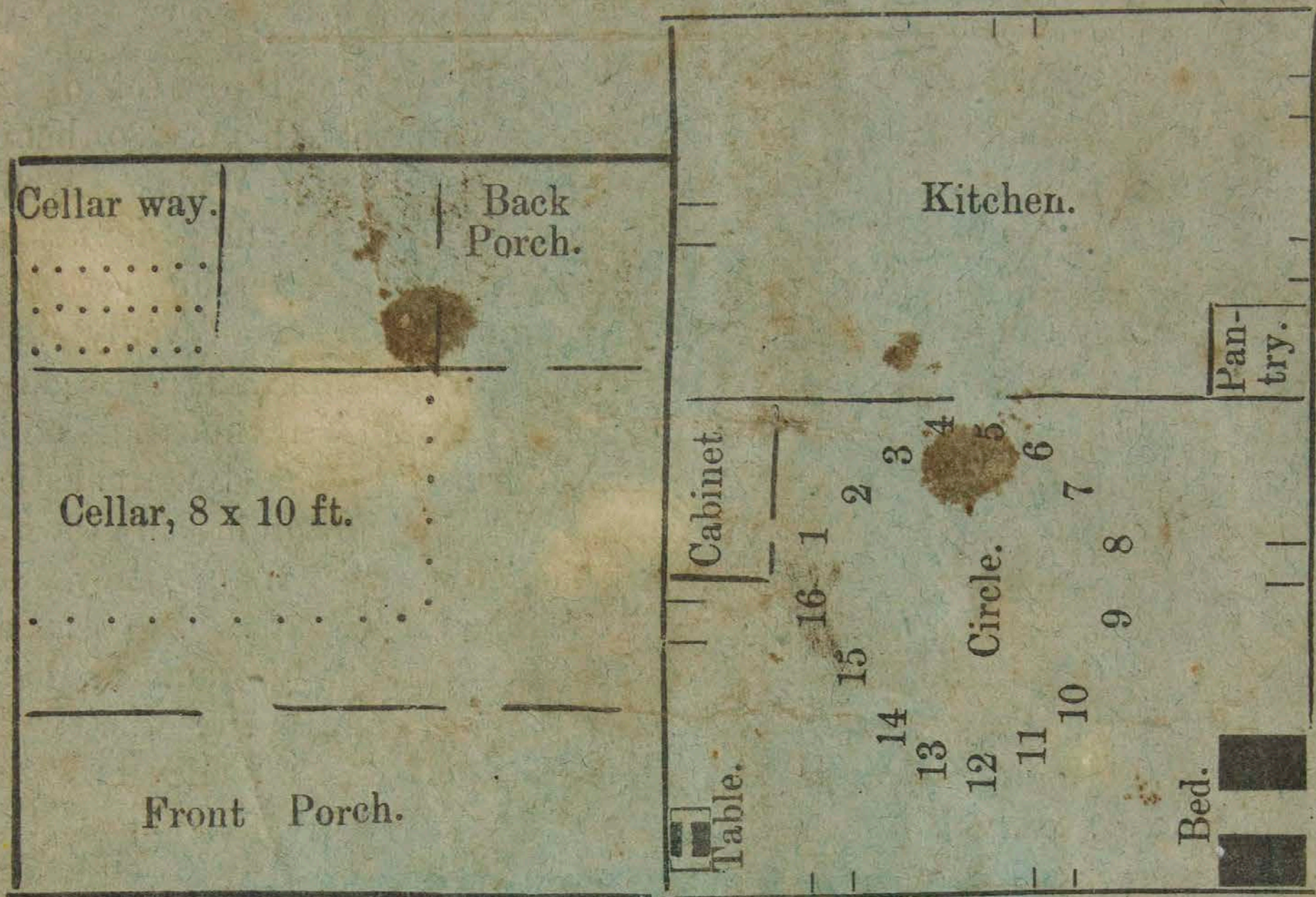
The exposure mentioned on the preceding page had the effect of a lightning stroke on the Spiritualists here—it paralyzed them. To them I now was the reverse of the description given of me by Walser, who said: "The air about him seemed to come fresh from the ambrosial fields where gods are wont to revel and sip sweet nectar from perennial flowers." "Many sought the opportunity of gaining from this heavenly favored good man a smile; others the privilege of touching his sacred garments." It was poor consolation for them to say, "Ten thousand mediums caught does not prove all mediums frauds." The Spiritualistic association never held another meeting. The lesser mediums in town, who had shone by light borrowed from me, now waxed dim. They argued no longer on the street corners with their opponents. No smile radiated their countenances. Their faith had been sorely wounded, but not entirely destroyed—they were like the Southerners after the war who said, "We were whippel but not conquered." The unbelievers were triumphant, and with look so knowing, and expression so provoking, and leer so aggravating would say, "I told you so!"

The question may be asked, "Did your work and its exposure do any good?" Not long since a disciple of mine, a steadfast Spiritualist, who hung up in his room a message received from his father "over there," regretted the fact that the children of Liberal were all growing up Materialists. I did it. No new converts to the faith have been made, nor will there be, until the memory of my circles has ceased. No medium, however proved, or great his fame, can now come to Liberal and deceive a single person, except the "faithful." The people will profit by the lesson given.

Strange as it may seem to the general reader, and strange as it is to me, even now I am regarded as a good medium by many of the Spiritualists in town. They say: "He used some deception, but we know it was not all fraud; for we know our departed friends when we see them, and we did see them at Bouton's seances." Some will slip in now of evenings and insist on a circle being held for their benefit. I occasionally accede to their wishes and give them a slate-writing; for it is easily done with "believers," and they go home happy, and think I am as good a medium as ever. And I claim that if faith is strong in my circles, and conditions favorable, I am now, as ever, as good and genuine a medium as there is in the world.

DR. J. B. BOUTON.

HOVEY'S DIAGRAM OF DR. BOUTON'S HOUSE,
LIBERAL, MO.



KEY TO CIRCLE:

- 1, Dr. Bouton.
- 2, Mrs. Dr. Spencer.
- 3, G. H. Walser.
- 4, Mrs. Dr. Jennings.
- 5, Dr. Hovey.
- 6, Mrs. S. C. Scoville,
- 7, Grandma Walser.
- 8, Arthur Bryant.
- 9, Mary E. Myers
- 10, D. P. Greeley.
- 11, Mrs. Dr. Thatcher.
- 12, Frank Myers.
- 13, Miss Cora McRae.
- 14, Mr. H. Scoville.
- 15, Mrs. Grec
- 16, Mrs. Weems.