



THE STRANGE CASE
OF
WILLIAM MUMLER
SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHER
LOUIS KAPLAN

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An earlier version of the section "Paranoia" in the Conclusion was published as "Where Paranoid Meets the Paranormal: Speculations on Spirit Photography," *Art Journal* (Fall 2003).

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To Ethel and to our living with specters

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PROLOGUE

New York Daily Tribune, APRIL 22, 1869, 2.

SPIRITUALISM IN COURT

In all the annals of criminal jurisprudence—and they comprise an array of crimes of almost every description—there has seldom, if ever, been recorded a case analogous to that now pending before Justice Dowling, in the Tombs Police Court, in which the people are the prosecutors, and Wm. H. Mumler of No. 630, Broadway, is the defendant. The specific charge brought against Mumler is that by means of what he termed spiritual photographs, he has swindled many credulous persons, his representations leading the victims to believe that by means of communication with the spirit land, it was possible not only to bring back the departed spirit, but to photograph their immaterial forms, thus forever perpetuating the memory of their spiritual presence. How many have been induced to speculate on the features of departed relatives and friends it is hard to say, but that the number was large the prosperity of Mr. Mumler's establishment seems to have proven beyond controversy, and, at the same time, that many were duped, and seemed to appreciate the fact. A few, predisposed to seize with morbid avidity anything savoring of the supernatural, gave implicit credence to the spiritual photographer, and refused to be convinced of what the majority of the world fully believed. On these parties Mr. Mumler mainly relied for evidence in his defence.

The announcement that the examination of the case would be continued yesterday, drew together a large and miscellaneous audience, including a number of the most distinguished of the believers in, and propagators of, the doctrines of Spiritualism, many legal gentlemen, curious to note the points of law which might arise during the trial, and a sprinkling of middle-aged ladies, believers evidently, who watched the proceedings with an interest scarcely exceeded by that of the party principally concerned. The examination was held in the Special Sessions Court Room; members of the bar, distinguished Spiritualists (among them Judge Edmonds and Mr. McDonald), and the ladies, being accommodated with seats inside the railing.

The principal defendant, Mr. Mumler, a man of about 40 years of age, with dark hair, beard, and eyes, and olive complexion, was seated next to his counsel, Messrs. J.T. Townsend, Day, and ex-Fire-Marshall Baker, and appeared perfectly calm and self-possessed, ready at a moment's notice to whisper to his counsel a question touching some important point which he desired to elicit from the witness. Mumler's face is one of the few from which one fails to gather any trace of character. It is calm and fathomless, and although it would be harsh to say that it is unprepossessing, it is yet a face which one would scarcely be able to believe in at first sight.

The People were represented by Mr. Eldridge Gerry, and the first witness called was Marshal Joseph H. Tooker, through whose instrumentality the spiritual photograph business was brought to the notice of the authorities. He deposed that in consequence of information from Mr. P.V. Hickey of *The World*, the Mayor had ordered him to "look up" the case, which he did by assuming a false name, and having a photograph taken by Mumler. After the taking of the picture the negative was shown him, with a dim, indistinct outline of a ghostly face, staring out of one corner, and he was told that the picture represented the spirit of his father-in-law. He, however, failed to recognize the worthy old gentleman, and emphatically declared that the picture neither resembled his father-in-law, nor any of his relations, nor yet any person whom he had ever seen or known. The other portions of Marshal Tooker's testimony were published in *The Tribune* at the time of the first discovery of the alleged swindle, and therefore it would be useless to recapitulate. With this testimony the prosecution rested.

For the defence the first evidence introduced was that of Wm. P. Slee, a photographer of Poughkeepsie. He had thoroughly investigated Mumler's

process, but could find no device or trickery in it. Mumler had produced spiritual photographs in his presence, and from the camera in use at his gallery in Poughkeepsie, but with his knowledge of photography—a knowledge extending over several years—he was utterly unable to discover how the thing had been done. He thought the same result could be produced by natural or mechanical means, but could not make a positive assertion to that effect, never having tried it.

William W. Guay, who was employed as an assistant to Mumler, receiving one half of the profits of the business, testified: I have a recollection of having met Marshal Tooker at No. 630 Broadway; he called there and expressed a desire to have a spiritual photograph taken, asking me whether I could do it, and on what terms. I demanded our usual price (\$10 in advance), but as he professed his inability to pay that amount, I consented to receive \$2 as a deposit. I did not know Marshal Tooker, and had no suspicion of his design. Eight years ago, I was specially commissioned by Andrew Jackson Davis to go to Boston, where Mumler was operating, and make a strict investigation into his process. I made the investigation with the consent of Mumler, and though I tested the process by every means I could devise, I could find no trick or device, and became convinced that the spectral pictures appearing on photographs of living persons were actually and truly likenesses of those departed, and were produced by means other than those known to artists. I know of two or three methods of producing ghost-like figures similar to these: one by placing a person behind the sitter, another by a peculiar arrangement of reflectors, and the third by chemical means. When Marshal Tooker called on me, I told him (as I generally tell most persons) that the spiritual picture shown in the photograph would be that of the spirit most closely in sympathy with him. Mrs. Mumler was generally in the room when customers called; she is a medium. I am a believer in the system of philosophy emanating from Andrew Jackson Davis. I would prefer not to say whether I believe in spiritualism and spiritual manifestations or not.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As a photographic historian and theorist with an abiding interest in the medium as both spectral and haunting, my desire to present the strange and singular case of William Mumler goes back a very long time. The idea for such a book is something that has haunted me in various guises (whether more commercial or more arcane), and I am thrilled that it has finally taken shape in this form and format with the University of Minnesota Press. This book at the crossroads of American cultural studies and photography studies consists of an edited selection of primary source documents from the 1860s and 1870s, including Mumler's memoirs, *The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography* (1875); Elbridge T. Gerry's closing argument against Mumler at the infamous trial held in the spring of 1869; P. T. Barnum's thinly veiled diatribe against Mumler in his book *The Humbugs of the World* (1866); and numerous newspaper accounts. These documentary sources are sandwiched between two essays of my own: "Ghostly Developments," which is more cultural historical in its staging, and "Spooked Theories," much more theoretical in scope.

First, I am grateful to my editor Richard Morrison for his wise counsel throughout this project. At the College Art Association meeting in Boston in February 2006, Richard encouraged both my authorship and "mediumship" to pursue this photographic ghost story in the very city where the contentious phenomena ascribed to William Mumler were born

and where he first raised such a ruckus almost 150 years ago by conjuring the ghosts in and of photography.

I am indebted to a number of institutions that have given me their kind permission to reproduce Mumler's images and the other related images in this book. Foremost, I thank the Getty Museum (and specifically Jackie Burns) for its cooperation in supplying me with the wondrous digital images of all thirty-nine *cartes de visite* by Mumler that were originally in the Sam Wagstaff collection. I also thank the following institutions and individuals for helping me to create this ghostly image bank: College of Psychic Studies in London, George Eastman House, Library of Congress, Picture History, University of New Hampshire Library, New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Pratt Library at Victoria College of the University of Toronto. I thank Beverly Wilgus (Bright Bytes) and Thomas Weynants (Early Visual Media) for permission to use images as well.

I gathered primary sources in research libraries over the course of many years, and I acknowledge particularly the Morris Library of Southern Illinois University, the University of Toronto libraries, the New York Public Library, and Harvard University libraries (including Countway Medical Library). My research has been supported most generously by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, for which I am very grateful.

I especially would like to thank my assistant Jessica Gillies, who did such a fantastic job with the administrative aspects of ghost hunting in terms of tracking down all the necessary images and permissions for the book. I also appreciate the help of a past research assistant, Shannon Petrello, for locating primary source materials. I thank more recent researchers, Michal Majernik and Ananda Korchynski, for transcriptions of primary source materials. Finally, I acknowledge the help of Robin Whitaker for her thorough and rigorous copyediting of the manuscript.

A few acknowledgments are related to moments when my thinking on Mumler and spirit photography received public exposure. I recognize Carol Mavor for including me on the panel "The Bored and the Paranoid" at the College Art Association meeting in 2001 in Chicago, where I first had the opportunity to present on Mumler and spirit photography. Thanks as well to Jane Marsching and Mark Alice Durant for including a revised version of this presentation ("Where the Paranoid Meets the Paranormal: Speculations on Spirit Photography") in the Fall 2003 issue of *Art Journal*. I am especially grateful to Jennifer Tucker of Wesleyan University for

her careful and astute reading of the manuscript and for her constructive criticism that helped to determine the shape of the introductory essay in particular. I thank all my colleagues in the Graduate Department of Art at the University of Toronto and in the Institute of Communication and Culture at the University of Toronto Mississauga, where I have worked and thrived for the past years. Finally, Melissa Shiff is a wonderfully creative partner with whom it is an ongoing pleasure and a privilege to share my life.

I dedicate this book to my aunt Ethel Schnipper, who gave me a great deal of support and mentoring when I was a struggling and underemployed academic. It was a time when I wanted to do a project on “the phenomena of Mumler” (as she referred to it) but when I did not have the time or the means to do so. I therefore recall her kindness as well as that of my parents, Sarah and Leon Kaplan, as this strange case finally reaches the printed page.

In light of the “spooked theories” that guide the concluding theoretical essay, I share one final uncanny point related to my research that bears repeating. While I had numerous ideas for the title of the book’s Introduction, I settled on the multiple meanings of “Ghostly Developments.” But only at the end of my research did I actually find this phrase as the subtitle to a primary source article on spirit photography in the *New York Herald*. In the haunting twist of a time warp, my title was confirmed and prefigured on April 22, 1869. At the height of the buzz and sensation created by the Mumler trial at the Tombs Police Court in New York City, that headline concluded: “Spirits Avaunt—Ghostly Developments.”

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INTRODUCTION

GHOSTLY DEVELOPMENTS

The subject is introduced with an apology for we are persuaded that in a short time spirit photographs will be generally looked upon as a low swindle. What a shame that all these things should come to pass in the nineteenth century and in America.

—Charles A. Seely (1863)

AN UNAPOLOGETIC INTRODUCTION

It would appear that one does not have to make an apology or to have any feelings of shame or remorse when introducing the subject of William Mumler and the birth of spirit photography at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The success of the recent exhibition *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult*, organized by Pierre Apraxine and Sophie Schmit, which began at la Maison Européenne de la Photographie in Paris and traveled to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, illustrates that an incredible amount of interest in this photographic ghost story exists in European and North American circles nearly 150 years after its occurrence. Rather than corroborating Seely's 1863 prediction in the *American Journal of Photography*, that in a short time these images would be reduced to a "low swindle," *The Perfect Medium* exhibition demonstrates that spirit photographs have been thoroughly commodified and raised to the level of "high art" on display in established museum institutions. That helps to explain why Apraxine and Schmit speak of the emergence of an "aesthetic approach" to spirit photography, and they note in particular Samuel Wagstaff's speculative 1974 purchase of an album of thirty-nine

cartes de visite by William Mumler (1832–84) in the 1860s and 1870s, an album that would eventually be purchased by the J. Paul Getty Museum.¹ (This excellent collection serves as the basis of the large majority of Mumler images reproduced in this volume.) In this way, institutional actors in the art world have reframed spirit photographs from visual artifacts embedded within the history of Spiritualism to objects of value within the history of Western art. As such, spirit photographs have become the latest in a series of the reclassification of images that were once considered vernacular or documentary but are now prized by some as art objects in their own right.²

If we look to the realm of historiography, the discourse of apologetics for a consideration of William Mumler and his role in spirit photography does not seem appropriate either. Rather than being devalued as a low swindle unworthy of serious consideration, spirit photography has been taken up in recent years exactly on account of our fascination with that which reeks of the notorious and the scandalous in popular culture and visual cultural studies. After being excluded for decades from American photo history textbooks, including Naomi Rosenblum's *A World History of Photography* and Beaumont Newhall's *The History of Photography*, spirit photography was admitted into the canon at the turn of the millennium with the publication of Robert Hirsch's *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography*. Even though Hirsch confuses Mumler's years in Boston (the early 1860s) and New York (the late 1860s), he does plot the details of his controversial trial. "William Mumler, who ran a spirit photograph studio in New York in the early 1860's, was eventually arrested as a swindler, though the charges were eventually dismissed because trickery was not proved."³ Meanwhile, a few other scholars have devoted lengthy discussions to the subject recently, focusing on the relationship between Mumler's images and the question of truth in photography. On the one hand, the trial of William Mumler is the subject of the first chapter of Michael Leja's *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp*. In "Mumler's Fraudulent Photographs," Leja focuses on the rise of skeptical viewing occasioned by these ghostly developments so that people no longer could trust photographs as implicitly truthful documents that did not lie.⁴ On the other hand, Jennifer Tucker has discussed the case of Mumler and the emergence of spirit photography at the intersection of science, photography, and the culture of display in Victorian society in order to stress the difficulties for debunking the claims of this type of photography because of the widespread belief "in the power of photography to mechanically reproduce reality."⁵

In reviewing the scenarios that frame the ghostly developments of William Mumler and in exploring some of the reasons why this story inspired so much passion and debate in its day, I do not intend to assume a dominant position that claims to hold the truth, that knows with assurance what is true or false about spirit photography, or that seeks to bridge the radical incommensurability that exists between believers and skeptics regarding the status of these images. If the discourse of spirit photography produces truth effects for those who believe in the divine agency of these images, it also produces fraudulent effects for those who believe in their human fabrication. In other words, these ghostly developments offer an exemplar of the type of *iconoclash* that the sociologist of science Bruno Latour defines as “what happens when there is *uncertainty* about the exact role of the hand at work in the production of a mediator.”⁶ In this specific case, the mediator/medium is spirit photography, whether it yields something that has been produced through a human hand or a divine one. This is a debate staged to determine whether spirit photography is something that should be understood (and rejected) through the lens of secular doubt and natural science or understood (and affirmed) through religious wonder and supernatural science. If one views these ghostly developments in terms of an iconoclash, then what motivates the “will to believe” or the “will to truth” for those who assume these views becomes more important than staking out a position that such-and-such a phenomenon is true or false with the utmost certainty. Therefore, an examination of the scenarios that frame the efficacy and the power of spirit photography and how Mumler’s images were mobilized in terms of these competing narratives must review the ways in which his images manifested a “spiritual truth” for believers (to cite Mumler’s term) and a swindling fraud for skeptics.⁷ (See his *Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography* in this volume.) But an unwillingness to call William Mumler a fraud does not indicate a lack of moral responsibility or the condoning of religious fundamentalism. On the contrary, it stems from the desire to unhinge religious and intellectual fundamentalism of all kinds and to raise the level of uncertainty regarding both skeptical and Spiritualist truths. This approach to cultural studies is related to the ethical imperative and the responsibility of deconstruction: to leave open the possibility that something more exists than what is dreamed of in the skeptic’s or the Spiritualist’s philosophies and to entertain the limits of thinking.

This chapter situates the emergence of spirit photography as a remarkable cultural and historical phenomenon by considering a number of forces

and factors in which this photography was inextricably wrapped up and in which it got carried away in pursuing the case history of William Mumler and how it came to pass in nineteenth-century America. These frames of reference include the rise of Spiritualism as a discourse of religious practice and belief that opened up the space for spirit photography to reside (or haunt); the competing claims of and the larger debates about science and religion in which spirit photographs were embroiled and that Spiritualism tried to reconcile; the role of the popular press and tabloid journalism in publicizing, promoting, and even instigating the case and notoriety of Mumler; the relationship of spirit photography to visual entertainments and popular amusements of the day; the legal issues and controversies raised by Mumler's sensational trial; and finally the cultural practices around death, mourning, and bereavement that figured into the success of spirit photography at a particularly divisive moment in American history marked by the Civil War (1861–65) and its aftermath.⁸ Taking up these various narrative strands and these cultural and intellectual developments does not involve affirming or debunking the truth claims of spirit photography but rather involves acknowledging its affective power and its ability to construct meaning and value as well as to provoke controversy and debate then and now.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY IN THE LIGHT OF SPIRITUALISM

The story of William Mumler and the emergence of spirit photography as a commercially viable practice in the major urban centers of New York and Boston in the 1860s, as well as in smaller towns such as Poughkeepsie and Buffalo, could not have happened without the intellectual and spiritual support and patronage of the religious movement known as Spiritualism. Ann Braude has written about the views and beliefs of those who were attracted to this modern American religious phenomenon of the mid-nineteenth century, which allied itself to progressive reforms and the championing of women's rights, sought to reconcile science with religion, extolled the cosmic virtues of harmony and sympathy, and attracted followers seeking to make spiritual connections in order to counteract the encroachments and threats posed by industrial and technological modernization and secularization.⁹ Although space here limits me to only a thumbnail sketch of Spiritualism, framing those particular aspects of Spiritualist belief that made it conducive to the rise and flourishing of William Mumler's spirit-photography practice is important. In order to locate the means by which to understand how Spiritualist religious doctrine could

have fostered the strange case of William Mumler, one must recall the short and simple credo of the New England Spiritualists' Association (NESA) published in 1854 and documented by historian Robert S. Cox: "Our creed is simple, Spirits do communicate with man—that is the creed."¹⁰ If the essence of Spiritualist faith and belief could be reduced to the communication of spirits with mankind, then the Spiritualist project could be viewed as one of revealing and manifesting the various ways and means (or media) through which spirit communication could and did happen. According to this credo, the faithful who believed and felt passionately about the truth of Spiritualism and spirit manifestations were invested in a system of thought designed to prove the existence of the afterlife and the immortality of the soul. In other words, Spiritualists were driven by an otherworldly desire to deny death and to abolish the limits of human finitude, and, as we shall see, they looked to both old and new communication technologies by which to achieve these ends. On the other hand, NESA's credo and its granting of agency to the spirits were open to skeptical attack and a demystifying inversion of the credo to argue that only human beings have the power and the agency to communicate with the spirits they have invented.

The initial series of manifestations that put spirit communication on the map and in the hearts and minds of antebellum Americans took place in the backwater of Hydesville, New York (near Rochester), during the winter of 1848, when the farmhouse occupied by the Fox daughters (Kate and Margaret) became the site of mysterious taps and rapping from the walls and the floors only in their presence. On the assumption that the spirit of a dead man (specifically a murdered peddler) was haunting the house and attempting to communicate with them, the girls soon became known as spiritual mediums said to possess divinely inspired powers to translate the raps and taps of the spirit world into a meaningful language and thereby masters of the art of a new communication technology referred to as the "spiritual telegraph."¹¹ But these phenomena did not go without their skeptics, who were convinced that the Fox girls were youthful pranksters doing mischief by dropping objects behind people's backs and surreptitiously cracking their knuckles and joints in darkened séance rooms. The spirit circles of the Fox sisters with their spiritual telegraphic special effects possessed many of the characteristics of popular entertainments and magic shows, but they also addressed an important emotional need. According to Ann Braude's skeptical account, "The hunger for communion with the dead gave Spiritualism its content, transforming what may have been a

teenage prank into a new religion. Americans wanted to talk to spirits, and they would have done it with or without Kate and Margaret Fox.”¹²

Meanwhile, Spiritualism found another basis for its belief in communication with the spirit world in the inspired writings of the Poughkeepsie Seer, Andrew Jackson Davis (Figure 1), who quickly became the philosopher of a growing mass movement when he gave his seal of approval to the manifestations of the Fox sisters as part of a “philosophy of spiritual intercourse,” a rather sexy phraseology to mark his belief that spirits could communicate with humans (and vice versa).¹³ This clairvoyant was not untainted by the dynamics of performance and spectacle either. Davis began his career in the company of one Dr. Lyon, who served as his “magnetizer” during numerous public performances. In such entranced states, Davis operated as a spiritual medium and channeled the messages of the dead, including texts and visions dictated to him by his spirit guide, the Swedish mystic Emmanuel Swedenborg. In addition, the mesmerized Davis often gained insights into the condition of the sick, and he prescribed cures and remedies for them. Davis’s visionary thinking and faith healing was called the “harmonial philosophy” in its privileging of harmony as both a spiritual and a moral value and in its rejection of the fire and brimstone of the Calvinist tradition.¹⁴

Davis also coined the name “the Summer-Land” to denote the heavenly place where the spirits dwell after death. In an enumeration of his religious beliefs, Davis confirmed, “I believe in the immortality of every human mind; in a sensible communion between the peoples of earth and their relatives in the Summer-Land (the hereafter).”¹⁵ While Davis utilized trance and mesmerism as his chosen means for receiving divine transmissions, spirit photography offered a new technological medium that would provide visual access to the “sensible communion” between human beings and the dearly departed dwelling in the Summer-Land. The prosecuting attorney in the Mumler trial, Elbridge T. Gerry, made sarcastic reference to Davis and his writings on a number of occasions during his closing argument. He particularly focused on Davis’s *The Present Age and Inner Life: Ancient and Modern Spiritual Mysteries Classified and Explained* (1853), calling it an “infamous book” and disparaging it as an anti-Christian doctrine that reeked of “heathen pantheism” (see page 157).¹⁶ In another instance, Gerry condemned Spiritualism as blasphemy in its perversion of the Christian doctrine of resurrection. “Spiritualism also denies the doctrine of a general resurrection and of a final judgment to come. . . . It asserts that the resurrection takes place at the instant of [Christ’s] death”

(see page 158).¹⁷ But from the perspective of the ghostly developments of William Mumler, Spiritualists believed that *photographic* resurrection became possible from the instant of each person's death.

It is well known that the first account of Mumler's ghostly developments was published in Davis's *The Herald of Progress* in the fall of 1862, and this text is reproduced in the first section of primary source newspaper and journal accounts in "Mumler in the Press: The Beginnings," in this volume. Three years later, Davis took up the phenomenon of spirit photography

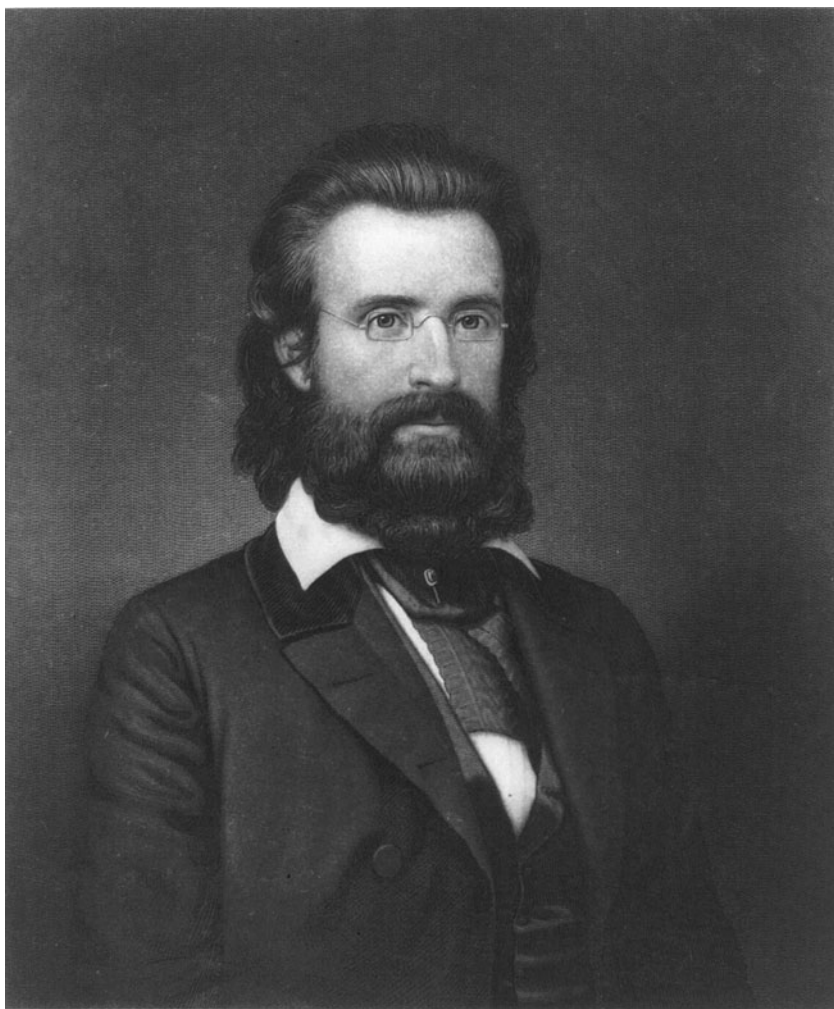


FIGURE 1. Steel engraving by Samuel Sartain, after ambrotype by I. Rehn, "Andrew Jackson Davis, 1826–1910," n.d. Print from Library of Congress.

in *Death and the After-Life* (1865) but in a rather cryptic manner that did not proclaim its full accomplishment. Tapping into the technological imaginary of his day, Davis moves rather quickly from the real or potential wonders of spirit photography to imagining an evanescent art for capturing and recording smell.

