

SPIRIT SLATE WRITING AND KINDRED PHENOMENA.—IV.

BY W. E. ROBINSON.

A favorite trick of one medium was to have a pile of slates on top of the table. After the slates had been thoroughly examined, he would clean them and place them on the floor, showing each slate after cleaning. He would then pick them all up at once and replace them on the table and select two of them, putting them together and holding them in his hands above his head; he would then separate them and show one covered with writing. There was no trick about the slates themselves, as would be easily proved by the examination to which they were put before and after the spirit manifestations. The explanation of the trick is as follows: The floor was covered with a carpet in which there was a slit or cut just wide enough to pass a slate through. Before the séance, a slate written on one side is placed under the carpet with the writing downward. (See Fig. 9.) The slates, as they

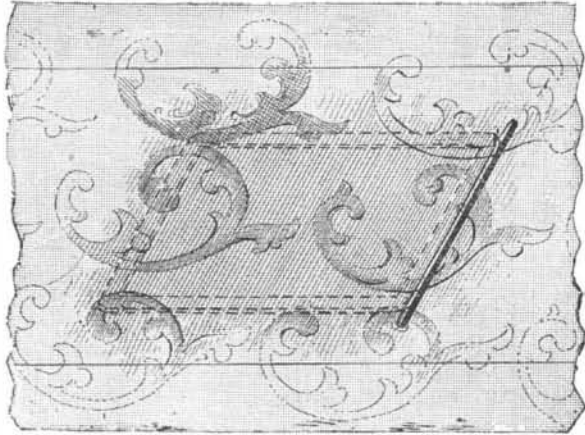


Fig. 9.—THE SLATE UNDER THE CARPET.

are cleaned, are laid on the carpet immediately over or near the concealed one, and on lifting the slates from the floor, this one is also carried with them and placed on the table. Of course, it is this slate and one of the prepared ones that are afterward used. There is little likelihood of anyone taking notice of there being one more slate in the pile.

We now come to what mediums term the "double slate." It is, to all appearances, two ordinary slates hinged together at one side and locked with a padlock, the shackle of which goes through a hole in the sides of the frame of each slate. This slate also contains the false flap or slate, but the slate or flap is held firmly in either frame in the following manner: The inside edges of both ends of each frame are beveled inward a trifle. One of these ends of each slate frame is also made to slide or pull out about a quarter of an inch. These are prevented from sliding, until the medium desires it, by a catch in the framework, which is connected with a screw in one of the hinges. This screw stands a little higher than the rest, so that it is easily found by the medium. The hinges are on the outside of the frame instead of the inside. When the screw is pressed it loosens the catch, which allows the ends to be moved a trifle. The false flap is just large enough to fill in the space under the bevels of the frame, and if the catch in the top frame is released and the end moved, the flap will drop into the bottom slate, where it is held tight and firm, by releasing the catch in that frame and moving the end until the flap settles into its place and then sends the end back into its original place again. The writing is placed beforehand on one slate and on one side of the flap, both the written sides being face to face, but after the flap has changed places, or, we might say, changed slates, two slates are presented with written sides.

There is another double slate made with hinges and padlocks. (See Fig. 10.) One of the ends of the wooden frame of one slate is fastened securely to pins on the slate, which is made to slide out completely from the frame. This, of course, allows the sides of both slates to be written upon. After that is done the slate is slid back into its frame. Care should be taken in sliding the pins back not to reverse it so as to bring the writing side out.

Another spirit trick is performed as follows: The stranger is allowed to bring two slates and to wash and seal them himself in the presence of the medium. The medium places a piece of chalk between the slates before they were sealed. The slates were then sealed in a most elaborate manner; court plaster and sealing