A gentleman who is an expert in science says that he can demonstrate that the photographic instrument can photograph invisible substances. Thus mankind are getting ready to *take the spirit form*, to establish the beautiful fact, by photographic developments. Art has made the nearest approach to painting unsubstantial shadows, so that the human eye can, with admiring satisfaction, look upon them. Perhaps, in this manner, one of these days, Art will catch the fragrance of a flower, so that you can take the likeness of an odor to your friends!¹⁸

By insisting that the photographic instrument can photograph invisible substances, Davis turns to a scientific expert to support the feasibility of spirit photography. In this manner, Davis invests Spiritualism with the rhetoric of science that regularly permeated Spiritualism's pronouncements in the attempt to reconcile science and religion in an era when science was being invested with truth, objectivity, and progress. For Davis (and Mumler), spirit photography was not to be viewed as something that was in any way opposed to science, but rather it should be seen as an empirical means and a new technology to prove a "spiritual truth" and a "beautiful fact." In a letter to the editor of the *New York Daily Tribune*, S. L. Walker takes up the Spiritualist position that frames spirit photography as a new and emergent scientific (noticeably italicized) and technological discovery that is a direct successor to Morse's telegraph. "Spirit Photographs, at no very distant period, will be as common and popular as the electric telegraph, or the sewing machine are to the present age. At no distant day the world at large and the investigating minds, in particular, will be interested in perusing a *scientific* work upon the whole subject, which I trust will dispel the darkness which yet broods over the grandest revelation of God's mysterious providence."¹⁹ It is in a similar light that the various scientific tests and investigations of Mumler's equipment and technical process must be understood. As Steven Connor notes, "Spiritualism shared with its opponents the language of investigation, evidence, exhibition, and exposure, and the séance was seen by spiritualists themselves as a kind of laboratory for the investigation of the spirit world, a stage on which to unveil or bring to light hitherto concealed mysteries."²⁰ In other words,

spirit photography had to withstand the careful scrutiny of scientific investigations (conducted by both Spiritualists and skeptics) that functioned as litmus tests as to whether it passed as legitimate or failed as fraudulent. Such was the case of the photographer William Gurney, who “commenced a thorough and scientific investigation of the phenomena with the determination to expose what he believed to be a fraud” but who was convinced after his investigation of Mumler and his methods to such an extent that he testified at the trial that he “accepted the phenomena as genuine.”²¹ In contrast, skeptics could not accept the findings of these investigations as scientific even if they could not locate the exact means of deception. In this battle over the good name of science, it is interesting to note the legitimization heaped on Charles W. Hull, who testified to seven potential methods of photography trickery and manipulation at the trial and who was one of the star witnesses for the prosecution. Hull was said to have both “studied the science of photography eleven years” and “written articles in scientific periodicals in this country.”²²

It is also important to understand the aims of spirit photography in tandem with other photographic projects made in the name of science and technology in the same period. If one looks at the time–motion studies of E. J. Marey or Eadweard Muybridge, one recognizes that the goal was to use photography in order to see the invisible and to reveal truths that were beyond the powers of the naked eye. As indexed in the citation above, it was also the goal of spirit photography to photograph the invisible. Davis’s claim, then, was that the (spirit) photographic medium could provide access to that which was beyond the normal powers of perception. Mumler himself made a similar argument in “Spirit-Photography Scientifically Considered,” the last chapter of *The Personal Experiences*, pointing to the “important branch of physics popularly known as florescence” in order to posit that a possible scientific explanation for his own spirit photography could be derived from a spirit that is “reflecting the ultra-violet rays” (see page 137).²³ In contrast, the “small gathering of scientific gentlemen” led by the same Professor Seely at the Lyceum of Natural History also invoked the magic word of science to debunk Mumler’s photographs. Instead of positing that ultraviolet rays account for spirit photography, this group did not believe that more was here than meets the eye. The report of their meeting reads: “Dr. Devine wanted to know if it was possible for a photograph to be taken of things not visible to the eye. He remarked that the matter was all bosh, and that if the dignity of the Society was to be kept up, the subject should be dropped.”²⁴ This debate illustrates

how both skeptics and Spiritualists sought to appropriate the good name of science to their positions, the skeptics in order to drive a wedge between “natural science” and what they viewed as the humbuggery of the Spiritualists, and the Spiritualists in order to show how something seemingly supernatural could be scientifically proven nevertheless.²⁵

While Davis and Mumler have served as the protagonists of this account of spirit photography in the light of Spiritualism, one should not forget the important role played by a number of women in these remarkable manifestations. Spirit photography catered to those who took up the role of mourners, and it was clearly targeted at women as an important group of gendered consumers, given their importance to the affective sphere of death and grieving. As Ann Braude relates, “Death literally occurred in woman’s sphere. Women, who were expected to focus their lives on the nurturing of family members during life, were also expected to feel losses through death more deeply than men, who might turn their attention to other duties.”²⁶ The former first lady Mary Todd Lincoln, who appeared in mourning costume many years after the death of President Abraham Lincoln, led the way in this category of famous female mourners who sought the spirit-photography services of William Mumler, and I will review her visit to Mumler’s studio in more detail in the final chapter of this volume (Plate 1). But this is not to say that a large number of men were not featured in these images, including important political figures such as the leading abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and Ulysses S. Grant’s vice president Henry Wilson (Figure 2).

We also should recall that a large number of mediums in Spiritualism were women and that the role of the clairvoyant offered them the opportunity to speak (albeit in the name of dead spirits), which was normally denied them in the public sphere. In her study of the life and times of Victoria Woodhull, Barbara Goldsmith affirms the firm connection between Spiritualism and the women’s rights movement. “Spiritualism and woman’s rights drew from the same well: Both were responses to the control, subjugation, and repression of women by church and state. Both believed in universal suffrage—the equality of all human beings. . . . Not all woman’s rights advocates became Spiritualists, but Spiritualism embraced woman’s rights.”²⁷ Ann Braude further elaborates this point: “Among the more audacious claims in *Radical Spirits* is the assertion that spirit mediums formed the first large group of American women to speak in public or to exercise religious leadership. The book documents the existence of 200 or so women whose careers as trance speakers during the 1850s and



FIGURE 2. William H. Mumler, "Vice-President Henry Wilson with Spirit," 1870–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.36).

1860s can be followed in the Spiritualist press.”²⁸ Braude recalls that one of “the leading trance lecturers” in the history of Spiritualism was the British-born Emma Hardinge Britten, who would become a major historian of the American movement with the publication of her book *Modern American Spiritualism: A Twenty Years’ Record of the Communion between Earth and the World of the Spirits* around the time of Mumler’s trial.²⁹ It is not surprising to learn that she sat for Mumler and that this encounter produced not an image of a deceased relative but rather the ghost of Ludwig von Beethoven watching over her (Figure 3). Hardinge Britten believed that the composer, who lived before the days of photography, appeared to her because her former occupation was “to write certain musical criticisms, in which the life and works of Beethoven formed the chief theme of [her] analysis.” She expressed her conviction as follows: “These circumstances considered, I think the remarkable resemblance of the spirit portrait to the well-known head of Beethoven may be taken as a striking and conclusive test of the spirit presence.”³⁰

Meanwhile, Hannah Mumler is described by her husband in *The Personal Experiences* as “a natural clairvoyant for diagnosing and treating disease, and has been subject to this influence since her earliest recollection” and as someone with “wonderful *magnetic powers*” (see page 107).³¹ William Mumler also states of those powers, “I believe them to be directly connected with spirit-photography, and that to them I am largely indebted for my ability in taking the likenesses of those who have passed on” (see page 107).³² Clearly, Mumler’s energetic and energized description of his wife (as a “perfect battery”) and her own abilities as a medium to summon the spirits, which he was then able to capture on the photographic plate, shares much with the personal powers that were attributed to Andrew Jackson Davis. Another important female figure in Mumler’s life was Mrs. J. H. Conant, who served as the official medium for the *Banner of Light* and whose séances featuring spirit communications from the dead who sent “messages of love to those who yet remain in the earth-sphere” were published in the newspaper on a regular basis (see page 109).³³ Conant was a frequent sitter for Mumler, and one of these images shows her with her spirit-guide Vashti, who was said to be an outcast half-breed girl of a white mother and a Native American father. The appearance of Native American spirit-guides such as Vashti or the image of the Indian chief Wapanaw with Luther Colby (who was Fanny Conant’s boss at the *Banner of Light*) in another one of Mumler’s images points to another type of spirit-photography subject quite different from the familial function of



FIGURE 3. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. Emma Hardinge Britten with the Spirit of Beethoven," c. 1871. Spirit photograph from James Coates, *Photographing the Invisible* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1911).

departed relatives. Finally, one should not forget the part played in the birth of spirit photography by one Helen F. Stuart, who engaged in another aspect of the bereavement business closely related to the function of spirit photography: the creation of mourning jewelry out of the hair of the deceased. Whether directly connected with Spiritualism or not, she owned the “photograph saloon” at 258 Washington Street in Boston, where Mumler’s first spirit photographs were made, and she possibly played a role in teaching photographic technique to the Boston engraver in the first place.³⁴

TABLOID JOURNALISM

The case of William Mumler and the photographic ghost story known as spirit photography is intimately tied up with the popular press, tabloid journalism, and photographic trade journals at every stage along the way. This volume provides the reader with a flavor of the range of things that were being published about Mumler in these different types of publications in 1862 and 1863, when spirit photography was reported and debated first in Spiritualist magazines and then in photographic trade journals, and later in 1869, when the trial became a flashpoint for public debate, making it a hot item in all the New York daily newspapers and even a topic of national coverage in publications such as *Harper’s Weekly*, where it became the front-page story on May 8, 1869 (Figure 4), and *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Journal*. For the tabloids of nineteenth-century Boston and New York, spirit photography as mediated via the ghostly developments of William Mumler became something like an “urban legend” that people wanted to read and speculate about. Mumler’s ghostly developments were a contentious and contested story that skeptics and believers disagreed passionately about, for it was felt that the larger implications of this sensational and strange case had put “Spiritualism in court” and on trial.³⁵

The part played by tabloid journalism at the trial, it should be underscored, was not the role of an objective eyewitness or documentary accountant. Instead, the news media had a shaping and determinative impact on bringing Mumler to trial in the first place, and Mumler’s images had become embroiled in the newspaper politics of the most important American media center, specifically in the rivalry between the *New York Sun* and the *New York World* for market share and reputation. On February 26, 1869, the *New York Sun* published a “remarkable story” about Mumler’s spirit photography, titled “A Wonderful Mystery: Ghosts Sitting for Their Portraits.” Reporting on this new urban sensation, the *Sun* did not condemn Mumler as a fraud but rather took up a more neutral position,

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SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHY.

To one of the people against WILLIAM H. MEXIA, of 531 Broadway, is one so remarkable in all without previous to the article of moral judgement that to devote this page a handsome bearing upon it. The charge upon Mr. Mexia is, that, by means of what were spiritual photographs, he has revealed the names of persons, better than he before a public to photograph in assumed forms of departed friends.

The case has excited to prominent interest, not even as it may seem, there are thousands of people who believe that the development will justify the accounts by the spiritual photographer. We did not attempt to give expression to our own opinion, but simply to show the developments of the case through the necessary effort during the last few days of the trial.

It is through the testimony of Marshall Joseph H. Toussaint that the case has been brought before the court. He deposes that he was questioned by Mayor Hall to investigate the case which he did by assuming a false name, and by getting his photograph taken by Mr. Mexia. After the taking of the pictures he again was shown him, with a dim, indistinct outline of a ghostly but striking out of one country, and he was told he did not recognize the spirit of his late father. He, however, failed to recognize the very old gentleman, and he was told he did not recognize the picture which represented his late father, nor any of his children, nor yet any person whom he had ever seen or known. With this evidence the process went.



W. H. MEXIA.



MRS. W. H. MEXIA.—BY MEXIA.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MEXIA.

—not that gross materiality that mortals possess, but still they are material enough to be visible to the human eye, for I have seen them only a few days since I was in a court in Brooklyn when a suit against a life insurance company for the amount claimed to be due on a certain policy was being heard. Looking toward that part of the court-room occupied by the jury, I saw the spirit of the man whose death was the basis of the suit. The spirit in the circumstances connected with the death; said that the suit was groundless, that the claimant was not entitled to recover from the company, and said that he (the man whose spirit was speaking) had committed suicide under certain circumstances; I drew a diagram of the place at which his death occurred, and on showing it to the counsel, was told that it was exact in every particular."

A large number of witnesses deposed that they recognized the forms of departed friends (in some cases of those long dead) in the photographs taken for them by MEXIA. The most striking case was that of a gentleman of Wall Street, whose deceased wife's features both he and his friends distinctly recognized in a photograph taken for him in this way.

If there is a trick in Mr. Mexia's process it has certainly not been detected as yet. To all appearances, spiritual photography rests just where the rappings and table-turnings have rested for some years. Those who believe in it at all will respect no opposing arguments, and disbelievers will reject every favorable hypothesis or explanation. Mr. Mexia has certainly been very fortunate. He has been believed in, in the first place, by a large number of people. He has obtained, again, a good price for his photographs; for who could expect spirits to be called "from the vasty deep" for less than ten dollars per hour? And, finally, he has been prosecuted, and thus extensively advertised. Beyond this, the trial, like all legal proceedings of this nature, will amount to nothing.

In addition to our illustrations of specimens of Mr. MEXIA's spirit photographs, we give also representations of similar photographs taken by Mr. ROCKWOOD of this city. The latter were taken by natural means, but not so as to secure detection as to the trick resorted to to obscure the result. Mr. MEXIA has certainly the advantage of a longer experience in the business.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MEXIA.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MEXIA.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MEXIA.



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MEXIA.



F. V. HICKLY.—BY ROCKWOOD.



C. A. BOWLE.—BY ROCKWOOD.

SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHY.—[SPECIMENS FURNISHED BY MEXIA AND ROCKWOOD.]

FIGURE 4. Cover page, Harper's Weekly, May 8, 1869.

giving equal time to both skeptics and believers who stressed the wondrous and marvelous nature of these recent events. On the one hand, the reporter Hitchcock wrote, “skeptics will insist that there is some trick, and that the ghost pictures are obtained by using lay figures or old photograph negatives, or by some other expedient of that kind.” On the other hand, “Mr. Mumler says that he really believes the pictures are produced by departed spirits who are attached to the sitters by affection or relationship or affinity.” The article concluded, “What our reporter thinks about it he declines to say. If there is any trick used, he does not know what it is. He gives us the facts, and we give them to our readers to think about as they please. The whole thing is a marvel any way, and deserves to be investigated by scientific men.”³⁶

This is exactly the point at which both the *New York World* and the Photographic Section of the American Institute intervened in the name of the natural sciences. The investigative reporting of the science columnist P. V. Hickey of the *New York World* served as the primary catalyst of what was to transpire. At the instigation of Hickey, a complaint was brought against Mumler to the attention of Mayor A. Oakey Hall, who then assigned Marshal Joseph Tooker to look into the case and prepare the sting operations that followed. The *World* published Hickey’s complete affidavit on April 13 as part of its first feature-length article on the trial: “‘Spiritual’ Photography,” subtitled “A Photographic Medium in Trouble—Charge of Obtaining Money by Trick and Device—Interesting Affidavits.” The affidavit begins: “P.V. Hickey, residing in said city, county, and State, to wit, at No. 186 Hudson street, in said city, being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is connected with the editorial department of THE WORLD, a daily paper published in said city, that it is a part of his duty to procure scientific news for said journal.”³⁷ The association of Hickey’s duties with the procurement of “scientific news” and the dubious quotation marks placed around “‘spiritual’ photography” in the title hint at the storm of controversy raised by the Mumler trial and how it offered a showdown in the popular press in the debate between the rational forces of the scientific faithful and the supernatural belief in the wonders of spirit photography.

Hickey also was connected with the Photographic Section of the American Institute (PSAI), and its membership had an axe to grind with Mumler for what they viewed as his making a mockery of photography as something based in reality and reliable in depicting the truth. Hickey reported on the meeting of the PSAI in the *World* on March 3, 1869. This article exposed the ire felt by the upholders of the photographic medium

as a humbug-free technology that did not dabble in spirits. “Several of the members called attention to the ‘Spiritual’ photographs now fleecing the public, and, after exposing the manner in which the mediums worked, expressed the opinion that the matter called for the intervention of the police. A member suggested that a much readier mode of exploding the humbug would be to have some respectable artists offer to photograph deceased ancestors for half the usual price.”³⁸ While it is not known if the members of the PSAI went out of their way to counter Mumler’s supernatural images with their own discounted knockoffs, it is known that they actively worked with Tooker and the prosecution and submitted numerous double-printed images as evidence of how the ghostly developments could be produced by mechanical means, and these exhibits formed a part of Gerry’s argument. One of these simulated specimens, attributed to George and Elihu Rockwood’s Gallery, was reproduced on the front page of *Harper’s*, and it shows Hickey with the “spirit” of Joseph Tooker hovering above him (Figure 5). This sight gag was an ingenious move on the part of the prosecuting photographers, because it touched on one of the things that had led Mumler into trouble in the past while practicing in Boston, that is, when a few of the extras in his spirit photographs were identified as being among the land of the living. Another specimen was a photograph prepared by the New York photographer Abraham Bogardus showing P. T. Barnum with the ghost of the late president Abraham Lincoln hovering over him (see Figure 40, on page 196), in a prophetic foreshadowing of Mumler’s own most famous image.

Mumler’s three-week preliminary examination before Judge Dowling received extensive press coverage in all five major New York newspapers of the day. In addition to the *World* and the *Sun*, the *Tribune*, the *Times*, and the *Herald* all devoted an inordinate amount of space to the sensational trial, including lengthy news stories, exact transcriptions of testimony, letters to the editor, and even commentaries. As has been noted by previous studies of the accounts of the trial in the popular press, a lot of this coverage was biased against Mumler in particular and against Spiritualism in general. At the conclusion of the trial, the *Herald* proclaimed Judge Dowling’s verdict of acquittal to be a “most ridiculous decision, discharging Mumler with a grand advertisement, and full freedom to inveigle all the countrymen he can get into his gallery. Common sense and reality are not to be departed from, or every bedlamite can give his own crazy reasons for misconduct, and there is no safety. Whatsoever.”³⁹ Appealing to its readers in the name of common sense and reality (also aligned with



P. V. HICKEY.—BY ROCKWOOD.

FIGURE 5. Rockwood's Gallery, "P. V. Hickey with Joseph Tooker as Spirit," *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869, cover. Wood engraving after spirit photograph.

the defense of photographic realism), the *Herald* cast the departures of spirit photography on the side of madness and delusion. The paper hit the panic button in regard to Dowling's decision, linking it to the general breakdown of social order and to an opening of the floodgates to bedlam. The *Tribune* published letters to the editor on May 4 that presented evidence in support of both the prosecution and the defense. On the one hand, "Are They Pictures of Spirits?" by someone calling himself "the Investigator" dredged up stories from Boston that put Mumler in a very negative light. On the other hand, the Poughkeepsie-based photographer William Slee, who had testified on behalf of Mumler at the trial, submitted "Spiritual Photographs," which recounted his own investigations of Mumler's spirits in his own "operating rooms," where he could find no evidence of trickery.⁴⁰ While the *New York Times* began its coverage with the following damning headline, "A Stupendous Fraud—Pretended Spiritualistic Portraits of Deceased Persons Taken by a Broadway Photographer,"⁴¹ it later published a commentary on April 25 not usually noted in the newspaper literature related to the trial; this commentary presented a more impartial and open-ended view of the proceedings that mediated between the unwise forces of mistaken beliefs and the untold powers of the yet-to-be-known. "Certainly, in view of the world's past history and its present progress, it is not the part of wisdom to believe in appearances, or to disbelieve in what we cannot yet understand. Those are both the resources of thoughtlessness and folly. . . . Scientific ghosts are a fact undoubtedly; but that does not disprove the alleged appearance of disembodied spirits."⁴²

In 1862, Mumler first came to the public's attention in the Anglo-American world through the Spiritualist press: Andrew Jackson Davis's *Herald of Progress*, in New York, and Luther Colby's *Banner of Light*, in Boston, as well as the *Spiritual Magazine*, in London (which reproduced many of the American newspaper and journal accounts for the British audience). Obviously the media organs of Spiritualism wanted to publicize a phenomenon that would support and confirm their doctrines regarding the possibility of communication with the spirit world. Very fittingly, the first two articles devoted to "spirit photographs" in the *Banner of Light* were published on November 1, 1862. This was when A. B. Child composed a short statement ("A New Spiritual Phase") commenting on three photographs by an unnamed photographer that claimed to contain "the actual likenesses of spirits." Amid the Halloween season, the Boston public would have to decide whether these "very interesting phenomena" were to be viewed as a photographic con artist's trick or a Spiritualist treat.⁴³

A review of the Spiritualist literature illustrates that the popular mainstream press was not the only sort to subject Mumler to rigorous examination and that the skeptics had not cornered the market on the ideal of scientific investigation. The advocates of Spiritualism invested in the scientific method in order to make their claims that seemed to be beyond reason. Indeed, in seeking to validate the doctrine of Spiritualism and the visual evidence of the afterlife of the soul, Andrew Jackson Davis saw it in his best interest to make sure these ghostly developments were credible. Therefore, he sent an investigator, William Guay, to test Mumler in Boston to see if some trick or device might be found, and Guay's report became a good ghost story in the Spiritualist press: "I went through the whole process of selecting, cleaning, preparing, coating and silvering and putting into the shield, the glass upon which Mr. M. proposed that a spirit form should be imparted, never taking off my eyes, and not allowing Mr. M. to touch the glass until it had gone through the whole of the operation."⁴⁴ With spirit photography put on trial in this manner, Guay was "obliged to endorse its legitimacy" to Davis. In the hindsight of 1869, however, this "independent" investigation would undergo a credibility crisis when the authorities discovered that this same Mr. Guay, assuming the guise of Mr. Silver, was in partnership with Mumler at 630 Broadway when the sting operations staged by Marshal Tooker took place. In dispelling the myth that Spiritualist journals were always supportive of Mumler, it should be noted that the *Banner of Light* published Dr. H. F. Gardner's accusatory statement on February 20, 1863: "Evidence of deception have, in two cases, at least, been furnished me, which is perfectly conclusive." While Gardner still maintained his belief that "genuine spirit likenesses have been produced through his mediumship," he was forced to admit that Mr. Mumler or some person connected with Helen Stuart's rooms "have been guilty of deception in palming off as genuine spirit likenesses pictures of a person who is now living in this city."⁴⁵

The third type of coverage that Mumler received throughout the 1860s came from the professional photographic press, in which the reviews of spirit photography were quite negative. Not much sympathy was shown for this attempt to move photography out of the hands of skilled operators and into those of spiritual mediums. In these accounts, the ghosts were usually explained away as fraudulent tricks of the trade in need of exposure. To that end, the *British Journal of Photography* published the mocking report in January 1863, "About Some Photographic Ghost Stories." This account suggests a scenario that reduces the Mumler mystery

to the mere reuse of plates containing “indelible impressions upon the glass—which no cleaning can remove.”⁴⁶ Sitting around the fireplace and speculating in the tradition of Descartes and his cogito and in quest of foundational photographic truths, the author (bearing the initials R. A. S.) begins in a sarcastic vein with rhetorical questions in the attempt to efface the ghost stories that have been generated by photography. “Yes, about *photographic* ghost stories! And why not? Pray, are there any reasons why we photographers should not have our own peculiar ghost stories to chat about while sitting around our cozy hearths during these long winter evenings?”⁴⁷ Yet, one also notes that the mocking attempt of this accredited professional journal to demystify Mumler has been cast as a phantasmic story and one that utilizes a spiritual and Spiritualist imperative (“pray”). In other words, the photographic journal (and its “reasons”) cannot wipe the slate clean of such uncanny and peculiar stories on account of the constitutive haunting of the photographic medium by ghosts and phantoms.

LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the same way that Mumler’s ghostly developments were enmeshed in the machine (the printing press) of urban tabloid journalism and the commercial desire to crank out sensational stories to sell newspapers, his spirit photographs also were ensnared in the criminal justice system and taken up in the New York City law courts in the spring of 1869 for a preliminary hearing before the Court of Special Sessions at the Tombs Police Court. In this case, another institutional force also was at work: a New York political machine looking to find favor with its citizens by rooting out corruption at a time when it needed to distract attention from its own fiscal improprieties. Clearly, Mumler’s case played on the general public’s anxiety about business fraud and political corruption and its desire for ethical conduct in business dealings at a highly sensitive moment in American urban history when these ideals were under severe threat. For this was the period when the Democratic state senator and political boss William Tweed was actively engaged in plundering the coffers of New York City of somewhere in the neighborhood of two hundred million dollars. Indeed, it is recorded that New York City’s debt increased by approximately one hundred million dollars in the period between 1868 and 1870. In fact, Mumler’s trial took place just two years before Tweed was convicted of defrauding New York City of millions through a variety of schemes with contractors who overcharged the city for work that was either done or not

done. Mayor Hall, who took a personal interest in bringing Mumler to trial for his alleged fraud and larceny on the public, was a member of the infamous Tweed Ring, and many people felt that he served as the front man for a web of corruption and scandal. However, Hall (like Mumler) was acquitted of all charges at his trial a few years later. Given this background information regarding the swindles at work in and around the halls of city government and the political climate of corruption, it is quite amusing to read Gerry's comments in his closing argument at the Mumler trial, in which he sings the praises of the political establishment as a force for good and justice. "The Chief Magistrate of this city, with an energy that does him honor, had determined to put a stop, if possible, to these wholesale swindles. The Arm of the Law should be liberally extended to aid him in his efforts" (see page 179).⁴⁸

This book includes the complete transcript of the argument of Elbridge T. Gerry in the Mumler "spirit" photograph case, recorded by Andrew Devine and delivered before Judge John Dowling on May 3, 1869 (see page 140). This document will enable the reader to review the rhetorical strategies and the legal arguments and precedents deployed by the prosecution in constructing its case against William Mumler, who was accused of two counts of felony (fraud) and one count of misdemeanor (larceny). In regard to the first two counts, Gerry indicts Mumler as a swindler who "by *false pretenses* defrauded and cheated [Marshal Joseph H. Tooker] out of, and obtained from him the sum of ten dollars, lawful money of the United States of America" (see page 143).⁴⁹ Many have noted the exorbitant amount that Mumler charged for a dozen photographs as further evidence that he was in it only for the money. The amount indicates a strong class bias in terms of Mumler's clientele, meaning that only a select and exclusive group of celebrities and affluent patrons (Spiritualist or not) could have afforded a visit to his New York studio on 630 Broadway. In regard to the final count, Gerry accused him of practicing "a *larceny of money by trick and device*," because he did not believe that Mumler had delivered the goods that he had promised to Tooker, that is, "a photograph of a spirit by supernatural means" (see page 144).⁵⁰ Given this final point, it becomes apparent why Gerry turned to a number of photographic experts such as Abraham Bogardus (of the National Photographic Association), Charles W. Hull, and Oscar G. Mason (the last two of the Photographic Section of the American Institute) as witnesses. Their testimony provided the prosecutor with what he needed to make the argument that these photographs were darkroom tricks of the trade rather than

produced by supernatural means. Gerry also made it a point to undermine the witnesses for the defense who proclaimed that their Mumler images were genuine; he did so by arguing that Spiritualist clients' authentication that these photographs did indeed depict the spirits of their deceased relatives could only be a self-fulfilling prophecy, whether a result of their system of belief or their being in a state of mourning.⁵¹ But Gerry would not settle for religious pluralism, and he did not allow Spiritualists the space to hold their beliefs peaceably. Instead he took the offense at numerous points in the trial with the express purpose of branding Spiritualism the product of religious heresy and mental delusion. In fact, he had to be overruled by Judge Dowling when he attempted to call Dr. Parsons, "one of the physicians of the Blackwell's Island Insane Asylum," to the witness stand in order "to prove some points relative to insanity."⁵²

The Mumler case, specifically the prosecution's strategy, was analyzed a few years later in the legal textbook *The Law of Literature* (1875), authored by the New York lawyer and Shakespeare scholar James Appleton Morgan. Morgan classified the prosecution's legal argument that Mumler's spirit photos were fraudulent as an example of something that, while not harmful in and of itself, could be regarded by the law as something "not innocent," on account of the false pretenses attributed to the photos' production by a "spiritual or supernatural process." In assessing the prosecution's case, Morgan shifted the basis for fraud from the pretense that Mumler had created a spirit photograph to the pretense that Mumler and his camera had a special type of connection with the spirit world. From Morgan's perspective, Mumler's fraud, therefore, lay in conflating spiritual and photographic mediums and in the technical fetishization that he somehow operated with a *Spiritualist* camera. As Morgan explains:

The gist of the fraud here was, evidently, not the taking of the picture, or the production of the chemical and mechanical effect of a shadow upon the camera; nor perhaps the assertion that an actual spiritual presence accompanied the sitter (for that there are or are not spiritual presences about us continually, is a matter of fact concerning which men cannot reason from any data known to the law, and hence it cannot hear the opinion of experts upon the subject, nor form any conclusions of its own), but it is submitted, the pretense that the operator and his camera were different from other operators and cameras, inasmuch as they had a connection with the spirit world. It was for obtaining money under false pretenses, therefore, that the prosecution by the people against Mumler proceeded.⁵³

On the other side of the coin and the courtroom, John D. Townsend led Mumler's defense team at the trial and offered a "spirited" closing argument that addressed both the legal and the spiritual aspects of the case. Proclaiming Mumler's innocence, Townsend argued that he was charged with fraud not because of any wrongdoing but only because the prosecution could not understand how he produced the spirits in his photographs and because Marshal Tooker could not recognize the particular spirit that appeared on the photographic plate. Townsend took this opportunity to make a fascinating analogy between Mumler's spirit photography and Samuel F. B. Morse's invention of the telegraph twenty-five years previously. This ingenious gesture set up Mumler as the struggling prophet of a new technology called spirit photography who was ironing out the kinks to make it fully operational. In this light, Townsend viewed the present case as one of a partly failed transmission (capturing the wrong ghost on the line and in the frame) instead of an intentional fraud.

Suppose, when Morse was struggling to put before the world the great fact that by means of electricity communication might be had on the instant between persons hundreds of miles apart, some skeptic should have asked to have a message sent from New-York to Boston; that Mr. Morse, confident of the truth of his discovery, should attempt to send the message, but that, owing to some cause not clearly known to him, the continuity should be broken, and the attempt to transmit the message should fail, would such failure be counted a fraud by any court or jury in Christendom? And yet Mumler is charged with fraud, because the spirit figure which appeared on Tooker's photograph is not recognized by Tooker as being the representation of any person known to him.⁵⁴

Clearly, Townsend understood that he had to defend Spiritualism as much as Mumler's good name at the trial, "because the question as to what is the belief of Spiritualists had been introduced into this examination." To put it quite bluntly, Spiritualism had been slandered as a religion of insanity and delusion. To counteract this, Townsend framed Spiritualism as a respectable option for popular nineteenth-century religious belief as part of his defense. Citing one report (credible or not) that claimed Spiritualism had eleven million adherents or at least interested people in the United States at that time, Townsend dared Gerry to charge one-third of the American population with insanity. Townsend also resorted to quoting scriptural passages that could be interpreted in ways that would give a sound spiritual basis to Mumler's practice and the witnessing of spirits

in photographs. Despite the objections of Gerry, Townsend shifted the argument from photographic to theological proofs. As a wondrous example of a biblical case study, he cited the Witch of Endor as a conjurer of spirits whose powers could have been captured quite easily if there had been cameras in those times. “Spiritualists found their belief on the Bible. Throughout the book we find mention of spirits. . . . The Witch of Endor raised the spirit of Samuel and if we believe in the Bible—counsel could not see how we can fail to believe that spirits do appear, at times, and are palpable to the sight of those mortals gifted with the power of seeing them.”⁵⁵ This is exactly the rhetorical question that Townsend put to both Abraham Bogardus and P. T. Barnum for their consideration: “Now, if photography were known in those days, would it have been impossible to photograph the spirit or ghost of Samuel?”⁵⁶

In “The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy,” Jennifer Mnookin devotes a section to the Mumler trial and to these legal considerations. Mnookin argues that the preliminary hearing offered the chance to put on trial not only William Mumler and the validity of Spiritualism but also “the nature of photographic evidence itself.”⁵⁷ Mnookin locates three strands of testimony and argumentation at the trial dealing with the status of photographs as evidence. She classifies the first strand as “supernatural realism,” which she associates with those defense witnesses who testified that these images provided important evidence for the existence of spirits. In other words, these Spiritualists believed that such images bore an indexical relationship with the supernatural and that they were the product of spiritual intervention. She classifies the second category as “mechanical illusionism,” which she associates with those skeptical witnesses for the prosecution who “combined an emphasis on photography’s mechanical provenance with a focus on its manipulability.”⁵⁸ They, too, argued that these images served as evidence but of just the opposite of spiritual intervention; they argued that Mumler’s images were fraudulent and illusionist, providing them with evidence to illustrate the mechanical tricks and darkroom manipulations that he employed. Finally, Mnookin classifies the third category as “anti-evidentialist,” and this was the one taken up by Mumler’s legal team and ironically the one that carried the day in court. According to Mnookin, those affirming the anti-evidentialist position held “that the photographs themselves could not provide definitive evidence about their mode of manufacture; for this, it was necessary to look not at the product but at the process.”⁵⁹ In this way, Townsend was able to challenge the meaning that the prosecution

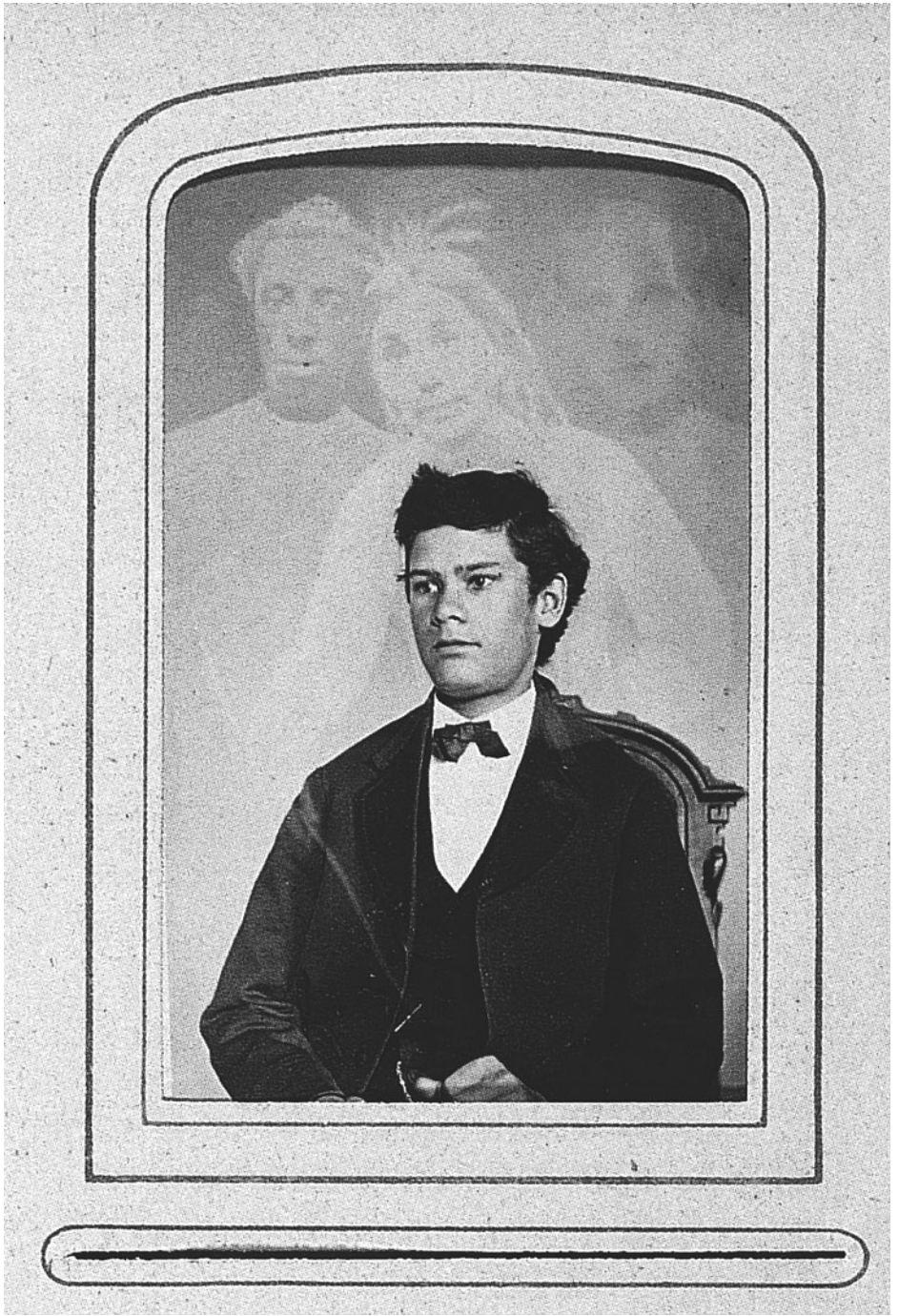


FIGURE 6. William H. Mumler, "Master Herrod with the Spirits of Europe, Africa, and America," 1870–72. Reproduced by kind permission of the College of Psychic Studies, London.

attributed to the twenty images it submitted as evidence and as proof of Mumler's fraud. For all of the nine purported methods of deceit enumerated in the proceedings, the prosecution still was not able to figure out how Mumler actually did the trick, and therefore it did not have a case in the end. Consequently, Judge Dowling had no choice but to acquit Mumler and to acknowledge the force of the anti-evidentiary position, despite his moral qualms about his own decision. As he proclaimed in his verdict, "After a careful and thorough analysis of this interesting, and I may say, extraordinary case, I have come to the conclusion that the prisoner should be discharged. I will state that, however I may be morally convinced that there may have been trick and deception practiced by the prisoner, yet as I sit as a Magistrate to determine from the evidence given by the witnesses, according to law, I am compelled to decide . . . the prosecution have failed to make out their complaint."⁶⁰ Given the viability of each of these three positions on the status of the photographs as evidence, Mnookin concludes that the Mumler case "suggests the indeterminacy of photographic meaning" or that photography is perpetually engaged in what the photo historian and theorist Richard Bolton has referred to as "the contest of meaning."⁶¹ The indeterminate result of the Mumler trial would then be to think about photographic meaning as an exercise of competing wills to truth and as an effect of rhetorical framing. "The tremendous variation in the understanding of these images as constituting proof of ghosts, proof of fraud, or no proof at all reminds us that we cannot assume that a photograph has a singular and unproblematic meaning."⁶²

PHOTOGRAPHIC AMUSEMENTS:

BREWSTER'S GHOST AND COMBINATION PRINTING

In 1856, the Scottish physicist Sir David Brewster published *The Stereoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction*. Known as one of the key technological innovators of his era for the invention of the kaleidoscope as well as for his innovation in the development of lenses for the stereoscope (the binocular-attuned instrument designed to give the illusion of a three-dimensional viewing experience), Brewster understood how this new photo-philosophical toy would lend itself to funny business. These insights are found in his chapter 14, "Applications of the Stereoscope to Purposes of Amusement." It is the photographer who establishes the relationship between technology and the occult with a sleight of hand and a parlor trick that is made in the name of levity. The solemn strivings of

Spiritualism have no place in this narrative that situates its ghostly developments as photographic amusements and as commercially viable visual entertainments. Brewster's assertion is a far cry from Mumler's claim that the photographer carries us into the regions of the supernatural for the purpose of spirit communion with the dead. The British scientist writes: "For the purpose of amusement, the photographer might carry us even into the regions of the supernatural."⁶³ With this flight toward the airy and ethereal regions, the normative reality effect of the photograph is challenged by the conjuration of a "spiritual appearance" or ghostly apparition. Brewster goes on to explain this photographic artifice, whereby all that is solid seemingly melts into air:⁶⁴

His art, as I have elsewhere shewn, enables him to give a spiritual appearance to one or more of his figures, and to exhibit them as "thin air" amid the solid realities of the stereoscopic picture. While a party is engaged with their whist or their gossip, a female figure appears in the midst of them with all the attributes of the supernatural. Her form is transparent, every object or person beyond her being seen in shadowy but distinct outline. . . . In order to produce such a scene, the parties which are to compose the group must have their portraits nearly finished in the binocular camera, in the attitude which they may be supposed to take, and with the expression which they may be supposed to assume, if the vision were real. When the party have nearly sat the proper length of time, the female figure, suitably attired, walks quickly into the place assigned her, and after standing a few seconds in the proper attitude, retires quickly. If this operation has been well performed, all the objects immediately behind the female figure, having been, previous to her introduction, impressed upon the negative surface, will be seen through her, and she will have the appearance of an aerial personage, unlike the other figures in the picture.⁶⁵

As with other comic forms that generate laughter and amusement, the issue is always one of good timing. It is important to have the ghost play only a walk-on part for just a few seconds and then to depart or split the scene. The timing differential in terms of the shortened length of exposure for this in comparison with the rest of the theater party generates the ghostly effect, or what Brewster invokes as "the appearance of an aerial personage" in the staging of photography's natural magic.

George Swan Nottage and his colleagues at the London Stereoscopic Company, founded in 1854 to disseminate the new visual entertainment on a mass scale, were clearly reading Brewster's handbook when they devised

a series of stereo cards just a few years later titled *The Ghost in the Stereoscope*. The caption to each of these practical applications contained the following acknowledgment: “Kindly suggested by Sir David Brewster” (Figure 7). These uncanny images depict a ghost’s invasion of domestic scenes, which surprises and startles the homebody, who realizes that he or she is living in a haunted house. One can imagine these stereo cards as constituting the ghost story genre for this new popular entertainment, which functioned as the television set of the nineteenth century. Contemporary with Mumler’s practice in the 1860s, London Stereoscopic also issued another series of cards called New “Spirit” Photographs. The qualifying quotation marks placed around the word *spirit* indicate that these images were located on the skeptical side of the great debate and were considered rather dubious despite the claims and assertions of the believers. These visual entertainments were highly staged minidramas in which a stock character encounters a stereoscopic specter to evoke a mixture of laughter and fright or even horror. Such fantastic and phantasmic photographic tableaux might be thought to open up a space for security and comfort by allowing their viewers to laugh at the unreal ghosts of unreason, but they also unwittingly suggest the more haunting proposition that from the very first double, the photographic medium was invested with ghosts and prone to airy flights that spook “the solid realities of the

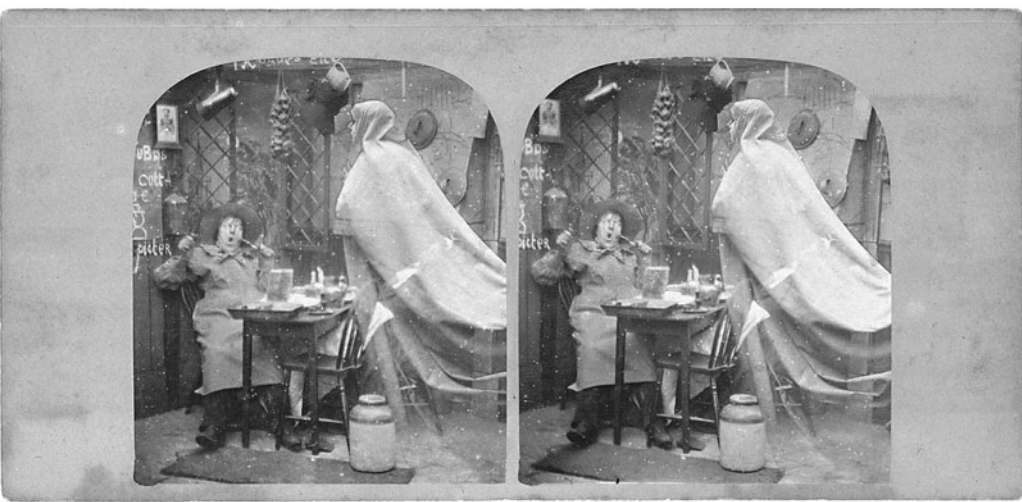


FIGURE 7. London Stereoscopic Company, stereo card from the series *The Ghost in the Stereoscope*, c. 1858. Collection of Early Visual Media, Thomas Weynants. www.visual-media.eu/ghosts.html.

stereoscopic picture.” However, believers were not fazed at all by Brewster’s entertaining demystification. The *Banner of Light* paradoxically commented on the London series: “It is a little singular that Sir David should have suggested a method of producing spirit pictures so original and truthful, when he is a most intensely bitter anti-Spiritualist.”⁶⁶ At the fraud trial, Elbridge T. Gerry demonstrated that he was quite familiar with Brewster’s stereoscopic ghost as well, and he listed it as the second of nine possible methods by which Mumler’s spirit photographs could have been produced by mechanical means rather than by a supernatural process or power. As Gerry states, “A figure clothed in white can be introduced for a moment behind the sitter, and then be withdrawn before the sitting is over, leaving a shadowy image on the plate. This is known as ‘Sir David Brewster’s ghost’” (see page 163).⁶⁷

The birth of spirit photography also coincided with other photographic techniques and manipulations, such as the invention of double or combination printing that involved the production of pictures from several negatives, and clearly Prosecutor Gerry suspected Mumler of also relying on these new artistic techniques to produce supernatural effects in his spirit photography. Indeed, the first suspected method in the legal brief involves the case of double printing the same glass plate. Gerry instructs the jury: “A glass plate containing a previously prepared positive is placed in the plate-holder, in front of the sensitive plate, so that the image on the glass will be taken with that of the sitter at the same time” (see page 163).⁶⁸ In *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science*, Jennifer Tucker relates that the *Photographic News* published Mr. Davie’s “Formula for Raising Ghosts” in the summer of 1869 (or a few months after the trial) with a detailed recipe of the technical points for this photographic trick of producing a plate with a ghost “etched in the glass” in preparation for the plate to receive a second impression.⁶⁹ Sometimes the same results could even be produced by accident when the photographer forgot to clean the plate thoroughly, and one notes that Mumler himself first believed that the initial spirit photograph was an accident attributable to double printing. In *The Personal Experiences*, Mumler seeks advice from an unnamed photo operator with more experience. “His opinion was that the negative was taken upon an old glass that had previously been used for the same purpose, but had been insufficiently cleaned; and when a second negative was taken upon the same glass, the latent form, so to speak, was re-developed sufficiently to give an indistinct and shadowy outline. This theory was at the time, with my limited knowledge of photography,

acceptable, and when asked by my employers and others how the picture was produced, the above statement was given” (see page 70).⁷⁰

But if Mumler’s narrative had stopped at the point of accident, with the acknowledgment that an unclean plate had been prepared by a bumbling engraver recently turned photographer, then there would be no divinely inspired ghost story to write about. In the next paragraph, however, things get out of hand with the arrival of a gentleman of the Spiritualist persuasion (presumably Dr. H. F. Gardner) at Mumler’s studio. “One day a gentleman visited me who I knew was a Spiritualist; and not at that time being inclined much to the spiritual belief myself, and being of a jovial disposition, always ready for a joke, I concluded to have a little fun, as I thought, at his expense. I therefore showed him the picture, and with as mysterious an air as possible, but without telling an untruth, which Mr. P.T. Barnum calls ‘drapery,’ I stated to him ‘that this picture was taken by myself when there was no visible person present but myself’” (see page 70).⁷¹ Given the tone of this anecdote, it would appear that a fun-loving Mumler, prior to his Spiritualist conversion, was not averse to a little photographic amusement or even to playing a practical joke of his own. Before seeing things in a Spiritualist light, Mumler puts on a mysterious air and tells Dr. Gardner (who would be his first advocate but who later would also accuse him of fraud) what he wants to hear in a scene that is full of doublespeak and equivocations. Even though Mumler believes that this is a matter of double printing, he confesses to Gardner that he was the only person in the room at the time, a circumstance that a ghost-hunting Spiritualist would be inclined to interpret as a modern-day miracle. And when Gardner puts a supernatural spin and a mysterious air on the photographic double and begins to spread the word in the Spiritualist press in New York and Boston, the photographic ghost story is sealed. However, it should be noted that an omission occurs in *The Personal Experiences* in contrast to the account that Mumler gave to the Spiritualist press. For what one finds in Mumler’s published statement in the press is his identification of the printed extra as the ghostly development of his *dead cousin*. One wonders, then, whether this factoid, omitted from his own publication, was actually the “drapery” that Mumler added at the Spiritualist’s expense. In the primal reporting of spirit photography in the *Herald of Progress*, Mumler is quoted as saying: “This photograph was taken of myself, by myself, on Sunday, when there was not a living soul in the room beside me—‘so to speak.’ The form on my right I recognize as my cousin who passed away about twelve years since.”⁷² It is this

explanatory addition that takes Mumler's photograph out of the realm of photographic amusement and aligns it with Spiritualist ideas about the afterlife and communication with departed spirits.