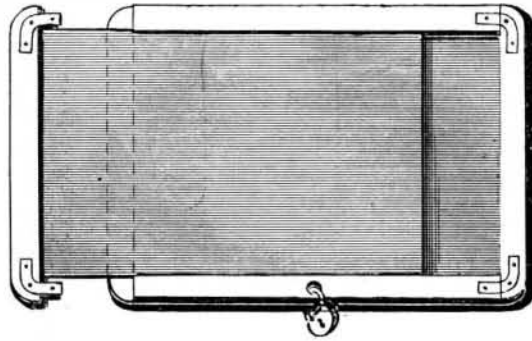


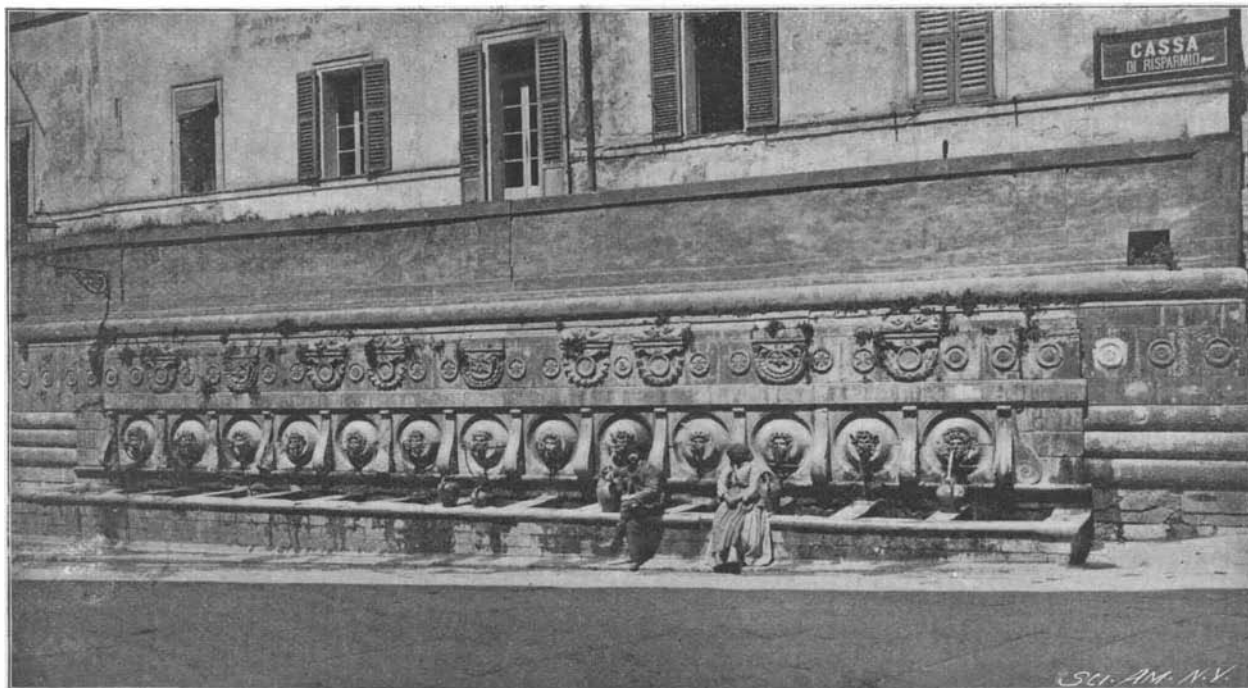
Fig. 10.—THE PADLOCKED SLATE.

wax being profusely used, making it an utter impossibility to insert the minutest piece of wire or like body between the slates; nevertheless, after the slates were held under the table, they were unsealed and writing was found upon the inner surface of one of them, although it could hardly be called writing, being little more than a scrawl. Our Fig. 11 shows how the trick was performed. The piece of chalk the medium placed between the slates was composed of pulverized chalk mixed with a little glue water and iron filings and allowed to become hard. The medium while under cover of the table traces with a magnet below the slate the words found upon the inside, but backward. The chalk, on account of a considerable percentage of iron filings it contains, rolls around over the slate, making a kind of mark.

AN INTERESTING ITALIAN FOUNTAIN.

Americans who have never been abroad can hardly appreciate the importance which the fountain assumes in Southern Europe. With us a fountain usually suggests an ornamental work of an architectural order with stone or bronze figures or groups and a basin as constituent parts; but in the countries bordering on the Mediterranean the fountain, while ornamental, or at least picturesque, has utility as well. In the large cities, such as Rome, Florence, Naples, etc., there is an abundant water supply piped directly to the houses, but as in sanitary matters Italians are somewhat backward, many of the inhabitants are forced to obtain water from prosaic iron hydrants. In the smaller places, however, the fountain is one of the institutions, and even though there is a system of water supply in use, the people depend largely upon the fountains, and the gayly dressed women may be seen at all hours resorting to the fountains with their polished brass or copper kettles or large earthenware pitchers, which they deftly carry away poised on their heads. Naturally, the fountain is the center of gossip and the scene around it is always animated.