In framing this exchange as something of a "cover-up" (but not as an untruth), Mumler perversely invokes the technique of drapery that he derives from his archenemy (or partner in crime), P. T. Barnum. Here, Mumler alludes to Barnum's exact testimony at his trial when Barnum was asked by John Townsend if he "as a public entertainer presented to the mass anything which [he] knew to be untrue, and took money for it." Barnum responds, "Well, I think I have given it a little drapery sometimes founded on fact."⁷³ In this way, Mumler himself is haunted by the testimony of the star witness for the prosecution, who seeks to dismiss his images as one of the humbugs of the world and whose own published account debunking his spirit-photography practice (titled "Spiritual Photography") is reproduced in this volume. With Mumler's adaptation and deployment of Barnum's drapery, it is as if the prankish or skeptical position begins to fold over on his spirit photography. Nevertheless, Michael Leja argues that such an admission of drapery on Barnum's part makes



FIGURE 8. Oscar Rejlander, "Hard Times," c. 1860. Courtesy of George Eastman House.

one wonder why the spectacular showman's visual entertainments were to be considered legitimate rather than as frauds and deceits.⁷⁴ In other words, why was it that Mumler was the only one who stood trial for fraud and larceny or who spent time in the Tombs for his drapery? And what made the rhetoric of spirit photography (and its supernatural claims) qualitatively different from other photographic amusements or visual entertainments in a court of law in that sociohistorical context? These fascinating questions come to the fore in P. T. Barnum's ribald testimony at the trial and in the narrative unmasking that he presents in *The Humbugs of the World*.

The historical conjuncture of the birth of spirit photography with the invention of combination printing as a sustained art-photography practice leads to another interesting convergence involving one of the classic combination albumen prints of that era by Oscar Rejlander. "Hard Times" (1860) shows a family scene in which a pensive father sits next to the bedside of his sleeping wife and child, and the superimposed traces of these same characters assuming other poses create an eerie effect of doubling (Figure 8). One year before Mumler's claim regarding the first divine manifestations of spirit or spiritual photography, Rejlander wrote on the mount of this man-made image, "A Spiritistical Photo."⁷⁵ This indicates that art photographers who were working in Great Britain in this same period and aiming to achieve "pictorial effect in photography" (to recall Henry Peach Robinson's phrase and handbook)⁷⁶ were attuned to the capacity of combination printing and its technical manipulations, occurring either in the darkroom (through the masking of negatives) or in the studio (through the insertion of an unclean plate into the slide), to conjure something akin to the images developed by one William Mumler, spirit photographer.

POSTSCRIPT

Elbridge T. Gerry's closing remarks ridiculed Mumler and the claim made by his defense team that the spirits in his photographs were somehow able to reflect their own light, thereby having a supernatural ability to generate multiple light sources within a single image and defy photographic logic. "If the prisoner's innocence is as strong as his supernatural powers are said to be, perhaps, like some of his 'spirits,' he may be able before a jury of his countrymen, to create in their minds a marked impression of that innocence by his own reflected light!" (see page 179).⁷⁷ The question of human versus divine agency is once again at stake here in this final instance of iconoclasm as Gerry seeks to reduce Mumler from a supernatural

medium channeling spiritual powers to a photographic agent and con artist manipulating his photographs and his public. The prosecutor mocks the possibility of a divinely inspired photographer basking in his own aura and reflecting (or, better, emanating) his own light while hinting that he would not mind Mumler's own transformation into a ghost. This thinly disguised death wish would have been a fitting ending for our photographic ghost story. But Gerry was granted neither his wish of seeing Mumler tried by a jury of his peers nor his wish of Mumler turning into a ghost just yet. The defendant was set free and returned to his native Boston to start life over again.

William Mumler would not give up his ghost until fifteen years later on May 16, 1884. In marked contrast to his self-professed technical incompetence in the field of photography, as outlined in *The Personal Experiences*, and his insistence that he served "as an instrument in the hands of the dwellers in the invisible world," Mumler's obituary in the *Photographic Times* paints a picture proclaiming "his inventive genius and taste for experiment." It goes on to list a number of photographic activities and discoveries for which he is not remembered today: "a wide reputation as a photograph publisher," "the discovery of what is known as the Mumler process, by which photo-electrotype plates are produced and as readily printed from wood-cuts on an ordinary printing press, and at great saving of expense," as well as "experimenting upon improvements in dry plates for instantaneous photography." Only the obituary's last sentence contains a short reference to our photographic ghost story and to the contentious discovery of spirit photography: "The deceased at one time gained considerable notoriety in connection with spirit photographs."⁷⁸ It is that considerable notoriety achieved by William Mumler with spirit photography for which he is still remembered today as his ghostly developments continue to intrigue and haunt us.

MUMLER IN THE PRESS

THE BEGINNINGS (1862—1863)

The Spiritual Magazine, DECEMBER 1, 1862, 562—63.

REPRINTED FROM *Herald of Progress*, NEW YORK,

OCTOBER 1862.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS: A NEW AND INTERESTING DEVELOPMENT

We have been placed in possession of an account of events transpiring in Boston, which give promise of opening to the world a new and satisfactory phase of spiritual-manifestations. The facts, as narrated by Dr. H. F. Gardner, of Boston, are as follows:—

Mr. W. H. Mumler, an amateur photographer and practical chemist of Boston, was engaged on Sunday, October 5th, at the photograph gallery of Mrs. Stuart, at No. 258, Washington-street, in adjusting the chemicals, which had become disarranged. Having prepared a plate, and placed a chair near the focus of the camera, by which to adjust it, he proceeded to take his own photograph, card size, by quickly jumping into position and standing still the required time. The picture—a copy of which we have seen—represents Mr. Mumler as an active, rather athletic looking man, standing with his coat off, and the black cloth used to cover the camera, in his hand. Upon the back of this card appears the following statement:—

“This photograph was taken of myself, by myself, on Sunday, when there was not a living soul in the room beside me—‘so to speak.’ The form

on my right I recognize as my cousin who passed away about twelve years since.”

—“W. H. Mumler.”

The form referred to is that of a young girl apparently sitting in the chair, which appeared on developing the picture, greatly to the surprise of the artist. The outline of the upper portion of the body is clearly defined, though dim and shadowy. The chair is distinctly seen through the body and arms, also the table upon which one arm rests. Below the waist, the form (which apparently is clothed in a dress with low neck and short sleeves) fades away into a dim mist, which simply clouds the lower part of the picture. Mr. Mumler affirms that this form bears a likeness to a spirit cousin, and its appearance was equally unexpected and startling to the artist, who was not a believer in Spiritualism, though perhaps somewhat interested, and had no reason to suppose himself a medium.

Since this accidental discovery, we are assured by Dr. Gardner that at least a dozen similar photographs have been taken, a new spirit form appearing at the side of each subject. The artist experiences a loss of strength in the process that limits him to three or four sittings per day. The forms are not as distinct as we could desire, yet they are sufficiently marked to prove individuality to friends. Dr. Gardner kindly left with us two specimens of photographs taken subsequently to the one we have described. They are card photographs of a gentleman and his wife, residents, we believe, of Chicopee. On the picture of the lady stands beside her a female form, recognized by both parents as the likeness of a spirit daughter. The upper portion of the form is quite distinct, but the lower fades out in the form of flowing skirts, partly covering the mother's dress, till quite indistinct at the floor. The other has a less distinct form, yet one recognized by the gentleman as his mother in the summer land. A peculiarity about this picture—less distinct though it is—renders it one of the most interesting that we saw. The upper portion of the shadowy figure alone has a recognizable form, and this is so large, that were the figure to be completed in due proportion, the feet would be carried some distance below the floor. It is a magnified image of a human (or spirit) head, hardly possible to have been produced from any visible object within range of the instrument. And the arm of the spirit seems thrown about the neck of the subject (her son), the hand resting like a little cloud of mist upon the opposite shoulder. Witnesses were present in all cases except the first, to testify that only one person sat for each picture, and yet we are

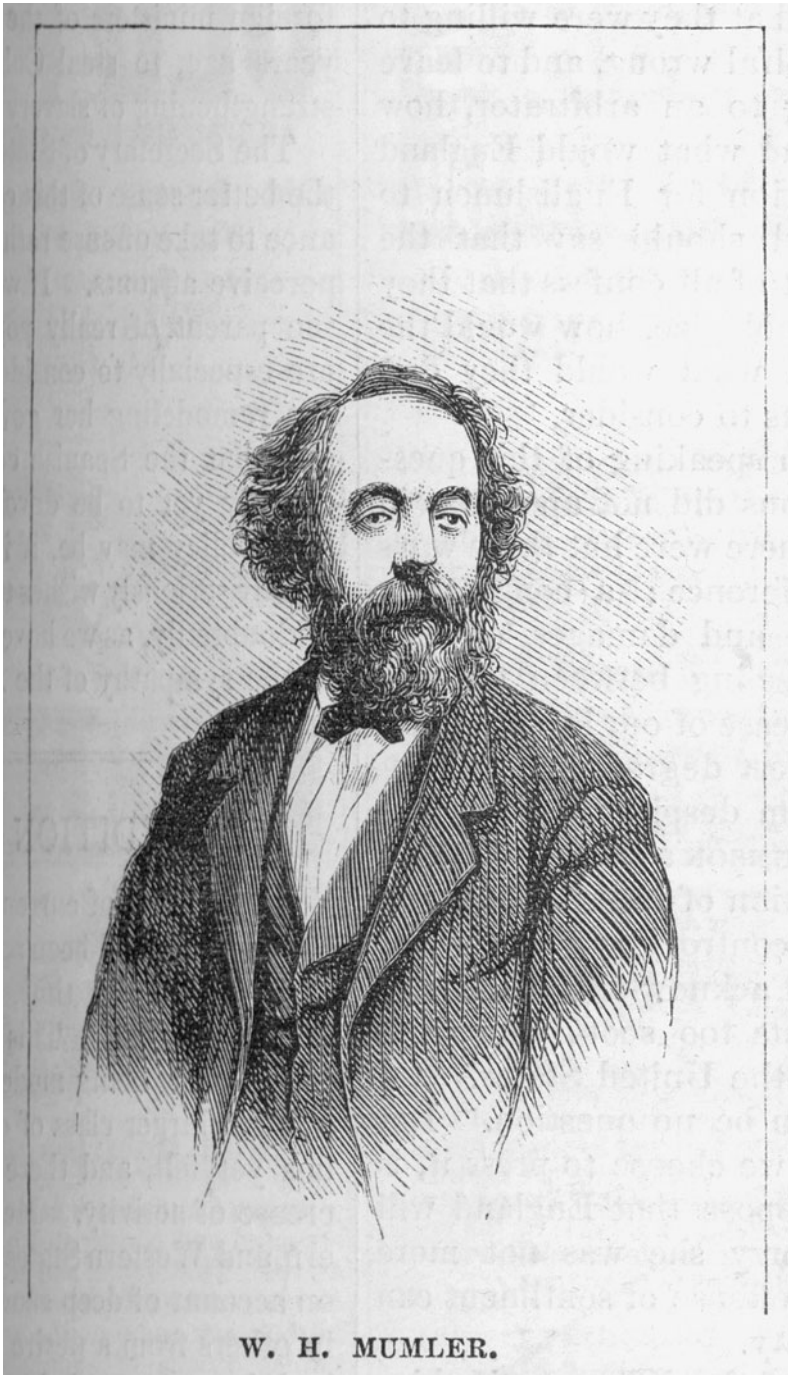


FIGURE 9. "W. H. Mumler," *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869, cover. Wood engraving after photograph.

assured that in some instances three additional forms appear. Similar results to those mentioned above can perhaps be produced by any skilful photographer, by introducing forms during a portion of the time a plate is exposed, or reflecting an image upon the sensitive surface in the dark room. We trust scientific and truth-loving photographers will experiment, that, if possible, the fraud or accident, if either exist, may be exposed, or the means made use of by spirits to project an image upon the air exposed to the line of vision of the camera be discovered.

This singular freak in chemical art, if it be no more, or the new manifestation of spirit-power, if it be such, commands most earnest attention and inquiry. No single phenomenon could possibly awaken deeper interest than will follow this new revelation. While we have the fullest confidence in the truth of the circumstantial account given above, the very interesting and even startling character of the alleged phenomena, and the intense desire that will be largely felt for its truth, leads us to withhold for the present anything like entire credence, and to invite the strictest investigation it is possible for incredulity to institute. We shall look for further report from observers in Boston to whom this new exhibition may be afforded.

—C.M.P.—*Herald of Progress*

***Banner of Light*, NOVEMBER 1, 1862, 4.**

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

In another column we publish an interesting statement from our friend Dr. A. B. Child, particularizing this new phase of Spiritual Manifestations. We, also, have had the matter under consideration during the past week, as have hundreds of others in this city. We have been assured for months by our spirit friends that in due time the mundane world would be startled by this new phase of spirit power; but we were not prepared to receive it so soon, and are yet in doubt that the manifestation is entirely legitimate. We shall investigate further ere we give a decided opinion in the matter. Be it understood, when we say this, that we would do no injustice to any parties interested. We merely caution our friends not to become too enthusiastic, but to scrutinize thoroughly the *modus operandi* by which these photographs are produced. In the meantime we shall keep our readers duly informed of what transpires in this direction hereafter.

Banner of Light, NOVEMBER 1, 1862, 4.

A NEW SPIRITUAL PHASE

Three photographs have just been exhibited to me with a distinct likeness of well-known Spiritualist friends in the form on each, and the shadowy likeness, entirely different from the others, apparently of a spirit, in the background of each. It is affirmed that neither the sitters nor the artist saw or knew of any object whose reflection could have produced the *second* likeness on each photograph, but that both are fully convinced that they were the actual likenesses of spirits. We shall take pains to examine this very interesting phenomenon, and speak further on the subject next week.

—A. B. Child

Banner of Light, NOVEMBER 8, 1862, 4.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

This new phase of spiritual manifestations, to which allusion was made in the BANNER of last week, is exciting a great deal of attention and wonder in those who take an interest in the grand and beautiful subject of spirit communion. If there be deception in this unaccountable phenomenon, it is so shrewd and so deep that it has thus far eluded the detection and very careful and thorough examination of many persons. There has been, heretofore, no phase of the spiritual manifestations more beautiful and convincing than this, and it is proper that it should be thoroughly scrutinized, and, if real, be proved free from any odium that should justly stigmatize trickery, swindling or deception.

If this phenomenon in spiritual manifestations be genuine, it is the greatest and the best yet given to outside perception in the catalogue of a long variety which bear incontrovertible evidence of the truth that spiritual communications are what they claim to be, viz.: actual manifestations of the "dead" to the "living." This new phase is to be a link that shall tangibly connect the two worlds, the material and the spiritual, to the palpable recognition of sensuous perception. It shall be evidence that philosophy cannot impeach, and that the pretences of religion shall see beauty in, and scorn no more.

Mr. Wm. H. Mumler is the medium and the artist who makes photographs of spirits. His business has heretofore been ornamental engraving—a very profitable business, which he says has paid him from five to eight dollars a day—but from causes he cannot explain, he has been forced

to leave it, and engage in what he is now doing. He is not a Spiritualist, or, he says, he has never believed in Spiritualism, but has opposed and ridiculed it. He has many times been told by mediums that he was a very powerful and peculiar medium. This he did not believe, and only laughed at the communications.

A few Sundays since, he being alone in the photograph saloon of Mrs. Stuart, 258 Washington street, trying some new chemicals, and amusing himself by taking a picture of himself, which when produced, to his great astonishment and wonder, there was on the plate, not alone a picture of himself, as he supposed, but also a picture of a young woman sitting in a chair that stood by his side. He said that while standing for this picture he felt a peculiar sensation and a tremulous motion in his right arm, and afterwards, felt very much exhausted. This was all he experienced that was unusual. While looking upon the strange phenomenon—the picture of two persons upon the plate, instead of one—the thought and the conviction flashed upon his mind, *this is the picture of a spirit*. And in it he recognized the likeness of his deceased cousin, which is also said to be correct by all those who knew her.

He related this wonderful experience to some persons who were interested in Spiritualism, and they at once eagerly sought to have the experiment tried upon themselves; the result of which has been, that some twenty or more persons have had their pictures taken, and the picture of one or more spirits have been upon the same plate. Many of them have been recognized as friends that once lived on earth. The picture of the spirit is fainter and less distinct than that of the one who sits. The pictures of the spirits are not alike, each one being different.

Dr. Ammi Brown, on one picture, had the likeness of a beautiful female spirit; on another, he had the picture of two women and one man beside his own.

A widow lady, who was accompanied to the rooms by her mother, and a daughter, sat for her picture, and that of a spirit also. When it was finished, the daughter first saw it, and instantly exclaimed bursting into tears, "Why, mother, this is father!" The grandmother looked at it next, and exclaimed: "Yes, this is my daughter's husband!" And the mother then looked and said: "*This is my husband.*" All were weeping at the truthful likeness of a spirit.

All those who have witnessed this wonderful manifestation, seem to be fully convinced that it is genuine—not a trick of the artist. Dr. Brown has examined it carefully and patiently, and is fully satisfied that there is



FIGURE 10. William H. Mumler, "Mr. Brown and His Spirit Sister Recognized," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.30).

no deception in it. He says: "If these pictures, claimed to be the pictures of spirits, be a swindle, or a sleight-of-hand deception, the operation beats the ingenuity of all the necromancers and prestidigitators of the present and the past." He has been present at the making of about twenty spirit pictures. He has carefully watched the whole process from beginning to end, both before and behind the curtain. He has even prepared the plates with his own hands, and he affirms that he is fully satisfied that the pictures are what they are claimed to be—real photographs of real spirits.

He handed the first picture of a spirit taken for himself, enclosed in an envelop, into the sensitive hands of Mrs. J. S. Adams, before she had any knowledge that spirit-photographs had been made, and the moment she took it in her hand, she exclaimed, "This is the picture of a spirit."

One lady, very skeptical, said she believed that the artist used an old glass plate on which there was another picture imperfectly washed off. The artist requested her to furnish her own glass, with a mark on it, by which she should know it. She did so, and to her unbounded surprise, there was not only a picture of herself upon it, but also a picture of a dear departed friend that she recognized.

One gentleman said that the picture of spirit was a deception, for a photograph artist had shown him that two "*negatives*" used would produce two pictures on the same card.

This last fact Mr. Mumler admitted; but, on each *single* "negative," he showed that there was the picture of the sitter, and also of the spirit.

Mr. Plummer, who takes the photographs for Mrs. Stewart in the same rooms, and with the same camera where Mr. Mumler operates, and assists Mr. Mumler in preparing his plates, affirms that if there be any deception in the mater, it is entirely beyond his knowledge.

Mr. Luther H. Hale, one of the best and oldest photograph artists in this city, has, by request, imitated these spirit-photographs; but he says that he can only imitate them by using *two negatives*, and printing twice. He says he cannot see how they can be produced on the card with only *one negative*, which is the case with all Mr. Mumler's spirit pictures.

Mr. Luther Parks has a picture of himself, and of a beautiful female spirit, floating, bearing a wreath of flowers, apparently about to place it upon his head.

Mrs. Isaac Babbitt has a picture of herself and of her deceased husband that was recognized at once by all who knew him before his decease.

Mrs. Snow had a picture of herself and a spirit brother, holding a musical instrument in his hand, whom she recognized. This brother was

a musical instrument maker, and used to make the same kind of instruments he held in his hand in the picture. She submitted this picture, in a sealed envelop, to a medium who knew nothing of what the envelop contained, and who had heard nothing of this new phenomenon. The medium immediately replied, "You ought to be satisfied with the picture and musical emblem."

Mr. Taylor, of Indiana, sat for a picture, mentally requesting that the picture of his little child, recently deceased, might be made sitting upon his hand, which he held in position for that purpose. The picture revealed himself and his mental request answered. The spirit child was pictured sitting on his hand, and leaning its little face against his own.

A well known citizen of Boston sat for a picture, being fully persuaded in his own mind, at the time he sat, that the picture of Daniel Webster would appear on the plate with that of his own, and which impression of his own the artist knew nothing of. The picture presented one of himself and one of Daniel Webster, which no one could fail to recognize who knew the two men.

Mr. Edward Haynes, Jr., sat at two different times, and with very satisfactory results.

Judge Maine had a spirit picture with his own, and was satisfied that it was what it purported to be.

All likenesses of spirits thus far taken are not recognized as those of deceased friends, though most of them are fully recognized as such. But whether the likeness of the spirit be that of a departed friend or not, this argues nothing against the mightiness of the manifestation in its claims to be spiritual, which claims have thus far been subjected to the ordeal of the most searching examination, and in every respect seem to be just and true.

Mr. Mumler invited me to bring my own glass on which to make the picture; to examine the camera, its tubes and lenses; his chemicals; to see him apply the collodion to the glass and immerse it in the silver bath; to see him take it out of the bath, and put it in the shield, then in the camera, and then to go with him into the dark closet, lighted only by a little lamp, and see him take the glass from the shield, which is a little dark box, then pour on an iron preparation, wash it under a stream of water, and then hold it to the little lamp, and see the picture of a mortal and a spirit on it. In compliance with this invitation, I carefully observed all the above operations in detail.

Mr. Mumler asks for any fair investigation that shall convince the people that his claims are just and genuine. This is right, and as it should

be. And it is not unjust, or ungenerous, in a new thing, so great and so beautiful as this, if true, must be, for the people to ask the privilege to *prove* it true beyond the shadow of doubt.

I have a desire not to be too credulous in believing this new phenomenon, which seems almost too good to be true—and also, I have a desire not to appear like an obstinate fool, by shutting out the perception of palpable, tangible facts, and deny that they exist, when I know that they do. Having spent one hour each day, on four consecutive days, in making a careful and thorough examination, and re-examination, of the whole process, and conversing freely with Mr. Mumler during the whole time and also having seen these pictures which exhibit a peculiarity that deception, I believe, could not produce or imitate, I freely confess, with at least twenty others, whom I know, who have witnessed almost the same, that there is no appearance of deception—that the pictures are real pictures of real spirits.

The *modus operandi* of producing these spirit-pictures, is a mystery. There is no spirit seen standing by the side of the person who sits for the picture, which shows that the picture of the spirit is not made like the picture of the mortal, by reflection on the camera. The spirit picture must be made without reflection from without, but is made inside the camera. How it is made, neither deception, investigation, nor philosophy can answer.

—A. B. Child

***Banner of Light*, NOVEMBER 29, 1862, 5.**

“LETTER TO THE EDITOR”

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY SCIENTIFICALLY CONSIDERED

When we consider that light, by the aid of which the artist takes pictures, is composed of three elements, producing three distinct effects, viz.: illumination, heat, and chemical changes, and that these may be separated, each from the others, the mystery of photographing spirits is measurably removed. If an artist were to glaze his windows with glass stained yellow, he could not take pictures by the photographic process, for the reason that yellow glass shuts out or absorbs the chemical rays. We have been in the habit of supposing that a body must be tangible to the physical sight in order to impinge its form upon the sensitive plate placed in the camera for that purpose; but there is no fact in philosophy that disproves the power of a spirit form to reflect chemical rays. We know that heat may

be reflected by surfaces which do not transmit light, and light is often turned from its course without its usual accompaniment, heat.

There is, moreover, a bit of philosophy which I have contended for, the last few years, which seems calculated to elucidate this subject more fully. Light and heat (caloric) are elementary substances, and enter into the constitution of all organic bodies in equivalent proportions with other matter—constituent elements of the three—as positively as the carbon, oxygen and hydrogen. When thus combined they become latent, or lose their sensible properties until decomposition takes place, as in combustion or decay, when they are set free, or become again sensible to the senses. By virtue of this law it is that we are enabled to heat and light our dwellings. The chemical rays seem to be more attenuated, or spiritualized, and do not enter into combination with organic bodies, but act rather as the master workman in arranging the other elements, and hence it is that we do not get chemical effects from artificial light, or that which is set free from the combustion of organized substances. Light and heat being material elements, require a material body or substance tangible to the senses, in order that they may be reflected, while the chemical rays may be reflected or imparted from a spirit form intangible to the physical vision.

Thus it is that a spirit occupying a position before a camera may impinge its form upon the sensitive plate, though not discernable by the physical eye—the form not sufficiently dense to reflect the illuminating rays, may yet be sufficiently material, so as to reflect the chemical rays, which alone are instrumental in the production of a photographic picture.

Cleveland, Ohio.

—C.D. Griswold, M.D.

Banner of Light, DECEMBER 6, 1862, 6.

REPORT OF THE "BOSTON SPIRITUAL CONFERENCE,"

THURSDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 25, 1862.

SUBJECT—SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

DR. GARDNER.—I am not competent to say much on this subject as yet. I have an engagement with Mr. Mumler for a sitting, when he has promised me the privilege of any and every chance of investigation that is in his power to grant me. After this investigation I shall be better able to speak on the subject. I have had one sitting with Mr. Mumler, at which I had one picture with four spirit-forms upon it. I cannot speak positively about the recognition of these spirits, though I think there is a striking family

resemblance in one of them, which may be the picture of a deceased son. This subject is exciting great interest, and also great opposition and ridicule. Thus far in this new spiritual manifestation, faith holds a prominent place. There is hardly any manifestation that has ever come forth from the spirit-world that does not require some faith. But it behooves us, as Spiritualists, to carefully investigate and candidly inquire what cause there is for faith in this thing and also what cause there is for so much doubt and opposition. To me there is no cause for doubt. To me this new manifestation is not more wonderful than many that I have previously witnessed. I know that I have held a spirit-hand in my own. If spirits can produce spirit-hands that are tangible to physical touch, I cannot doubt that they can produce an impression upon a glass plate made sensitive to the action of light. A great number of mediums have foretold this phenomenon. Five or six years ago this was foretold in the very room where they are now made. The pictures themselves furnish evidence, for their gauze-like appearance has not yet been imitated. Careful examination will find the counterfeits to be essentially different in some points. In consequence of the crowd of people that visit Mr. Mumler's rooms, there is necessarily a great deal of confusion created in the magnetic condition which is necessary to the production of these pictures. This is not favorable to his operations. I do not doubt that Mr. Mumler is a peculiar medium, and has an organization and magnetism well adapted to the production of spirit photographs. I am of the opinion that the pictures he makes and calls spiritual, are genuine. In regard to Mr. Mumler's prices, I do not think that five dollars for six photographs is too much, but I am sorry that he has raised his price to seven dollars and a half for the same. There is another artist, through whom spirit-photographs are made, but he feels conscientious scruples about making them. He is a member of the Baptist Church, and thinks that spirit-intercourse is wicked. He does not wish to make them, and wishes to have his name in no way mentioned with them. I persuaded him to grant Hon. Robert Dale Owen and myself a sitting last Thursday week. Mr. Owen had a very distinct spirit-picture; mine was not so good. I believe that his medium powers are very strong in this direction.

MR. BARNES.—I visited Mr. Mumler's rooms today, and had a picture of a spirit made with my own. Just like a young robin, I hold my mouth open to the heavenly world for its truths to fall in and feed my soul. I swallowed Spiritualism, but not before I opened my mouth, in faith, to receive it. I

first had faith to believe it—now I know it true. The minute I came in contact with Mr. Mumler, I was convinced that this new phase of Spiritualism was true. Mr. Mumler, a stranger to me, said: “You, brother, can have a good picture.” He sat me down, and I did have a good picture. I told Mr. Mumler, that if he abused the gift of his remarkable power, it would be taken from him; to see well that he made a good, wise and generous use of the valuable gift. Greater gifts than this will be soon given to the earth.

Banner of Light, DECEMBER 20, 1862, 4.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS IN LITERATURE

Already has this new development in Spiritualism begun to show itself in the literature of the day, literature which the people tacitly accept as more real than granite stone or earthly dust. In *Ballou's Monthly* for January 1863, there is a story by Francis A. Durivage, called “Mysterious Occurrences in East Houston-street, N.Y.” It tells about the wicked life of a young man, who sat for his photograph, and there came with his own picture the spirit picture of an old man he had murdered for his money, with one hand pointing to his cut throat, and the other to the picture of the young man, who was the guilty murderer. When he saw the picture he confessed the deed.

Banner of Light, DECEMBER 27, 1862, 6.

“MESSAGE DEPARTMENT”

The Seances at which the communications under this heading are given are held at the BANNER OF LIGHT OFFICE, No. 158 WASHINGTON STREET, Room No. 5 (upstairs) every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday afternoon, and are free to the public. The doors are closed precisely at three o'clock and none are admitted after that time.

Each Message in this Department of the BANNER we claim was spoken by the spirit whose name it bears, through MRS J.H. CONANT, while in a condition called the Trance. They are not published on account of literary merit, but as tests of spirit communion to those friends who may recognize them.

These Messages go to show that Spirits carry the characteristics of their earth-life to that beyond whether good or evil.

We ask the reader to receive no doctrine put forth by Spirits in these columns that does not comport with his reason. Each expresses as much of truth as he perceives—no more.



FIGURE 11. William H. Mumler, "Fanny Conant with the Spirit of Her Brother Charles H. Crowell," 1870–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.29).

THE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

We perceive that the public mind is somewhat excited at the present time with regard to the recent spiritual unfoldment which has been presented to you in the form of spirit likenesses. And as the human mind is ever reaching out for more truth, more light, it is to be expected that more truth and more light will be constantly inflowing into the receptive souls of God's earthly children. You are not to suppose that because you receive a great truth at one time, that you are never to receive another, for God's gifts are unceasing.

Many minds are disposed to disbelieve the genuineness of this unfoldment, are inclined to skepticism, and to such we would say, your skepticism, if it be honest, will be of great service to you in discovering the real truth, inasmuch as it will help you to discriminate between that which is genuine and that which is false. Whenever we see an honest skeptic, we are pleased with such an one, for we have the assurance that when once he builds his opinions upon truth, they will stand upon a foundation that time nor eternity have power to destroy. The temple which he rears for himself shall endure forever, for it will not have been built upon the sand, but upon the rocks of sound thought and thorough investigation. No fabric will such minds rear upon the superficial. We are to expect their structures to rest upon the firm basis of everlasting truth and wisdom.

The Spirit Photographs—are they genuine or not? is the question.

We have no disposition to lessen your faith in humanity; on the contrary, we would do all we could to strengthen it. We have no disposition to point out the seeming faults of humanity to you, for if we do that at all, it will be to individuals, and not to the world at large. But we have a disposition to be just, and to aid you mortals in your search after truth, and with this desire we would ever be found encouraging you when you are pursuing the right, ever be found admonishing you when you stand upon the brink of a precipice, and ever ready to lift the veil and allow you to see whatever deceptions are being practised upon humanity, under the professed garb of truth.

There is much that is genuine and true, beyond the possibility of a doubt, surrounding this recent unfoldment of spirit-power. There is also much that is untrue, and which has its origin not in the world spiritual, but in the world material. The false or untrue never was born of Nature; on the contrary, it originates in what we call art, and it is not only your

duty but your *right*, as rational and intelligent beings, to study this new spiritual unfoldment closely, and to draw the line of demarcation between the two. This is your work, and not ours; and inasmuch as you have the faculty to divide the right from the wrong, the false from the genuine, it is your duty to exercise it, and to weigh in the balances of your own judgment all that is presented you from the spirit-world, or from the world in which you now live.

Now, then, bring all that is presented you with regard to this subject of Spirit Photography, into the temple of your own reason; grasp it with a hand of science and of honesty, and believe us, you will very soon be able to discern the pure grains of wheat, and the chaff also. Now, after you have duly considered and analyzed this recent unfoldment of spirit-power, please give your light to those who are in darkness. Do not cover your light with a bushel, but rather stand upon the hill-top, and do not be afraid to let the multitude look at you. This much we have to say with regard to these new medium manifestations, or this recent unfoldment of spirit-power.

(November 17, 1862)

The Spiritual Magazine, JANUARY 1, 1863, 34–41 (EXCERPTS).

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

THERE are many further details concerning these photographs in the American papers, and the process, from beginning to end, has now, as appears from reliable reports, been thoroughly investigated, without detecting any flaw or fraud, or anything to diminish the marvel. Messrs. A. J. Davis and Co., the proprietors of the *Herald of Progress*, had the following announcement in their paper of the 22nd November:—

“We are happy to be able to promise for our next a letter from a practical photographer, now in Boston, who visited Mr. Mumler, the artist medium, at our request. This letter is from one we had so implicit confidence, that we gave him a letter of introduction to Mrs. Stuart and Mr. Mumler, who have allowed him every desired facility for examining every part of the process.

“The result we shall publish in full next week. It will suffice now to say that the gentleman alluded to was permitted not only to watch every step of the process, but *himself to prepare the plate and develop the picture*. He secured the likeness of his departed wife and of his father.

“The letter gives us renewed confidence in the reliability of Mr. Mumler, and in the credibility of this new and wonderful exhibition of spirit-power.”

Mr. William Guay, the gentleman here referred to, wrote a preliminary letter to the *Banner of Light*, giving the result of his observations as follows:—

“Boston, November 18th, 1862.

“Mr. Editor,—Having been informed by Mr. William H. Mumler that you desire to publish the results of my investigation into the possibility and genuineness of Mr. M’s photographic impressions of spirit forms, it gives me much pleasure to detail to you what I have seen. As I have been commissioned by Messrs. A. J. Davis and Co., you can rest assured that I was resolved, if permitted, to allow nothing to slip my utmost scrutiny. Having had ten years’ continual practice in this particular branch—that is, negative on glass, and positive on paper from negative—I felt competent to detect any form of deception.

“Having been permitted by Mr. Mumler every facility to investigate, I went through the whole of the operation of selecting, cleaning, preparing, coating, silvering, and putting into the shield, the glass upon which Mr. M. proposed that a spirit form and mine should be imparted, never taking off my eyes, and not allowing Mr. M. to touch the glass until it had gone through the whole of the operation. The result was, that there came upon the glass a picture of myself and, to my utter astonishment—having previously examined and scrutinized every crack and corner, plate-holder, camera, box, tube, the inside of the bath, &c.—*another portrait*.

“Having since continued, on several occasions, my investigations, as described above, and received even more perfect results than on the first trial, I have been obliged to endorse its legitimacy.

Respectfully yours,
WM. GUAY.”

In a letter of the 26th November, after having made a full and minute report of his visits, Mr. Guay reports to Messrs. Davis and Co. as follows:—“The weather has been too unfavorable since Saturday to print from the negatives, on one of which I perfectly recognize the likeness of my father. The picture of my wife is very faint, but sufficient for me to recognize the features. It is impossible for Mr. Mumler to have procured any of my wife or father.” He also says that whilst he sat for the two pictures

he mentally desired that the likenesses of his father and of his mother should be produced.

Another photographic artist, Mr. H. Weston, of 31, Province-street, Boston, writes that after making a full examination of the process, he found a spirit-figure on the negative. He also says that he cannot conceive of any process by which imitations could be made without his detection.

In the *Banner of Light* of the 29th November, is also contained an elaborate review and description of the process and its results, from which we make the following extracts:—

“They are ordinary *cartes de visite*, but with a faint additional figure, not defined by a distinct, sharp outline, but vapoury and semi-indefinite. The whole of the figure is not displayed, usually, only the head and bust.

“The first is a portrait of the medium, W. H. Mumler, with one hand on a chair, the other holding the black cloth covering just taken from the camera. In the chair sits a half-defined female form, apparently about twelve or fourteen years old. This was at once recognised as a deceased female relative. A cloudy vapour hovers about the head of this spirit, an effect we never before saw in any sun picture. One we have seen has a faint disc of light about the head, as if luminous rays were shooting outward, but all stop at a determined circular outline. Two others have a similar effect, but the circle would be sufficiently large to enclose the whole figure, if the card were of greater dimensions.” [. . .]

The foregoing details will give the reader the latest information which has arrived as to the production of these spirit-photographs, and each must form the best opinion he can of the subject. For ourselves, we have no prepossession of possibility or impossibility, and we are willing to believe in anything that comes before us with sufficient evidence of its truth. We know no reason, *a priori*, why these things should not be; and knowing not only several of those who have investigated them, but how competent they are for the investigation, we are content for the present to believe in the probability that, as no fraud has been detected by them, the pictures are genuine. Should the contrary afterwards appear, we need be in nowise disconcerted in having given temporary credit to what appears to be supported by so respectable an amount of proof; and we should much rather have occasionally to retrace our steps, than be constantly opposing all new facts and ideas because they exceed, or appear contrary to, our small notions of what is possible.

The British Journal of Photography (JANUARY 1, 1863): 14–16.

ABOUT SOME PHOTOGRAPHIC GHOST STORIES

Yes, about *photographic* ghost stories! And why not? Pray, are there any reasons why we photographers should not have our own peculiar ghost stories to chat about while sitting around our cozy hearths during these long winter evenings?

Truly, I see none. So please to imagine that the raw, damp, chilly evening has gathered its gloomy shades thickly around us; that the window-curtains are snugly drawn; that the fire's cheerful flames are dancing fantastically to their own odd collection of funny little sounds; and so quiet are we, as we sit within the ruddy flickering glow, that the tic-tic-tic of the time-piece seems unusually solemn and impressive. Of course, we speak in whispers. Ghost stories lose half their relish if not murmured in a tone which harmonises with the hush of the hour. And, of course, we put the lights out. The huge distorted shadows thrown by the red firelight upon the walls and ceiling, and the encroaching black shadows, which



FIGURE 12. William H. Mumler,
 “Fanny Conant with the Spirit of
 an Unidentified Child,” 1862–75.
 Reproduced by kind permission of the
 College of Psychic Studies, London.
 Original size.

come and go so mysteriously and plunge the remotest corners of the room into such deep obscurity, are so deliciously suggestive, that, of course, we put the lights out.

There is a very white glass which has a great tendency to retain the image on its surface even after the removal of the collodion on which it was taken. I have heard it described as a "sweaty glass"; and Mr. Hervé, a photographer of large experience, asserts that he never knew these images to make their appearance on glass of any other description. He has in his possession a plate of this kind which has been cleaned and used in the camera over and over again, but which shows the image which was first placed upon it, but very faintly, after each cleaning, although, in this case, being so weak, it never appears through the collodion. Mr. Ponting, in his little book *On Photographic Difficulties*, attributes these indelible impressions upon the glass—which no cleaning can remove—to the fact of the plate having been too frequently used; and says, "Most photographers of any experience must have met with one or two instances of this kind."

And now for our ghost stories.

Not very long ago sundry American spiritualists were showing in triumph the photograph of a spirit taken by a certain operator, who, when producing the picture of a chair, was astonished to find, upon developing the plate, that there was the figure of a youth sitting in it. Wonderful as the spiritualists thought this fact, and conclusive as they considered it in proving their own peculiar theories, they were naturally indignant when photographers strove to convince them that there was nothing very particularly astounding in this, and that, although somewhat uncommon, few of them were not familiar both with the result and its cause. Then the spiritualists surrendered, but now they are again triumphant.

Most of us remember when there was much talk about either "the ghost at the War-office" or the well-authenticated ghost story, which created some stir, from the pages of *All the Year Round*; how one certain sneering skeptic publicly challenged any ghost or spirit to walk into one of our principal London photographic studios—and sit for a photograph.

That challenge may be said to have been accepted!

The *Manchester Weekly Times*, quoting an American newspaper, tells us all about it. In the city of Boston lives one William H. Mumler—not Juggler, but Mumler; and at 258, Washington Street, in the same city, is the photographic studio of Mrs. Stuart. It appears that Mr. Mumler,

instead of going to church or chapel like a good Christian, went, one Sunday, to Mrs. Stuart's shut-up and deserted studio, to "try some new chemicals"—he, Mr. Mumler, being not only a spirit medium, but a photographer. While there, he thought he would take his own portrait. When he placed himself before the lens for that purpose, something very wonderful occurred.

A strange, novel sensation came creepingly over him. He felt a mysterious, tremulous motion of his right arm, and became singularly "exhausted!" Not because the sitting was extraordinarily long, but *because*—however, that's to be told directly.

The exposure was over, and the poor "exhausted" man tottered into "the dark room" to develop his exposed self. He managed to pour on "the developer," and looked anxiously for "the coming man," when—oh! wonder of wonders!—he saw not *one*, but *two* images!

No—my good Sabbath-reverencing friend—the second image was not the image you suppose it was. It wore no horns, displayed nothing like a tail, and did not display cloven hoofs. It undoubtedly ought to have been the individual you mean, because he is generally believed to play a very prominent part in all Sabbath-breaking operations. But it *was* the image of Mr. Mumler's deceased cousin; and, as he looked upon it, "at once the thought and the conviction flashed upon his mind—this is the picture of a spirit."

Mr. Mumler, or Mumbler (the name is differently spelt by the different authorities), is said to be now "in a fair way to make a fortune out of the spirits," by taking the portraits of the living and the dead at one and the same time, and in one and the same picture, although (as Dr. Gardner, of Boston, states) "the artist experiences a loss of strength in the process that limits him to three or four sittings a-day." The editor of the *Herald of Progress*, having received two specimens of these "spirit photographs," says—"The upper portions of the form (spiritual) is (in one) quite distinct, but the lower fades out"; and says of the other, though less distinct, it is one of "the most interesting he ever saw," because it is not a whole-length portrait, but "is a magnified image of a human (or spirit) head, hardly possible to have been produced from any visible object within range of the instrument"; and adds—"We trust scientific and truth-loving photographers will experiment, that, if possible, the fraud or accident, if either exist, may be exposed, or the means made use of by the spirits to project an image upon the air exposed to the line of vision of the camera be discovered."

The American papers, following upon this discovery, give other cases, details, &c. The *Banner of Light* (as the title suggests, also American) gives us a letter from Mr. W. Guay. [. . .] Mr. Guay afterwards recognised in the positive—not the negative—the phantom image as the likeness of his father. There is a saying about the wisdom of the child that knows his own father, which may be illustrated in this fact of a photographer of ten years' standing not recognising a negative of his own father—until he had seen a print from it. Another photographer—Mr. H. Weston, of 31, Province-street, Boston—also investigated the mysterious process, and arrived at the same conclusion as to its legitimacy. The *Banner of Light* reviews and describes a series of these “spirit-photographs,” many of which are described as being out of proportion with the images from the actual sitters; and, as being also so transparent that the objects in the picture are seen through them, or, as we should rather say, they—the supposed spirits—are seen through the objects. [. . .] Many photographers report their examination of Mr. Mumler's process in all its details, and profess themselves satisfied as to the reality of his pretensions; and better than all, “large numbers daily apply for pictures who cannot be accommodated. Engagements are already made for some weeks ahead!”

Boston seems really in a state of ferment with this new discovery. Judge Edmonds writes to the Editor of the *Evening Post* as follows:—

“Your article of yesterday in regard to spiritual photography professes to solve the mystery, and announces that Appleton's artist can do the same thing, whenever there is a photograph of a dead person.

“That is not the mystery of this thing. But it is to take a picture containing a likeness of a person who is dead, and of whom there is no photograph or likeness in existence!

“This is what the Boston operator professes to do, and the question is, *Is that so?*”

—J. W. EDMONDS

Mumler has one rival: as the thing seems to pay he will probably soon have more. Mr. Wall, speaking of the subject in a note to the writer of this article, says—

“I am inclined to start in rivalry of Mr. Mumler on this side of the Atlantic, and for the following reason:—

“Some years since I lost a very dear friend, of whom I had no photograph or likeness of any description. This was a subject of great and constant regret.

“One day I was photographing a background without any sitter. Remember I was not even thinking of the friend to whom I refer above. Upon developing the plate, what was my astonishment to discover that I had obtained not only the image of myself, but another image, which, on a closer inspection, turned out to be that of my friend!

“The description of this strange image agrees with that given of most of the American spirit-photographs!

“I may as well add, however, that it was not the image of my dead friend, but that of one whose portrait had previously been on the glass, and had just been cleaned off. Wasn't that remarkable?”

And with this I will conclude our “Gossip” about ghost *stories*.

—R. A. S.

Banner of Light, FEBRUARY 28, 1863, 4.

THE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

When the subject of spirit photography was first noted in this city, we cautioned our friends and the public not to be too sanguine in regard to what purported to be a new phase of spirit-power—as we considered it a matter of great moment, if true, and an unpardonable deception, if untrue—and accordingly advised them to scrutinize carefully the *modus operandi* of taking these pictures. Subsequently we received what we considered reliable evidence of the genuineness of several of the *cartes de visite* produced by Mr. Mumler—which evidence is before the public. Since then Spiritualists and others have investigated the phenomenon, to the best of their ability without detecting the least fraud on the part of the artist. But recently the gentlemen whose names are appended to the subjoined articles, and other parties, have expressed themselves that several of these photographs are not genuine spirit portraits; and in justice to ourselves and the community at large, we are in duty bound to open our columns to their statements, hoping that the whole truth may be arrived at thereby. We fully endorse Dr. Gardner, wherein he expresses the opinion that Mr. Mumler has produced spirit pictures that are genuine, notwithstanding the evidence to the contrary which is given below:—

DR. H. F. GARDNER'S STATEMENT

Mr. Editor—Please allow me a small space in your columns to say to the many friends who have written me upon the subject of spirit photographs, as produced by Mr. W.H. Mumler, that while I am fully of the belief that genuine spirit likenesses have been produced through his mediumship, evidence of deception in two cases, at least, has been furnished me, which is perfectly conclusive. I have, during all my investigations of the subject of spirit photography, been forced by the accumulating evidence into the belief that genuine spirit likenesses were produced, and have frankly and openly so stated at all times and under all circumstances, and I deeply regret the necessity that compels me, through irrefragible evidence, to state with equal frankness that I am satisfied, beyond a doubt, that in the instances above referred to, Mr. Mumler, or some person connected with Mrs. Stuart's rooms, have been guilty of deception in palming off, as genuine spirit likenesses, pictures of a person who is now living in this city. Yours for the truth.

Boston, February 20th 1863.

H.F. GARDNER, M.D.

P. T. BARNUM,
SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHY (1866)

“SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHING” (CHAPTER 14) FROM *Humbugs of the World: An Account of Humbugs, Delusions, Impositions, Quackeries, Deceits, and Deceivers Generally, in All Ages* (NEW YORK: CARLETON PUBLISHER, 1866), 109–19.

SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHING.—COLORADO JEWETT AND THE SPIRIT-
PHOTOGRAPHS OF GENERAL JACKSON, HENRY CLAY, DANIEL WEBSTER,
STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, ETC.—A LADY OF
DISTINCTION SEEKS AND FINDS A SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPH OF HER
DECEASED INFANT, AND HER DEAD BROTHER WHO WAS YET ALIVE.—
HOW IT WAS DONE.

In answer to numerous inquiries and several threats of prosecution for libel in consequence of what I have written in regard to impostors who (for money) perform tricks of legerdemain and attribute them to the spirits of deceased persons, I have only to say, I have no malice or antipathies to gratify in these expositions. In undertaking to show up the “Ancient and Modern Humbugs of the World,” I am determined so far as in me lies, to publish nothing but the truth. This I shall do, “with good motives and for justifiable ends,” and I shall do it fearlessly and conscientiously. No threats will intimidate, no fawnings will flatter me from publishing everything that is true which I think will contribute to the information or to the amusement of my readers.

Some correspondents ask me if I believe that all pretensions to intercourse with departed spirits are impositions. I reply, that if people declare that they privately communicate with or are influenced to write or speak by invisible spirits, I cannot prove that they are deceived or are attempting to deceive me—although I believe that one or the other of these propositions is true. But when they pretend to give me communications



FIGURE 13. Sarony Photographic Studio, "P. T. Barnum," n.d. Milne Special Collections, University of New Hampshire Library.

from departed spirits, to tie or untie ropes—to read sealed letters, or to answer test-questions through spiritual agencies, I pronounce all such pretensions ridiculous impositions, and I stand ready at any time to prove them so, or to forfeit five hundred dollars, whenever these pretended mediums will succeed in producing their “wonderful manifestations” in a room of my selecting, and with apparatus of my providing; they not being permitted to handle the sealed letters or folded ballots which they are to answer, nor to make conditions in regard to the manner of rope tying, etc. If they can answer my test-questions relevantly and truly, without touching the envelopes in which they are sealed—or even when given to them by my word of mouth, I will hand over the \$500. If they can cause invisible agencies to perform in open daylight many of the things which they pretend to accomplish by spirits in the dark, I will promptly pay \$500 for the sight. In the mean time, I think I can reasonably account for and explain all pretended spiritual gymnastic performances—throwing of hair-brushes—dancing pianos—spirit-rapping—table-tipping—playing of musical instruments, and flying through the air (in the dark,) and a thousand other “wonderful manifestations” which, like most of the performances of modern “magicians,” are “passing strange” until explained, and then they are as flat as dish-water. Dr. Von Vleck publicly produces all of these pretended “manifestations” in open daylight, without claiming spiritual aid.