The Italian fountain is of every conceivable style, from the splendid and artistic creations of Giovanni



"FOUNTAIN OF THE THIRTEEN MOUTHS," AT ANCONA.

Bologna and Tribolo to simple bronze spouts projecting from a wall and provided with a shelf or ledge to hold the water vessel. Our engraving represents one of the most curious fountains in Italy, the so-called "Fountain of the Thirteen Mouths" at Ancona. Ancona, on the Adriatic, is an old Greek city and its

streets are narrow and steep, running up the sides of the hills and for the most part ending in a square, the Piazza del Teatro. Turning to the right, by the Strade Calamo, we come to "La Fontana del Calamo," as it is also called. It is believed that the name originated from the inequalities of the street, the fountain being built on an incline, as will be seen from our engraving. The original fountain was very old, and in 1503 it was demolished and the great stones which formed it were used in the construction of the portico of the Palazzo della Anziani. It was rebuilt in its present form by the architect Pellegrino Tibaldi, in the sixteenth century.

The fountain consists of a long rectangular trough divided into sections by cross stones which are built in to support water vessels. Against the wall of the building there are thirteen circular recesses, each filled

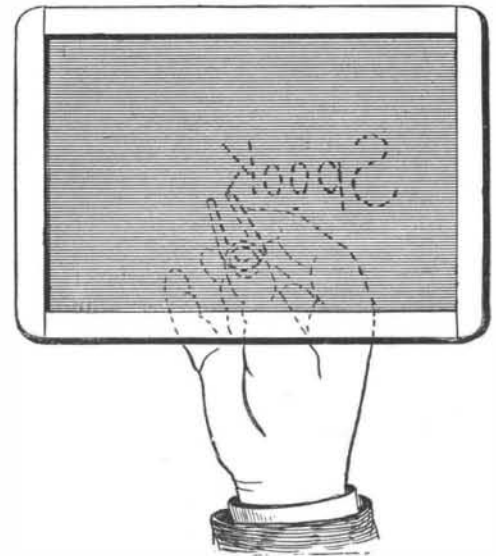


Fig. 11.—MAGNETIC WRITING.

with a lenticular disk, the top being cut off so as to leave a plane surface. Each is terminated by an ornamental mask, the mouth serving as an outlet pipe for the water. A cock in this pipe regulates the flow of water. The thirteen masks are separated by reversed consoles decorated with volutes. Pilaster consoles to match form the end finish. Above are ornaments carved in stone. The whole effect is naturally very picturesque.

A Tank Steamer Fire.

We are indebted to Mr. Ellepiaux, United States Vice-Consul at Rouen, for the following notice of a remarkable fire in a tank steamer:

One of the first, if not the first, tank steamers to have been saved after taking fire, without exploding, occurred in the port of Rouen last Monday, and in which a young American, A. V. Patterson, manager of Bedford & Co., displayed unusual nerve and courage. The steamship "Vindobla" was in port discharging a cargo of crude oil, which was about half unloaded, when an explosion occurred in No. 4 compartment on steamer, and which flooded engine, fire room, and cabins with burning oil, which naturally caused the

ship to be abandoned by her crew. Mr. Patterson, with the assistance of some of his employes, connected a 2½-inch steam line from shore boilers, and by extending same through port holes, together with streams of water played on hatches and wooden decks, succeeded, after five hours of labor, in extinguishing the fire. The ship is constructed with double deck from the middle to the stern, and it is between these two decks, the upper one in wood, that the hatches open that lead to each tank, and these hatches were not bolted down; this makes the saving of the vessel most surprising. The damage done the vessel was not so great but that, with some temporary repairs, it cleared with its own steam for Newcastle-on-Tyne, where the boat will be docked and properly repaired.

Rouen, September 26, 1898.

AN average star of the first magnitude is one hundred times as bright as one of the sixth magnitude.