Among the number of humbugs that owe their existence to various combinations of circumstances and the extreme gullibility of the human race, the following was related to me by a gentleman whose position and character warrant me in announcing that it may be implicitly relied upon as correct in every particular.

Some time before the Presidential election, a photographer residing in one of our cities (an ingenious man and scientific chemist,) was engaged in making experiments with his camera, hoping to discover some new combination whereby to increase the facility of “picturing the human form divine,” etc. One morning, his apparatus being in excellent order, he determined to photograph himself. No sooner thought of, than he set about making his arrangements. All being ready, he placed himself in a position, remained a second or two, and then instantly closing his camera, surveyed the result of his operation. On bringing the picture out upon the plate, he was surprised to find a shadowy representation of a human being, so remarkably ghostlike and supernatural, that he became amused at the discovery he had made. The operation was repeated, until he could produce

similar pictures by a suitable arrangement of his lenses and reflectors known to no other than himself. About this time he became acquainted with one of the most famous spiritualist-writers, and in conversation with him, showed him confidentially one of those photographs, with also the shadow of another person, with the remark, mysteriously whispered:

“I assure you, Sir, upon my word as a gentleman, and by all my hopes of a hereafter, that this picture was produced upon the plate as you see it, at a time when I had locked myself in my gallery, and no other person was in the room. It appeared instantly, as you see it there; and I have long wished to obtain the opinion of some man, like yourself, who has investigated these mysteries.”

The spiritualist listened attentively, looked upon the picture, heard other explanations, examined other pictures, and sagely gave it as his opinion that the inhabitants of the unknown sphere had taken this mode of re-appearing to the view of mortal eyes, that this operator must be a “medium” of especial power. The *New York Herald of Progress*, a spiritual paper, printed the first article upon this man’s spiritual photograph.

The acquaintance thus begun was continued, and the photographer found it very profitable to oblige his spiritual friend, by the reproduction of ghost-like pictures, ad infinitum, at the rate of five dollars each. Mothers came to the room of the artist, and gratefully retired with ghostly representations of departed little ones. Widows came to purchase the shades of their departed husbands. Husbands visited the photographer and procured spectral pictures of their dead wives. Parents wanted phantom-portraits of their deceased children. Friends wished to look upon what they believed to be the lineaments of those who had long since gone to the spirit-land. All who sought to look on those pictures were satisfied with what had been shown them, and, by conversation on the subject, increased the number of visitors. In short, every person who heard about this mystery determined to verify the wonderful tales related, by looking upon the ghostly lineaments of some person, who, they believed, inhabited another sphere. And here I may as well mention that one of the faithful obtained a “spirit” picture of a deceased brother who had been dead more than five years, and said that he recognized also the very pattern of his cravat as the same that he wore in life. Can human credulity go further than to suppose that the departed still appear in the old clo’ of their earthly wardrobe? And the fact that the appearance of “the shade” of a young lady in one of the fashionable cut Zouave jackets of the hour did not disturb the faith of the believers, fills us indeed with wonder.



FIGURE 14. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. French with the Spirit of Her Son," c. 1870. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.8).

The fame of the photographer spread throughout the “spiritual circles,” and pilgrims to this spiritual Mecca came from remote parts of the land, and before many months, caused no little excitement among some persons, inclined to believe that the demonstrations were entirely produced by human agency.

The demand for “spirit” pictures consequently increased, until the operator was forced to raise his price to ten dollars, whenever successful in obtaining a true “spirit-picture,” or to be overwhelmed with business that now interfered with his regular labours.

About this time the famous “Peace Conference” had been concluded by the issue of Mr. Lincoln’s celebrated letter, “To whom it may concern,” and William Cornell Jewett (with his head full of projects for restoring peace to a suffering country) heard about the mysterious photographer, and visited the operator.

“Sir,” said he, “I must consult with the spirits of distinguished statesmen. We need their counsel. This cruel war must stop. Brethren slaying brethren, it is horrible, Sir. Can you show me John Adams? Can you show me Daniel Webster? Let me look upon the features of Andrew Jackson. I must see that noble, glorious, wise old statesman, Henry Clay, whom I knew. Could you reproduce Stephen A. Douglas, with whom to counsel at this crisis in our national affairs! I should like to meet the great Napoleon. Such, here obtained, would increase my influence in the political work that I have in hand.”

In his own nervous, impetuous, excited way, Colorado Jewett continued to urge upon the photographer the great importance of receiving such communications, or some evidence that the spirits of our deceased statesmen were watching over and counseling those who desire to re-unite the two opposing forces, fighting against each other on the soil of a common country.

With much caution, the photographer answered the questions presented. Arranging the camera, he produced some indistinct figures, and then concluded that the “conditions” were not sufficiently favorable to attempt anything more before the next day. On the following morning, Jewett appeared—nervous, garrulous and excited at the prospect of being in the presence of those great men, whose spirits he desired to invoke. The apparatus was prepared; utter silence imposed, and for some time the heart of the peace-seeker could almost be heard thumping within the breast of him who sought supernatural aid, in his efforts to end our cruel civil war. Then, overcome by his own thoughts, Jewett disturbed the “conditions”

by changing his position, and muttering short invocations, addressed to the shades of those he wished to behold. The operator finally declared he could not proceed, and postponed his performance that day. So, excuses were made, until the mental condition of Mr. Jewett had reached that state which permitted the photographer to expect the most complete success. Everything being prepared, Jewett breathlessly awaited the expected presence. Quietly the operator produced the spectral representation of the elder Adams. Jewett scrutinized the plate, and expressed a silent wonder, accompanied, no doubt, with some mental appeals addressed to the ancient statesman. Then writing the name of Webster upon a slip of paper, he passed it over to the photographer, who gravely placed the scrap of writing upon the camera, and presently drew therefrom the "ghost-like" but well remembered features of the "Sage of the Marshfield." Colorado Jewett was now thoroughly impressed with the spiritual power producing these images; and in ecstasy breathed a prayer that Andrew Jackson might appear to lend his countenance to the conference he wished to hold with the mighty dead. Jackson's well known features came out upon call, after due manipulation of the proper instrument. "Glorious trio of departed statesmen!" thought Jewett, "help us by your counsels in this the day of our nation's great distress." Next Henry Clay's outline was faintly shown from the tomb, and here the sitter remarked that he expected him. After him came Stephen A. Douglas, and the whole affair was so entirely satisfactory to Jewett, that, after paying fifty dollars for what he had witnessed, he, the next day, implored the presence of George Washington, offering fifty dollars more for a "spiritual" sight of the "Father of our Country." This request smote upon the ear of the photographer like an invitation to commit sacrilege. His reverence for the memory of Washington was not to be disturbed by the tempting offer of so many greenbacks. He could not allow the features of that great man to be used in connection with an imposture perpetrated upon so deluded a fanatic as Colorado Jewett. In short, the "conditions" were unfavorable for the apparition of "General Washington"; and his visitor must remain satisfied with the council of great men that had been called from the spirit world to instill wisdom into the noddle of a foolish man on this terrestrial planet. Having failed to obtain, by the agency of the operator, a glimpse of Washington, Jewett clasped his hands together, and sinking upon his knees, said, looking toward Heaven: "O spirit of the immortal Washington! look down upon the warring elements that convulse our country, and kindly let thy form appear, to lend its influence toward re-uniting a nation convulsed with civil war!"



FIGURE 15. William H. Mumler, Jefferson Davis cartoon, 1865. Collection of the author. This *carte de visite* shows Mumler trying his hand at political satire at the end of the Civil War to mark Jefferson Davis's unsuccessful attempt in drag to escape the Union forces. Mumler provided the photomontage head for the cartoon illustration in this mixed-media work.

It is needless to say that this prayer was not answered. The spirit would not come forth; and, although quieted by the explanations and half promises of the photographer, the peace-messenger departed, convinced that he had been in the presence of five great statesmen, and saddened by the reflection that the shade of the immortal Washington had turned away its face from those who had refused to follow the counsels he gave while living.

Soon after this, Jewett ordered duplicates of these photographs to the value of \$20 more. I now have on exhibition in my Museum several of the veritable portraits taken at this time, in which the well-known form and face of Mr. Jewett are plainly depicted, and on one of which appears the shade of Henry Clay, on another that of Napoleon the First, and on others ladies supposed to represent deceased feminines of great celebrity. It is said that Jewett sent one of the Napoleonic pictures to the Emperor Louis Napoleon.

Not long after Colorado Jewett had beheld these wonderful pictures, and worked himself up into the belief that he was surrounded by the great and good statesmen of a former generation, a lady, without making herself known, called upon the photographer. I am informed that she is the wife of a distinguished official. She had heard of the success of others, and came to verify their experience under her own bereavement. Completely satisfied by the apparition exhibited, she asked for and obtained a spectral photograph resembling her son, who, some months previously, had gone to the spirit-land. It is said that the same lady asked for and obtained a spiritual photograph of her brother, whom she had recently heard was slain in battle; and when she returned home she found him alive, and as well as could be expected under the circumstances. But this did not shake her faith in the least. She simply remarked that some evil spirit had assumed her brother's form in order to deceive her. This is a very common method of spiritualists "digging out" when the impositions of the "money-operators" are detected. This same lady has recently given her personal influence in favor of the "medium" Colchester, in Washington. One of these impressions bearing the likeness of this distinguished lady was accidentally recognized by a visitor. This capped the climax of the imposture and satisfied the photographer that he was committing a grave injury upon society by continuing to produce "spiritual pictures," and subsequently he refused to lend himself to any more "manifestations" of this kind. He had exhausted the fun.

I need only explain the modus operandi of effecting this illusion, to make apparent to the most ignorant that no supernatural agency was required to produce photographs bearing a resemblance to the persons whose

“apparition” was desired. The photographer always took the precaution of inquiring about the deceased, his appearance and ordinary mode of wearing the hair. Then, selecting from countless old “negatives” the nearest resemblance, it was produced for the visitor, in dim, ghostlike outline differing so much from anything of the kind ever produced, that his customers seldom failed to recognize some lineament the dead person possessed when living, especially if such relative had deceased long since. The spectral illusions of Adams, Webster, Jackson, Clay, and Douglas were readily obtained from excellent portraits of the deceased statesmen, from which the scientific operator had prepared his illusions for Colorado Jewett.

In placing before my readers this incident of “Spiritual Photography,” I can assure them that the facts are substantially as related; and I am now in correspondence with gentlemen of wealth and position who have signified their willingness to support this statement by affidavits and other documents prepared for the purpose of opening the eyes of the people to the delusions daily practiced upon the ignorant and superstitious.

WILLIAM H. MUMLER

*The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler
in Spirit-Photography (1875)*

*The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography:
Written by Himself* (BOSTON: COLBY AND RICH, 1875).

PART ONE

In these days of earnest inquiry for spiritual truths, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to contribute what evidences of a future existence I may have obtained in my fourteen years' experience in Spirit-Photography; and although these may be but an atom in comparison with what others have received, yet that atom is necessary to constitute the great whole of Spiritualism in the nineteenth century.

The history of all pioneers of new truths is relatively the same, and happy is the man who is not the chosen one to meet the prejudices of a skeptical world in the development of some new discovery. And yet, as I look back upon my past experience, I feel that I have been the gainer, personally, for all the sacrifices I have made, and all the troubles I may have endured in the knowledge I have gained of a future existence, and in the soul-satisfaction of being an humble instrument in the hands of the invisible host that surrounds us for disseminating this beautiful truth of spirit-communion. Nevertheless it has been a difficult task to battle with the skeptical world, to bear persecution and poverty, to outlive slander, and to overcome the many obstacles that beset the path of one whose mission it is to advance some new truth. And if in the following pages some

of these rough experiences creep in, let it not be thought they are inserted in malice or for the evocation of sympathy, but that the story would be incomplete without them.

Before commencing to take spirit-pictures I had a reputation as an honest and trustworthy person, enjoying for many years the confidence of the leading jewelers of Boston, in whose employ I was, and often being entrusted with their valuables to a large amount. But this reputation, that I had been years in establishing, vanished like a soap-bubble when I commenced to take spirit-photographs. I was condemned as a trickster, branded as a fraud, and deserted by those who were happy to acknowledge my acquaintance when in—to them—a more honorable business. And, strange as it may seem, many of my strongest opponents have been professed Spiritualists—men who have seen and are familiar with the difficulties that attend the demonstration of spiritual truths; who, while endeavoring to enlighten a skeptical and bigoted world with new truths will, at the same time, with the same skepticism and bigotry, denounce other truths of which they have not been convinced. “Consistency, thou art a jewel.”

At the time of taking my first picture, in March 1861, I was in the employ of Bigelow Brothers & Kennard, leading jewelers of Boston, as their principal engraver. Being acquainted with, and somewhat interested in, parties engaged in the photograph business, by often witnessing the operation I became familiar with the process of taking a picture, and it was thus, in whiling away an idle hour in taking a negative, that the spirit-form first appeared.

The picture was indeed at that time a strange looking one, and, from the fact that it was taken when no visible person was present but myself, it was, to me, unaccountable. But on submitting it to the operator for an explanation, his opinion was that the negative was taken upon an old glass that had previously been used for the same purpose, but had been insufficiently cleaned; and when a second negative was taken upon the same glass, the latent form, so to speak, was re-developed sufficiently to give an indistinct and shadowy outline. This theory was at the time, with my limited knowledge of photography, acceptable, and when asked by my employers and others how the picture was produced, the above statement was given. But the picture was, to say the least, a novelty; and I had one printed to show my friends, who called on me, in my office, where I worked at engraving.

One day a gentleman visited me who I knew was a Spiritualist; and not at that time being inclined much to the spiritual belief myself, and being



FIGURE 16. William H. Mumler, "L. A. Bigelow with Spirit," 1862–68. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.22).

of a jovial disposition, always ready for a joke, I concluded to have a little fun, as I thought, at his expense. I therefore showed him the picture, and with as mysterious an air as possible, but without telling an untruth, which Mr. P.T. Barnum calls "drapery," I stated to him "that this picture was taken by myself when there was no visible person present but myself."

He asked me if I would put this statement on the back, and sign my name to it? I did so, and gave it to him, never dreaming of any publicity ever being given to it. I was greatly surprised in about a week from that time, in receiving a paper from New York called the *Herald of Progress*, published, I believe, by Andrew Jackson Davis, and having a column or more descriptive of this very picture, with my name and statement that were on the back.

I felt, on reading this statement, considerably mortified in seeing my name in public print in support of what at that time I thought to be a kind of misrepresentation; but feeling really innocent of any evil intention, and knowing that New York was many miles away, and I an humble and secluded engraver, I thought nobody would be damaged much. I could not help feeling a little amazed, however, that for once the tables were completely turned on me, and the would-be joker was joked. Comforting myself with the idea that what was printed in a New York paper would not trouble me much in Boston, you can judge of my surprise and chagrin when I discovered that the whole article had been reprinted by a paper in Boston called the *Banner of Light*, which it seems was on the alert then, as it is now, and I hope always will be, to grasp at new truths. It not only gave the description of the picture, but stated where in Boston it was taken, viz., 258 Washington street.

After partaking of my dinner, I thought I would call at the gallery and inform them of the mischief I had done; but I was too late—the *Banner* had saved me the trouble; for when I entered the reception room I found it filled with people anxious to see this wonderful picture and learn something more in regard to it. When I first opened the door the lady behind the counter (who was not then but has since become my wife), exclaimed, "Here comes Mr. Mumler."

Of course all eyes were centered on me, and a number of gentlemen came forward to congratulate me upon my success in taking the first spirit-picture. Two of the gentlemen were very desirous of having me make some sittings for them, in hopes of getting a spirit form. I declined to make any sittings, as that was not my business, and my time was otherwise engaged. Besides, I remarked that I was not sure that it was a spirit

form, and told them how the operator accounted for it. This solution was scouted by one of the gentlemen, who, it seems, was a scientist from Cambridge, and thoroughly acquainted with photography. He said that explanation of how the picture was produced was, to a person acquainted with the business, harder to accept than the spiritual; that while it might be possible, and even probable, in daguerreotyping, it was an impossibility in photographing on glass.

These gentlemen were so pressing in their desire to have me making a sitting for them, that I reluctantly acquiesced. We went up stairs into the operating room, and after making sittings for both a number of times, I succeeded in getting a spirit form for one of these gentlemen. When we again reached the reception room, and the success of this gentleman became known, nearly every person in the room desired a sitting. I hardly knew what to say or how to act; the result of the last sitting was so entirely different from what I had expected, that I was fairly bewildered. I had other business that demanded all my time; but still here was a wonderful phenomenon that needed investigation. I therefore concluded to take pictures two hours a day, thinking that I might be able to take this amount of time from my other business. Those present immediately booked their names for a sitting—enough, I think, working two hours a day, to have kept me employed for three months. I soon found it necessary, however, to devote my whole time to the business, which, with the exception of two intervals of short duration, I have continued to do from that day to this.

Among the earliest of my pictures was one which I took for

MR. ALVIN ADAMS,

the veteran expressman. I had never before met Mr. Adams, and was not aware of his intention of visiting me until I was introduced to him in the gallery. I mention this fact, because it has been stated that I knew beforehand of parties who intended to have sittings, and was thus prepared for them when they came. I took a negative for Mr. Adams, and on developing it, there came out a very distinct face by the side of his own. On bringing out the negative to show to him, Mr. Adams said: "If you have a form on that plate beside my own, I know who it is." I asked him how he knew. He replied by saying: "In the first place this gentleman (pointing to a stranger who was witnessing the operation) says he is a medium, and has described a very peculiar face, which I recognize by the description. Secondly, at the time you took my picture I received a signal from the spirit whom this gentleman has described, and which I always receive when this spirit is present. Now," he said, "Mr. Mumler, if you have got the picture,

I shall consider it a pretty good test." I then exhibited to him the negative, when he exclaimed: "That is he, my guardian spirit, Daniel Webster."

Here, then, is a treble test, proving clearly the fact of clairvoyant sight, of spirit telegraphy (for the signaling was nothing else,) and spirit photography. This test cannot be vitiated by the plea of "credulity" on the part of Mr. Adams, for his shrewdness and ability are too well known. Another picture, which I took for

MR. JOHN EWELL,

of Boston, was a very good test. Mr. Ewell thought he would have his picture taken while he was in a standing posture, and resting his hand on the back of a chair. On developing the negative, the form of a young lady was seen *sitting in the chair*, supported by what seemed to be a pillow at her back. Mr. Ewell and his family recognized this as his sister, who passed away in this position of consumption.

DR. H.F. GARDNER,

of Boston, a well-known Spiritualist, had a picture taken, on which were a number of forms which he recognized. The Doctor told me that he afterwards took this picture to Mr. Black, the well-known photographer, and asked him if he could produce one like it by any mechanical contrivance, whereupon Mr. Black declared he could not.

MR. HORACE WESTON,

of Boston, came to the gallery, an entire stranger to me, and desired a sitting. He requested the privilege of witnessing the process, which was readily granted—he not stating, however, that he knew anything about the business. On developing the negative, a form was seen which he recognized, if I remember rightly, as his father. Mr. Weston then told me that he was familiar with the business, and was delegated by Mr. Black (by whom he had been taught the process of photography) to have a sitting with me. He said, on leaving: "All I can say to Mr. Black is, that I have seen nothing different from taking an ordinary picture." He had not been gone long, however, before he returned, saying, "When I went back, they all came around me to hear my report, and when I told them that I had got a second form on the negative, but had seen nothing different in the manipulation from taking an ordinary picture, they shouted with laughter, and declared that I had been deceived." He then said, "Mr. Black told me to return and say to you, that if you will allow him the same privilege of witnessing the operation that you did me, and he gets a spirit form on the negative, he will give you fifty dollars." I told him to return and tell Mr. Black to come. I did not wait long before Mr. Black made his appearance.

We were entire strangers to each other, this being the first time we had ever met. I remember *every word* that passed between us as vividly as though it happened but yesterday, from the fact that I knew I was but a novice in the business, and I felt positive that I should astound one of the great masters of photography. I said, "Mr. Black, I have heard your generous offer, and all I can say is, *Be thorough in your investigations.*" He replied by saying, "You may rest assured of that." I then pointed to my camera saying "That is the instrument I propose to take your picture with; you are at liberty to take it to pieces." Mr. Black examined it, and said, "That is all right." I then took a piece of glass and said, "Mr. Black, I propose to take your picture on this glass; you are at liberty to clean it." He took the glass in his hand, breathed upon it, and declared it already clean.

I then showed him my dark room, bath, &c., and coating the plate with collodion, I immersed it in the silver bath. When this was done Mr. Black rested his hand on the edge of the bath, and looked, as though he thought to himself—"I don't lose sight of this plate from this time." Mr. Black then said: "Mr. Mumler, let me see your plate-holder; I have understood there was a false back in it." I handed the holder to him, which he examined and declared to be "all right." I told him to hold on to it; and taking the plate from the silver bath, I placed it in the holder, when Mr. Black closed the door and started with the holder in his hand for the skylight-room. Directly in front of where he would sit for his picture was a window, and placing the holder on the window-seat, *he walked backwards to his chair* so as not to lose sight of the holder. I then focused him in the camera, and after removing the ground glass I placed the holder in position and raised the slide; then giving the cautionary word, "All ready," I removed the cloth and exposed the plate. After the necessary exposure I covered the tube again with the cloth, and closed down the slide. I then looked at Mr. Black, who, with an incredulous smile, remarked, "Mr. Mumler, I should be willing to bet on one thing." I asked what that was? He replied, "That you have got my picture." I answered, "So would I." He then said, "And I guess that is all." I replied: "Very likely. I do not get them every time."

I then requested Mr. Black to remove the holder and carry it to the dark room, which he did. On arriving there I handed him a bottle of developer, with the request that he would develop the negative. This he declined to do, saying, "I would rather you would develop it, Mr. Mumler; I am not acquainted with the working of your chemicals, and I might spoil it." And with marked emphasis he said: "*You are not smart enough to put anything on that negative without my detecting it.*" I replied I was well aware of that

fact. I then tipped the plate on the flat of my hand, and poured on the developing fluid, while we both watched anxiously for the form or forms to appear. Soon the likeness of Mr. Black appeared, and then another form became apparent, growing plainer and plainer each moment, until a man appeared, leaning his arm upon Mr. Black's shoulder, while Mr. B., watching with wonder-stricken eyes this development, exclaimed:

“MY GOD! IS IT POSSIBLE!”

He then asked me to let him have the negative, with which request, after the process of varnishing, I immediately complied. Mr. Black then placing his hand in his pocket, asked, “How much is to pay?” I told him “Not a cent.” He then thanked me kindly, and withdrew.

Now here is a plain statement of facts that cannot be successfully contradicted, as I have sufficient evidence to prove the above statement in a court of law, if necessary.

Among my earliest pictures was one which I took for

MR. STEBBINS,

of Chicopee, Mass. This was a beautiful test, and Mr. S. found it difficult to restrain the tears, as he gazed upon the truthful likeness of his spirit-child.

Another of my early and satisfactory pictures was one which I took for

MRS. ISAAC BABBITT,

of Roxbury. On this picture is seen the unmistakable likeness of her husband. Mr. Babbitt was the well-known originator of “Babbitt's metal” and other inventions. By constant labor, and overworking his brain, he became insane; just before he passed away the physician thought best to shave the hair from the top of his head, and in his picture he is so represented, which is a remarkable test, from the fact that none, save the physician and Mrs. Babbitt, were knowing to the circumstance. Mr. Babbitt had a large circle of acquaintances, and all who have seen his picture declare it to be a perfect likeness, although many of them are not believers in Spiritualism.

DR. CHARLES MAIN,

of Boston, was one of my early sitters, and received a very satisfactory picture of his first wife.

MR. THOMAS R. HAZARD,

of Newport, R.I., came to me, a stranger, and desired a sitting. His negative was taken, and he was informed that the pictures would be ready to deliver in about three days. At the expiration of that period he called for them. I was in the reception room, which was well filled with visitors, at the time, and was somewhat astonished to hear Mr. Hazard, in his usual

blunt but honest way, as he simply glanced at the pictures, say, "Humbug! Just as I expected!" Putting the pictures in his overcoat pocket, he started for the door. I remember distinctly of feeling the color rising to my face as I noticed the incredulous smile of many of those present.

About one year from that time I was called from the operating-room, as a gentleman desired to see me in the reception-room. As I walked in, Mr. Hazard met me with the question: "Do you remember me?" I replied very distinctly, "I do." "What do you remember about me?" he asked. I told him that about a year previous he had some pictures taken, and, on receiving them, had very bluntly called them a "humbug." "You are right," he remarked, "and now I have come back to apologize," and then, in the same blunt, honest way, he said: "When I got home I took the pictures out of my pocket, without even looking at them, threw them into a drawer in my desk, and have never looked at them since, until last evening, when, happening to think of them, I took one out and held it up to the light, when I unexpectedly discovered in it a perfect likeness of my wife." "Why," he added, "the likeness was so plain that I was at once convinced, and so I started this morning to see you and make this apology."

MR. MILLER,

of Malden, Mass., was another of my early sitters. He requested mentally, at the time his picture was being taken, that his little son would appear sitting on his knee; and, on developing the negative, there was the spirit-son in the position *mentally desired*. Mr. Miller, on receiving his pictures, stated that it was an unmistakable likeness of his boy, and there was not money enough in this world to displace it.

MR. COLBY,

the Editor of the Banner of Light, was another of my early visitors. I took a picture of him, and there appeared standing by his side an Indian chief. This, I think, was the first time that I took a likeness of an Indian. It seems that Mr. Colby, the evening previous, had a sitting with Mrs. Ozias Gillett, one of the most reliable private mediums in Boston, when her Indian spirit-guide said, "Go have picture taken; me go with you." Accordingly Mr. Colby, the next morning, called on me for a sitting, without mentioning what had been promised, or what he expected, with the above result. Mr. C. took a copy of the photograph to Mrs. Conant, in order to test its validity as a spirit picture. It was handed to her enclosed in an envelope, but before opening it she observed, "I am impressed to say that the Indian chief 'Wapanaw' was present with you at the sitting. I have seen this spirit many times, and should know him from among a thousand, for

he always shows himself with three plumes on the top of his head, the centre one dotted with white."

On opening the envelope, she exclaimed, "That's 'Wapanaw'; there are his plumes exactly as I have seen them many times. That is evidence of spirit photography."

HENRY T. CHILD, M.D.,

of Philadelphia, came to Boston expressly to investigate the phenomenon. Before starting, however, he visited a well-known photographer in Philadelphia, and got thoroughly posted in the manipulations. He brought with him *his own glasses, marked with a diamond in phonographic characters*, witnessed the entire process twice, and carried the identical two glasses home with him, on both of which were spirit forms.

THOMAS HUNT,

late of Salem, Mass. I took a picture for Mr. Hunt, and, on the plate by his side were the well-remembered features of a tea-merchant whom he had known in China, where he resided some twenty years. In connection with this, I will give a very remarkable test, wherein I took a picture of Mr. Hunt since his demise. Some three years since, a gentleman called on me and desired a sitting, giving the name of Capt. Copp, of West Dedham. The picture was taken, and on developing the negative, two distinct forms were seen—male and female. On receiving the pictures, Capt. Copp instantly recognized his old friend, Thomas Hunt, and his (Capt. Copp's) wife. The Captain then stated that he made the acquaintance of Thomas Hunt in China, and that on the return voyage of Mr. Hunt to this country, his (Capt. Copp's) wife died on board the vessel. Subsequently, Thomas Hunt passed to spirit-life. Both spirits had thus returned, giving unmistakable evidence that they yet existed. This is a very remarkable test, and the truth of the above statement can easily be found by any person desiring an investigation. Mr. Hunt was a very peculiar looking man, and there is probably not a person in the world that would resemble him in the least, and the spirit picture of him which was thus obtained, is very plain and distinct, but in an entirely different position from the one which I took in life—the negative of which I still have in my possession.

I could give many more of my early pictures that were substantial proofs of the genuineness of my claims to spirit-photography; but notwithstanding these tangible proofs, public opinion was against me. I was denounced in the papers, and threatened with arrest. Spiritualists themselves could not believe it, and subjected me to the severest scrutiny while investigating; and to their opposition was matched that of the skeptical

world, all which, however, had no effect upon me, because I knew I was right. I felt that the innumerable hosts of living, intelligent beings who had passed to a higher life were with me, to sustain and assist in fighting the ignorance, bigotry, and blindness of the human race in this their earthly condition. But, after all, we are more or less dependent upon public opinion and countenance for our existence here, and the unpopularity of spirit photography ruined our other business, consequently the establishment had to be closed for want of patronage.

PART TWO

Feeling the force at this time of the old adage, "A prophet is not without honor save in his own country," I determined to move to New York. I arrived in that city with my family, having scarcely money enough to sustain ourselves for a week, and began to look around for business; but I found that my reputation as an alleged trickster had preceded me, and it was with difficulty I could obtain the use of a gallery.

At last myself and family were reduced to the direst extremity. I therefore made desperate efforts for a place in which to take pictures. I wandered up Broadway until I arrived at No. 630, where I instinctively stopped, and looking up to a sign, I read, "W.W. Silver." I visited the operating room, and found two gentlemen waiting, apparently, for a customer. I asked to see Mr. Silver, when one of the gentlemen before referred to—a pleasant, genial-looking man—stepped forward as a representative of that name. I stated my business to him, viz., that I was in search of a place where I could take spirit-pictures. "Spirit-pictures!" he musingly said, and then remarked that there used to be a man in Boston who took such kind of pictures. I answered that I was the man. He then said, "Do you tell me, sir, that if I sit in that chair and you take my picture, other forms will appear on the negative?" I replied that such results had happened when I took pictures. He then asked me to make a trial for him, which I did, and repeated, but without success in getting the spirit form. He remarked that probably his great skepticism was the cause of this non-success. "But," he exclaimed, "there's a man," (pointing to the other gentleman) "who says he can tip tables, and I shouldn't wonder if you could get a picture for him." "I will try," I said. I then went to work and prepared a plate, being accompanied all through by Mr. Silver, and made a sitting for the gentleman, whose name, by the way, was Trickey (an unfortunate name for a person with medium powers), and, on developing the negative, a spirit form was seen standing by his side.

This rather excited Mr. S., who declared that he had not the slightest faith that it could be done. "Now," he said, "as you have got the thing started, suppose you try me again?" I agreed, and made another sitting, which was successful, for on developing the negative, a well-defined form of an elderly lady was plainly visible. He nervously grasped the negative, and holding it up to the light, exclaimed, "That is my mother! Just look at this, Mr. Mumler," he said, at the same time holding up a little microscopic charm in the shape of a spy-glass, "look through this microscope and examine that old lady's features. You will observe," he said, "she has a rather peculiar-shaped face." I replied, "I notice she has." "And do you see that stray lock of hair across her forehead?" he asked. I answered that I did. "Now," he said, "look at this negative; there is the same peculiar-shaped face, and that stray lock of hair exactly as in the microscopic picture, which I took myself about three weeks before she died." The test was complete. Mr. Silver was satisfied I could do what I claimed, and in a short time a bargain was struck, whereby I should use Mr. Silver's gallery, instruments, chemicals, and all the paraphernalia incident to taking pictures.

The question has often been asked me, "Can you go into a strange gallery, and with the proprietor's implements take these pictures?" I answer, "Yes, I can do it; I have done it a number of times; but in this account I shall give but two instances—Mr. Silver, as above stated, and Mr. Slee, of Poughkeepsie—as both of these gentlemen testified to the fact under oath in my trial.

As I was now fixed for a place to take pictures, my next move was to get the pictures to take. The Spiritualists were then holding meetings at Everett Rooms, near 24th street, I believe, and I thought it would be a good idea to hang two of my large pictures in the hall, and state where I could be found. The following Sunday I sent my son to the room with a polite note, asking the privilege of having them hung in the hall, never dreaming of a refusal. But judge of my surprise and chagrin when my son returned with both pictures, saying, "The person who has charge of the room told me to clear out with those humbug spirit-pictures."

Here again was I met by one of those illiberal Spiritualists who boast so much of liberality. This individual refused to allow my pictures to hang in the hall. I was sorry for him, and hoped in my inmost soul that there were not many more like him in the society. But I felt it an imperative duty that I not only owed to my family and myself, but to those invisible hosts whose instrument I was, that I should be heard. Accordingly the following week I had some pamphlets printed, giving the names of parties in

Boston who had received satisfactory pictures, and a concise history of spirit-photography to date. With a bundle of these under my arm I started for the hall. Arriving there before many persons had gathered, I paid my ten cents admission fee and entered. I placed a pamphlet in every seat, which had the desired effect, for soon my business began to prosper. I was very successful in getting spirit forms, a large proportion of which were unmistakably recognized. This of course constantly increased my business, and I was not obliged to resort to any more advertising, as, before leaving New York, I was generously treated to a large amount of it unsolicited.

One day three gentlemen called on me, and one of them, introducing himself as Mr. Hitchcock, a representative of the *New York Sun*, said that he came to investigate my claims to spirit-photography, and for that purpose had brought with him Mr. Gurney, the celebrated New York photographer. They desired a sitting, and I readily acceded to their wishes. The investigation was entirely satisfactory, (particulars of which will be given hereafter,) and resulted in giving me an extended notice in the *New York Sun*. The effect of this advertisement was soon manifest, for my place of business was thronged with visitors of all grades of society—the high and the low, the rich and the poor—many no doubt attracted out of idle curiosity, but most of them showing an intense interest in the phenomenon of spirit-photography. And what is there, I ask, that is more important than the life to come? After a man has passed in the middle age, he looks forward, at the best, to but a few years of earthly existence, and naturally asks, “Is this all of life? Is there a hereafter?” And as the years roll on, seemingly but little longer than weeks in his youth, bringing him nearer to the solution of this great problem, the question becomes, to him, one of great moment. The anchor to which he has been clinging for safety begins to drag; the advance of science demonstrates that the world was not made in a brief period, but has existed for innumerable ages, and where is he drifting? Spiritualism comes to him like a beacon-light to the mariner; and thousands who were tossing wildly about upon the waves of doubt and skepticism are quietly resting under this protecting shelter of the beautiful truth.

My success in New York was fully all that I anticipated, for in a few months I was enabled to buy Mr. Silver’s interest in the establishment, and thus became sole owner and proprietor. But hardly had this change been consummated, when I was arrested by the order of Mayor Hall. In those days of “Tweedism” and “Rings” it is a wonder I escaped being sent to some penal institution—for when the Mayor had a prisoner arrested he

was as good as convicted; but—thanks to Judge Dowling—there was, at least, one exception to this rule. It is possible also that the case might have been decided differently, were it not for the very able manner in which it was conducted by my counsel, Mr. John D. Townsend, of New York. Those who were fortunate enough to have heard his final argument will never forget it. For two hours and a half he spoke in the most eloquent manner—quoting largely from Scripture—to an audience composed of the best people of New York City, packing the courtroom to its utmost capacity; and when at last he made his peroration, it seemed as though he was actually inspired. After the decision of the court was had, there seemed to be as many to congratulate him upon his great and eloquent effort as myself upon my honorable acquittal.

My trial was ended. But another trouble had commenced. My gallery had been leased over my head, and I was thus deprived again of a place to do business in; my money was gone, and I had not the necessary means to start another gallery. A friend suggested that, in view of the great advertising my pictures had received on account of my trial, I might make it pecuniarily profitable to exhibit them. Acting upon this suggestion, and being assisted by a Spiritualist friend, I gave a number of exhibitions, but failed to make them remunerative. Then I resolved to return to Boston. I did so, and commenced to take pictures at my residence, where I have continued until the present time.

In presenting the proofs I have collected since leaving Boston, in 1868, I think that Evidence No. One should commence with W.W. Silver, for here is positive proof of not only the form received, but of the method by which it was obtained as given in his sworn testimony at my trial. It is very strong in support of my claims to spirit-photography. This gentleman testifies that I came to him a total stranger, and that with his instruments, his chemicals, &c., and under his supervision, I produced a negative with a second form, said form being an unmistakable likeness of his mother, who was dead. Is not this enough to satisfy all candid minds? Some may say, "Oh, Mr. Silver was in collusion with you." Is it a supposable case that if I took these pictures by trickery, I would dare to go to an entire stranger and expose myself for the purpose of having him enter into the same business? How could I know but that he might be a firm believer in Spiritualism, and would immediately expose me? Besides, Mr. Silver's was not the only gallery that I tried to get the privilege of taking pictures in; and from the bitter enmity shown by photographers against me in my trial, would not some of them have testified to the fact, had such inducements been

held out? Not only did I go to Mr. Silver a stranger, and take a picture with a spirit form in the presence of that gentleman and Mr. Trickey, but I worked for months with Mr. S., using the same camera as himself, and working in the same closet. There were also working in the adjoining room two artists—the Keishman Brothers—who had free access to the operating room at all times, and have often seen me go through the routine of taking pictures; and I today challenge any one or all of them, if they ever saw anything which savored of fraud in my taking pictures, to publish the same to the world.

As accumulative evidence in the same line, let me offer Evidence No. Two, sworn in the persons of the Slee Brothers, of Poughkeepsie, N.Y., who have one of the finest galleries outside the city of New York, and whose work shows that they fully understand their business, and are second to none in the art of photography. Mr. William P. Slee came to my gallery in New York a perfect stranger to me, not mentioning the fact that he was a photographer, or that he understood anything about the business, and requested a sitting, with the privilege of witnessing the process, which I readily granted.

At this sitting I think I made a number of pictures, on one or more of which was a spirit form. Mr. Slee then informed me that he was a photograph artist, and asked if I could take a picture in any other gallery than my own. I replied that I had done so. He then said that if I would come to his gallery for three or four days, I might have the free use of his apparatus. I thankfully accepted his kind offer, as business was rather quiet at the time. Now, without detracting from Mr. Slee's kindness or generosity, I would here remark that I do not suppose he made that offer for the simple purpose of putting a dollar in my pocket, or that he had a thought of assisting me pecuniarily, for I was an entire stranger to him. What, then, was his motive? Solely and wholly to satisfy himself as to the genuineness of my claim. This being the case, then, it must at once be seen that Mr. Slee took every precaution to leave no chance for pictures of a fraudulent character to be made. He had new glass, on which pictures had never been taken, prepared for me; his camera and closet were put in requisite order; and, by way of completeness of detail, to detect the fraud if any there was, he gave strict orders to his operator to watch me in the closet, and at the same time had loop-holes bored through the ceiling whereby we both in turn could be watched.

Accompanied by my wife and clerk I walked into Mr. Slee's gallery on Tuesday, March 30, 1869, and with *his* instruments, *his* chemicals, and

in presence of *himself, his brother and operator*, commenced to take pictures, and continued to do so for four days.

If this statement was simply my own, being an interested party, it might be taken with some grains of allowance; but when an honorable gentleman goes into court, and swears to the same, what stronger evidence can be adduced?

In the New York Herald of April 22nd, 1869, will be found Mr. Slee's testimony in my trial, where, in answer to a request to state his experience in spirit-photography, he says: "I visited Mr. Mumler's gallery to see what I might learn in regard to it. I went to the premises 630 Broadway for the purpose of thoroughly examining the process of taking spirit-photographs; to see if I could understand it. I watched the process of taking these pictures as closely and minutely as I possibly could. Mr. Mumler sat me three times, and each time I watched him very closely, and also scrutinized the whole process. I did not notice anything unusual or different from the regular process, with the exception that I noticed he placed his hand on the camera. That was the only unusual thing I observed. On a subsequent occasion Mr. Mumler visited me at my gallery in Poughkeepsie, and used my material in the process of taking pictures that ensued, from beginning to end, including my camera, glass, chemicals, and all the other appliances necessary to the production of photographs. During his operations I watched him intently throughout, and the only unusual circumstance that I observed was placing his hand on the camera, as I had before noticed in New York, *and spirit-photographs were produced.*"

Here, then, is the unsolicited testimony of an honorable gentleman, a practical photographer, given under oath in support of my preceding statement.

As before stated Mr. Hitchcock, of the New York Sun, accompanied by Mr. Gurney, the celebrated New York photographer, and Mr. Livermore, came to my gallery for the purpose of investigating my claims to spirit-photography.

In quoting from the New York Sun, of February 26th, 1869, Mr. Hitchcock says: "Mr. Mumler, for the present, has established himself at the gallery of W.W. Silver, 630 Broadway, where your reporter, in company with an eminent photographer of this city, whom we shall call Brown, and a gentleman who was formerly a leading banker and stock-broker on Wall street, visited him yesterday morning. . . . One of the most remarkable of these strange pieces of work is a picture taken for the ex-banker above alluded to. Several years ago he lost his wife to whom he was

tenderly attached, and who, as he believes, has never ceased to be present in her spiritual form with him. A day or two ago he sat to Mr. Mumler, and on the plate there came along with his an image of a lady, which he and his friends all declare to be *a correct likeness of his deceased wife*. The face is perfectly distinct; one arm is thrown around the husband's neck, so that her hand, holding what seems to be a bunch of lilacs, comes in front of his breast. Another picture being taken, *the same figure appeared in a different attitude*, pointing with one hand upwards. . . . OUR REPORTER SEES WHAT CAN BE DONE FOR HIM! But first he requested his photographic friend, whom we have called Brown, to go through the process himself, and watch the various steps of it. Mr. Brown accordingly went up stairs in the sky-light room with Mr. Mumler, and prepared the sensitive plate himself from the naked glass. Sitting down before the camera, he waited the usual time, and then with his own hands developed the negative. At the side of his own there came out the face of a middle-aged man, with a dark beard. . . . Then came our reporter's turn. He, too, saw the colodion poured on the clean glass, and then placed in the silver bath, and taken out and placed in the groove or holder. While in the chair he thought he would try the effect of calling to mind the appearance of his father as he looked before he died some eleven years ago. The negative gave a face in profile, rather dim, but in general outline, he must confess, *very like his father as he thought of him!*"

Now here is a combination of tests which I should think would be rather hard to dispute. But let us see what Mr. Gurney says in his sworn testimony, as given in the *New York World* of April 22nd, 1869. Mr. Gurney, being the next witness, in answer to Mr. Day, said:

"I am a photographer at 707 Broadway; I have been engaged in business twenty-eight years; I have visited Mr. Mumler to have my picture taken; I witnessed the process, but I did not discover any deception; I saw the process of preparing the plate for taking the photograph; and in developing the negative *I applied the chemicals myself, and upon the negatives was a shadowy form.*"

I would like to mention here a little incident that happened in my perambulations to find a place to take pictures in New York. On walking up the Bowery I came to a doorway that made a very respectable appearance in photographic display, and walked in.

"Would you like to let your gallery a few hours a day in which to take pictures?" I asked. The proprietor being entirely ignorant of spirit-photography, I had to explain the whole matter to him; when he replied



SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPH BY MUMLER.

FIGURE 17. William H. Mumler, "Charles Livermore with the Spirit of His Wife," *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869, cover. Wood engraving after spirit photograph.

that, if *he* should sit, he would probably "get the devil or his cloven foot." I replied that, not being acquainted with his antecedents, I could not say. I, however, offered to take a picture for him, which he readily agreed to, and on developing the negative, there was directly over his head as perfect a cloven hoof as could be imagined. He actually turned pale, and looked at me suspiciously, expecting every moment, I suppose, to get a whiff of sulphur. He concluded, however (and while coming to this conclusion he managed to keep a respectful distance from me,) that these kind of pictures might hurt his business. I did not try very hard to disabuse his mind of this idea, for really I did not like the first appearance of his spiritual associates.

PART THREE

Having presented sufficient evidence to show that spirit forms appear upon the negative, aside from anything that I do more than in taking an ordinary picture, I will now proceed to give some of the later evidences I have to prove that these forms are actual likenesses of those who have passed to spirit-life. The first I shall offer is that of

CHARLES F. LIVERMORE,

well known in New York, formerly a member of the firm of Livermore, Clews & Co., Bankers on Wall street. Mr. Livermore came to me a perfect stranger, and desired a sitting. His name was asked for the purpose of recording it in the "engagement book"; but he declined to give it, saying, "A numeral will represent me just as well as my name." He was therefore recorded as "Mr. 500." Mr. Livermore sat three times, and I did not succeed in getting a spirit form. Mr. L. remarked that he had a severe headache, and did not think I would be successful. I however proposed to make one more trial, which he acceded to, and this time appeared on the plate the form of a lady standing behind him, with one hand on his forehead, and the other resting on his breast, holding a bunch of lilacs. The negative was shown him, when he desired me to make another trial, which I did; and this time I succeeded in getting the same face, but in a different attitude. The form was represented behind him, both hands holding a wreath of flowers, seemingly as if in the act of placing it on his head. This negative was also shown him, when he desired still another sitting. This time the same form again appeared, but still in another position—behind him, pointing upward. Mr. L. desired to know when the cards would be ready, and was told "in three days." At the expiration of that time he called, and, on receiving the pictures, exclaimed, "I shall never doubt any more." I asked him if he recognized the likeness, and he

replied, "It is my wife." Here, then, is a test that is simply unanswerable—the unmistakable likeness of this gentleman's wife appearing in *three different positions*, totally unlike any that she had taken during life. Mr. Livermore testified to the above facts, under oath, at my trial; and when the Judge asked him if he recognized these pictures as likenesses of his wife, his answer was, "*Unmistakably.*"

MR. WILLIAM HUBBARD AND WIFE,

of New York, both had sittings with me. Mrs. Hubbard came first to my gallery, and while sitting for her picture, mentally requested that her little boy would show himself as he used to while saying his prayers. On developing the negative, the boy's form was observed standing in front of her, and resting his head on her breast. Subsequently the spirit-son said, through a medium, that if his father would sit he would try and show himself plainer. Mr. Hubbard accordingly had a sitting, when his son appeared *in a different position*, facing directly front, and leaning against his father.

MR. PAUL BREMOND,

of Houston, Texas, also testified under oath to his having a number of pictures taken by me which he recognized. Mr. B. is the founder of the Houston and Texas Railroad, and is a gentleman of position and wealth.

MR. ELMER TERRY,

357 Bleecker street, New York, stated under oath that I took two pictures for him, one of which he recognized as his son, the other as a lady friend; and to prove that it was not *mistaken identity*, he called as evidence a relative of the lady.

MR. JACOB KINGSLAND,

while under oath stated that he recognized the lady as his cousin, also recognized Mr. Terry's son. This gentleman was not a Spiritualist.

JUDGE JOHN W. EDMONDS,

late of New York, testified to having a picture taken which he recognized.

DAVID A. HOPKINS,

of New York, stated under oath that he had a picture taken which he recognized.

MRS. LUTHERIA C. REEVES,

residing at 699 Washington street, New York, testified to her having a picture taken which she recognized as her son.

SAMUEL K. FANSHAW,

artist, New York. This gentleman is considered one of the best miniature painters and facial experts in that city, and, being such, his evidence is valuable, inasmuch as it disproves what is so often stated by skeptical

people, viz., that my pictures are likenesses only when persons imagine them to be so. Under oath he stated that he came to me an entire stranger, and sat for a picture—witnessed the whole process, he being familiar with photography—and received a likeness of his mother, which he said was more like her than the one he had painted from memory.

ANN F. INGALLS,

New York, testified under oath to her having sat for a picture and obtained a likeness of her son.

I have given the above cases as evidence of the strongest kind, because the facts were elicited under oath. Much more could be offered from among my New York experiences, but I do not deem it necessary. I will proceed to give the evidences of spirit-photography which came to hand after my return to Boston.

Some ten years or more ago, a gentleman in California sent me his picture, with the request that at a specified time I would put it on my table and take a likeness of it, placing the camera at the same relative distance as if I had a personal sitting. He stated that at the same hour (making allowance for the difference in time) he would sit quietly, concentrating his mind on the subject, and request some of his spirit-friends to try and show themselves with the picture. The result of the experiment was a success, as, on developing the negative, three forms (if my memory serves me) were seen standing around the table, which, the gentleman wrote me, were recognized. Since that time I have taken many pictures in that way, and have given some beautiful tests.

I have taken quite a number of pictures for

DR. WILLIAM EDWARDS,

No. 616 New Capitol street, Washington, D.C., a gentleman I have never met, but have in the above manner, obtained likenesses of nearly all the members of his family who have passed to the spirit-life, which he fully and unmistakably recognized.

MRS. H. B. HAINES,

of New Orleans, La., sent a picture to be copied; and after receiving the copies she wrote me as follows: "On looking at my pictures I was greatly surprised to recognize the unmistakable likeness of my mother."

MR. JOSEPH DEXTER,

of Boston, called on me to have a picture taken; but, not making any personal sittings at that time, he left his *carte de visite* to have me copy it, which I did, and succeeded in getting his mother, which, he told me, was recognized by his sister and other members of the family. An excellent test



FIGURE 18. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. Tinkman with the Spirit of Her Child," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.7).

in connection with this picture is that his mother promised, through a medium, that she would hold in her hand an anchor of flowers. The picture shows that the promise was fulfilled.

In a letter from

MRS. H. F. M. BROWN,

the well-known medium, who is now in Virginia City, Nevada, she says: "You may remember that some time ago I sent you an order for a spirit-picture of Mrs. Smith. At the time appointed I sat alone; the spirit of Mrs. S. came with three others. I talked to them as to persons in the form; exhibited to them some of your pictures, and asked them to go to you and try and show themselves on the picture you were about taking. They bowed and were gone. I did not know the parties, and wondered if they understood me and had gone to your room to be taken. The pictures were wanted as a test. When they arrived I was surprised to see the very spirits I had previously seen—four in all—on the card. I sent it to Mrs. Smith's family, who at once recognized them."

Mrs. Brown added, "Is not this a good test?" I responded, "Yes, a beautiful test, one which ought to be sufficient to establish the fact of your clairvoyant powers, as also that of spirit-photography."

MR. C. H. M. GOWAN,

of Trinity, La., writes: "The pictures received were satisfactory, and I think I may now advise others to 'go and do likewise.' And I hope that your beautiful calling may become better known, better appreciated and better sustained in its purity by a noble and progressive people."

MRS. J. C. CHAMBERLAIN,

Palmyra, Neb., informs me by letter that the three figures on her picture plate are recognized as a brother and two sisters, and she is perfectly satisfied.

A short time since, I received a letter containing a *carte de visite* from

MR. J. F. RIBLETT,

of Ackley, Iowa, with the request that I should copy the card at a specified time, which I did. On developing the negative, the form of a lady was seen standing by the side of the table, holding in one hand a scroll, on which was plainly seen the name of "Katie Karn." After I had returned the pictures to him, I received a brief note to the following effect: "The form is fully recognized, and the letters on the scroll spell her correct name." This picture was taken for an entire stranger, the editor and proprietor of a newspaper, (the Ackley Independent,) whom I had never seen or heard of. He fully recognized the name and features.

I might multiply such evidence, but think these will suffice for this class of testimony.

Before concluding this imperfect biography of my experiences in Spirit-Photography, I will give some of the evidences of those who have personally visited me for sittings since my return to Boston. I am restrained from giving publicity to many fine tests, from the fact that those who have received them are afraid of what the world might say or think.

I will commence with

MRS. LINCOLN,

widow of the late lamented President. I had just finished taking a picture for a gentleman who resides in Canada, when the door-bell rang, and a lady dressed in black, wearing a crape veil, was ushered in. The veil was so thick it was impossible to distinguish a single feature of her face. Without raising her veil she spoke to the gentleman for whom I had just taken a picture, saying, "Have you had a picture taken, sir?" He replied in the affirmative. "Do you recognize it?" she asked. He answered, "Well, I am not much used to looking at a negative, but I think I know who it is." Then, turning to me, she said: "What do you charge for these pictures?" I stated the price, and she decided to sit for one. I requested her to be seated; would be ready for her in a moment. I went into my dark room and coated a plate. When I came out I found her seated, with her veil still over her face. I asked if she intended to have her picture taken with the veil? She replied, "When you are ready I will remove it." I said I was ready, whereupon she removed the veil, and the picture was taken. I then requested her name for the purpose of recording it in the engagement book. "Mrs. Lindall" was given. Mrs. L. asked when she could have the pictures; and was told, in about three days. The negative, marked "Mrs. Lindall," was sent with the others to my printers. The pictures were returned only a few moments before Mrs. Lincoln called, and laid on my desk, in envelopes, with the names on the outside that were on the negative—Mrs. Lindall's among the rest. I was away at the time, and consequently had not seen the pictures, and did not recognize the form on her negative, as I had not the slightest idea that I had had such a distinguished sitter.

My wife was engaged in conversation with a lady-friend when the door-bell rang, and a lady was shown in. She asked if her pictures were ready? My wife asked, "What name?" The lady replied, "Mrs. Lindall." Mrs. M. then went to my desk, and looking over the packages of pictures, found one marked Mrs. Lindall, which she handed to her, and then continued the conversation with her friend, who by-the-way, being of an inquisitive

turn of mind, asked Mrs. Lincoln (who was at this time examining her picture closely,) if she recognized the likeness? Mrs. L. replied, hesitatingly, "Yes" [Plate 1]. My wife was almost instantly entranced, and, turning to Mrs. L., said: "Mother, if you cannot recognize father, show the picture to Robert; he will recognize it." "Yes—yes, dear," Mrs. Lincoln said; "I do recognize it; but who is now speaking?" she asked. The control replied: "Thaddeus!" A long conversation ensued. Mr. Lincoln afterwards controlled and talked with her—so the lady-friend informed me who had thus unexpectedly been a witness of this excellent test.

When my wife resumed her normal condition, she found Mrs. L. weeping tears of joy that she had again found her loved ones, and apparently anxious to learn, if possible, how long before she could join them in their spirit home. But this information of course could not be given. Mrs. Lincoln then related how she left Springfield, Ill., for the sole purpose of visiting my studio, and having a picture taken as a test. For that express purpose she traveled *in cog*. When she arrived in Boston, she came directly to my house, before visiting a hotel, for fear that some one who knew her might see and recognize her, and thus defeat the object for which she had taken such a long journey.

The picture of Mr. Lincoln is an excellent one. He is seen standing behind her, with his hands resting on her shoulders, and looking down, with a pleasant smile.

CAPT. R. MONTGOMERY,

of Hodgsdon Mills, Me., first sent me his *carte de visite* to copy, and received an unmistakable likeness of his daughter. Subsequently he visited a medium, when his daughter controlled, and told him if he would sit for a picture she would accompany him. He called on me for a sitting, when his child again appeared, holding a flower to his face. Capt. M. afterwards had another sitting. This time he received a likeness of his mother.

PART FOUR

I will here introduce the valuable testimony of

HON. MOSES A. DOW,

editor and proprietor of the *Waverley Magazine*, Bunker Hill District, Boston. This gentleman had a picture taken which was fully recognized by him. He says:

Having some time since become somewhat interested in the subject of Spiritualism, and being urged to do so by a request which I do not feel



FIGURE 19. William H. Mumler, "Captain Montgomery," 1870–75. Collection of Jack and Beverly Wilgus.

CAPT MONTGOMERY

Specialty

By

Mumler.

170 West Springfield St.

BOSTON, MASS.

FIGURE 20. William H. Mumler, verso of "Captain Montgomery," 1870-75. Collection of Jack and Beverly Wilgus. The address of 170 West Springfield Street indicates Mumler's studio after his return from New York to Boston.

at liberty to decline, I have, according to the best of my ability, noted down the prominent items of my experience, hoping they may give encouragement and increase the confidence of those whose minds have not yet become settled on the subject.

I well remember the time when the phenomena of spiritual manifestations were first introduced by the Misses Fox, of Rochester, N.Y., and I did not, even at that early day, when Spiritualism was so little known and its promulgation so new and wonderful, do, as many others did and do now, scout its pretensions, for I saw the germ of a new era—one in which the human mind would become more free and more expanded, and that it would do away with many false and cruel tenets in most of the popular creeds of the day. I was desirous, however, that others should study its reality and its claims to public confidence, as I had neither the time nor the inclination to search into its mysteries, for I had some fears that I might go too deep and that the subject might so involve my meditations as to unfit me for the actual duties of life, of which I had many responsible ones.

It was in the early part of 1870 that circumstances brought me in contact with some spiritual manifestations, and what I saw and heard at those meetings set the doors of my understanding “ajar,” and the probability of the truth of such manifestations was indelibly impressed on my mind; and it was not very difficult, for the results of my observations, in after researches, made me a sincere believer in the doctrine that the spirits of our departed friends come back to us, and, through proper media, communicate hope and consolation to their nearest friends and those whom they loved on earth.

It has not yet become sufficiently popular for a man somewhat known in a community to step forth and avow himself a believer in Spiritualism, much less to advocate its promulgation. But, if he truly, consciously and understandingly believes *anything* that courts investigation, especially one so important as is this, and dares not acknowledge that belief, he is not imbued with the spirit of liberty and free discussion which our institutions should have implanted within his bosom.

It has been my privilege, during the last twelve months, to enjoy the most positive tests of the truths of spiritual manifestations that any one ever had, and I propose, in this imperfect narrative, to give the results of my experience in plain and unequivocal language, that shall neither confuse or mystify those who may honor me by their perusal.

I am the publisher of a literary paper in Boston, and in the year 1862 there entered my office a young lady, apparently a recent graduate of our

high schools, who offered me some manuscripts for publication in my paper. She was reserved and dignified in her speech and manners, and she seemed the very ideal of what the most imaginative mind would deem almost perfection.

Her writings made a favorable impression, and I received several specimens of them during that year. After becoming acquainted with her intellectual ability, and having seen the probability of the rapid advancement that she would make by a little experience, I made arrangements with her to take a permanent place in my office as an assistant on my paper.

The situation which she was to fill was that of assistant editor. She was a fine writer of both prose and poetry, and her good taste proved to be a valuable acquisition to my editorial circle. Her amiable disposition, unselfish nature and graceful deportment, as well as her faithfulness and honesty in performing the duties allotted to her, made her an object of admiration to all her acquaintances. She filled the place to my satisfaction for eight or nine years.

Mabel Warren, as we will call the young lady's name, was taken ill on the 12th day of July, 1870. After nine days of severe suffering she peacefully and quietly passed to the spirit-land. I will not attempt to give language to the grief which I felt at her death. She seemed like a dearly-beloved daughter, her natural father having died in her infancy. Her funeral was attended by a large circle of weeping friends, who felt that a vacuum had been made in their circle which could not be again filled.

On the seventh day after her death, while riding, I met with an accident, which caused me to keep [to] my house for several weeks. An arrangement had been made with Mrs. Higgins, a spiritual medium, to take tea with my housekeeper, (who was a Spiritualist,) my family being away on a vacation. Several other friends of the cause were present. Before the company had assembled I had a short time to talk with the controlling spirit of the medium, which was that of an Indian girl, who said that there was a beautiful spirit present to see me, but she could not talk then as she was so weak, having been in the "spirit-hunting-grounds" so little while; but that she would talk to me another *moon-time*, or another night. This Indian spirit was called Mary, and was generally the first to communicate through this medium, at her sittings.

Later in the evening another little spirit took control of the medium—that of the son of an ex-mayor of one of the suburban towns of Boston. After some other remarks, he said:

“The beautiful spirit, Mabel, is here. She is sitting on the banks of a beautiful river, and she is surrounded with flowers, and has a beautiful flower in her hand, and *that is for you*. She loves you because you were so good to her. The banks of the river look somewhat like the river Nile, but the river Nile had people who were mourning and weeping, but here all are happy.”

At another time, on the same evening, Mabel took control of the medium herself, though weak and hardly able to sit in her chair. She requested paper and pencil that she might write. They were brought to her, and she proved almost too weak to take the pencil from the table. She at last succeeded, and made an effort to write, and with much difficulty wrote the following, which was in the handwriting she used during her life-time:

“And it was my fate to be taken beyond the—.”

When the pencil dropped from her hand, she fell back in her chair, unable to proceed any further.

On another evening, a week later, Mrs. Higgins, the medium, made us another visit, and being anxious to have a private interview, in hopes of obtaining some test that would prove to my mind the reality of Mabel’s presence, I had a sitting half an hour before the time set for the rest of the company to meet. Mabel immediately took possession of the medium, and in a friendly manner took my hand and said:

“You felt very sad when I passed away, didn’t you? But I shall *always be near you*, to console you. I used sometimes to feel as if I did wrong to think so much of you, but I do not think so now—it was all right.”

I will not attempt to relate all that was communicated to me at these sittings. My object is only to give prominence to such points in my narrative as shall enable the reader to trace a harmonious line of evidence from first to last of my experience, and, if not very nicely expressed, I hope there may be seen a consistency in my arguments in favor of the truth.

About a month after the meeting above alluded to, Mrs. D. and myself made a trip to Saratoga Springs. It was about the first of September. The “season” had passed away, and we rambled over the almost deserted fields of gayety unmolested and unnoticed. The shops and hotels were being closed; the *hidden machinery* (as it seemed) which forced the briny waters of the “Geyser” needed repairing, no doubt, and there seemed to be a move among the townspeople toward such improvements as were necessarily laid aside for the better convenience of the throng which had just left. We had ample room for driving about, and plenty of gay teams at our call.

We visited the "Lake," the "Fishery" and the "Springs," the waters of which we freely drank.

I took a stroll up Broadway one pleasant afternoon, and casually stopped in front of a palatial mansion, which was being improved and fitted up by "Lord Willoughby," an English nobleman, who, I believe, intends to make it his permanent residence. While admiring the place, with its beautiful garden of flowers, I noticed approaching me an elderly gentleman, who gave me a pleasant greeting. He informed me that his name was Baker; that he made Saratoga his abiding place; that his family were grown up and scattered over the world, and that he found pleasure in the subject of spiritual manifestations, in which he was a firm believer. He said he was then on his way to the "Waverley House," to meet Dr. Slade, a very powerful medium; that he performed wonders on the slate. He asked me to go with him, to which I consented, remarking that I had witnessed some manifestations, and had received communications from some of my friends.

I found Dr. Slade to be a delicately-constituted gentleman, of a remarkably fine countenance and of genial manners. After introducing the subject which we called to witness, he seated us around a common fall-leaf table, about four feet square. The Doctor sat on one side, I sat on another side at his right, and Mr. Baker sat on my right, opposite to the Doctor. We placed our hands on the centre of the table, touching each other, to form an electric circle. Raps came thick and loud under the table, as well as on my chair. The medium asked the spirits:

"Are there spirits here who wish to communicate?"

Three raps answered, "Yes."

"We will see what you desire to tell us," said the medium.

He then took a common school slate, and placed on it a small slate pencil about one-sixteenth of an inch long, and held it under the leaf of the table with the four fingers of the right hand, his thumb resting on the top of the table for support. His left hand remained on the centre of the table in connection with both those of Mr. Baker and myself, as before said, to keep the circle unbroken. There was no space between the frame of the slate and the table, and only about one-sixteenth of an inch between the slate and the table for the pencil to work in.

Soon was heard the sound of the pencil writing on the slate. It moved with great rapidity, and the sounds of dotting the *i* and crossing the *t* were distinctly discernible. Three distinct raps on the slate with the pencil said, "*that is all*," and the slate was taken out. On it was written:

"Have no fears for the future. This is a beautiful place.—C. DOW."

I remarked that I lost a brother Charles about thirty years ago. He died a member of the Orthodox church, and believed in all the *peculiar* tenets of that creed. He expressed a fear to me that my Universalism was not true; but, said he, "*I hope it is.*" And now to have him tell me in his first communication from the spirit world to "have no fears for the future," was very gratifying, for it confirmed my previous convictions that the idea of pain or sorrow after the death of the body, as a punishment, was only the fabrication of a false theology.

I then said that I had lost a friend in Boston a few weeks before, and had communications from her, in which she said she should always be with me; and that I would like to know whether she had come to Saratoga with me. The slate was held under the table, and when taken out these words were plainly written on it:

"She is here!—C. DOW."

Then I said I should like to have her write to me. Instantly there was written on the slate—

"I am always with you.—MABEL."

The medium then held the slate on the top of my head by his right hand, while his left remained in the center of the table, and on it was written, in Mabel's hand-writing, as follows:

"I am glad you are interested in this beautiful truth. Ask Mrs. D. to come, and she will be convinced.—MABEL."

During this manifestation the medium said he felt a hand take hold of his wrist and pull his cuff. I expressed a wish that she would manifest herself to me in that way, and soon the side of my coat was jerked quite hard, and a hand gently patted me.

The medium took an accordion and placed it under the table in the same way he had held the slate. He took hold of the back part of it, and let the bellows and keys hang down loose. The bellows were raised to a horizontal position, and began to move backward and forward to take in wind, and the tunes of "Sweet Home" and the "Last Rose of Summer" were played as sweetly as they could possibly be executed on that instrument by mortal fingers.

The medium also took a silver fruit-knife and laid it on the slate with the blade closed, and held the slate under the table. Instantly the knife was thrown across the room on the floor, with the blade opened to its full extent.

On the last evening before our leaving Saratoga I called with another gentleman to have a sitting with Dr. Slade. After witnessing more phenomena, I said that I was going to leave Saratoga on the next morning,

and I would like to know whether my friend Mabel was present. The slate was held under the table, and on it was instantly written—

"I am glad to meet you; you are so very dear to me.—MABEL."

Mr. Baker informed me that if I wished to know of a good medium in Boston on my return home, I had better call on Mrs. M. M. Hardy, No. 4 Concord Square, as she was one of the best mediums he had ever seen. I arrived home in about a week, and a few days afterwards called on Mrs. Hardy. As almost every hour of the day is previously engaged, I could only engage to call three days later. I did not see the lady at this time, as she was occupied. At the time appointed I called and saw her. I had never before seen her, neither had she ever seen me, though she may have read my name in my paper. She did not know what I expected to learn; nor whether I wished to meet father, mother, wife or children. I did not tell her my name, or give her any information in regard to myself.

I was invited into the sitting-room, and took a seat opposite to her, about six feet distant. In a few minutes she was in a trance, and controlled by a little spirit called "Willie," who is generally the first that appears to one who has never been there before.

After his telling me that there were several spirits present who knew me, I asked him if I had any friend present, when he answered with the voice and accent of a child of four years:

"Yes, you have a beautiful spirit here, and she has got flowers for you. Mary is here, too. Who is Mary?"

The Indian girl who first spoke of Mabel, and told me of her presence through Mrs. Higgins, came to my mind, and I asked Willie if it was the Indian girl.

"Yes, it is the Indian girl, and she has got flowers; they have both got flowers for you. The beautiful spirit gave you *positive demonstration* of her presence in Saratoga, through Dr. Slade, by writing on a slate. She is always with you."

I asked Willie if my friend would speak to me, and he said she would, and that he would go and let her come to talk with me.

The medium remained silent for a moment, when a deep sigh indicated a change of influences, and both hands were extended toward me, a manner of greeting a friend which was habitual to Mabel when in the earth-form. I took a seat nearer to her, and took her hands, which she clasped in a manner that indicated pleasure in meeting a long absent friend, and with great earnestness of language gave me a hearty welcome. The reality of her presence was so sensibly felt by me that I could not speak for some

time. Her wishes seemed to be to impress me with the fact that she was really my friend Mabel.

“My dear friend, I am so glad to meet you,” said she. “Promise me that you will not use the word *death* when you speak of me, for I am *not* dead, but alive, and am always with you. It is so beautiful to pass away from earth; I do not wish to come back, unless it were to die again, it is so beautiful. I am with your father, mother and brother; they all love me, and are waiting for you when you come over the river, and will meet you half way over the bridge. It is only a breath long; when the breath is gone you are here, and it is such a beautiful home and we are all so happy here. I will go now, and let your friends come to you.”

After she had gone I had a talk with father, mother and brother. They all spoke of the *beautiful spirit* which had recently come among them. My brother Charles said:

“Brother Moses, I am glad to meet you. You are the first one I have ever communicated with. We are very happy. The *beautiful spirit* is with us, and she can teach us our alphabet in spiritual progress because she was so good and pure when she came. I will go now, and let our mother come. Give my love to your daughters, and tell them their Uncle Charles lives.”

I would remark that my brother died about thirty years ago. My father died about fifteen, and my mother about forty-six years ago. My mother next came to meet me. She said I should find a beautiful home when I came to the spirit-land to meet my friends who were waiting for me. My father talked pretty much in the same manner; and altogether, the good things they told me make life here seem not very desirable, and take from death all its terrors.

At another sitting I asked Mabel if her father would speak to me, as she had told me that he was her guardian spirit while she lived on the earth, and that he was ever present with her. She said he would, and went away to let him come. The voice of the medium was changed from feminine to masculine, as he said:

“I am glad to meet you, sir. I passed away when this child (Mabel) was in her infancy. It was my doings that she was placed under your care and protection. Had it not been for that care and protection she would not have been the bright and pure spirit that she now is. I thank you for what you have done for her. I thank you for what you have done for her mother and sister. Good by.”

At another time, when I was holding converse with Mabel, she said, voluntarily, without such a thought coming to me—

“I shall give you my spirit picture some time.”

I supposed that it would have to be done with colors by a medium artist; and, not comprehending her meaning the matter dropped from my mind. I now reminded her of her promise to give me a picture. She said it would be a photograph, and it must be taken by a medium artist. I asked her when we should have it done, and she said she would tell me the next time I came. I called again in just one week, and she voluntarily spoke of the picture first:

“Now I am ready to give you my picture. I met the spirit of Rufus Choate, and I asked him if he could tell me where I could get a picture taken for a friend, and he told me I could get it at No. 170 West Springfield street, in Boston, of Mr. Mumler. I went there to see if that was the right number, and found that it was. I went in to see how they did it, and I got so near the instrument that I was taken on the glass. They didn't know who I was and so they rubbed it off. Now, when you leave here, you must go there and make arrangements for us to go at one o'clock, a week from to-day. You call here at twelve; then we will go there at one.”

On arrival at Mrs. Mumler's, I told her that I had called to see about having a picture taken—that a spirit friend had said she would give me one.

“When will you come?” asked she.

“I will call a week from to-day, at one o'clock.”

“What name shall I put down?”

I did not like to give my true name, as I had heard that Mr. Mumler was an impostor, and told her she might call me *Mr. Johnson*—which she did; and I came to my place of business.

Just a week from that time I called at Mrs. Hardy's to have a chat with Mabel previous to our going to Mr. Mumler's to get the picture. When I first came, Mrs. Hardy gave me a letter which Mabel had written through her mediumship, from which I will make an extract or two:

“MY DEAR FRIEND—I again come to you. I am never absent from you so but what I can hear you speak. I promised you my picture. I am ready to give it you any time when you may try to get it. I will bring you flowers of beauty, and the Great Spirit will paint for you the lily with whiteness and the rose with blushes. We can trust that Great Spirit through the infinite future. I am one of his ministering spirits to you. Grasp death with a smile when it comes, for we will meet you and lead you through the valley. I will meet you again soon.—MABEL.”

The meeting alluded to was no doubt that at Mr. Mumler's house to get the picture.

Mrs. Hardy then went into a trance, and Mabel was present in fine spirits. The first thing she said was—"How do you do, *Mr. Johnson*? I did not know that you was ashamed of your name. I was there when you gave them the name of Johnson."

I told her I did so because I hardly believed that Mr. Mumler could take *her* picture, though he might take my own.

"Oh you skeptic! Oh, you skeptic!" said she, and laughed at my lack of faith. At two different sittings Mrs. Hardy has seen the spirit of Mabel standing at my side, with her hand on my shoulder, dressed in a light striped dress, which was the last dress she wore on earth. Just before going to have our pictures taken, she asked—

"What dress shall I wear?—a white robe, or my light striped dress?"

I told her I should prefer the striped dress, as that would distinguish hers from other spirit pictures, but I did not care much for the dress if I saw the face of my friend there.

"You wish to see Mabel, don't you?"

"Yes, I wish to see my friend Mabel."

"Well, I shall wear my striped dress, and I shall stand by your side and put my hand on your shoulder, and I shall bring you many beautiful flowers. Now we will go for the pictures. Good-by."

I left and went directly to Mr. Mumler's house, arriving there before one. He said he had no one in, and would proceed with my sitting for the picture. I was seated in a chair in the centre of the back parlor, about ten feet from the instrument, which was placed near the window, to take in as much daylight as possible, as it was a cloudy day. The first time I sat about two or three minutes, when he took the plate and went out of the room to wash it. In a few moments he returned and said it was a failure, and that sometimes it required half a dozen trials before a picture could be secured.

The second trial was not much better, though he said he saw traces of something, but rather indefinite. I told him I had just conferred with my friend, and she said she would be there.

"Well, then, we must persevere," said Mr. M.

The next time I sat just five minutes by his watch, which he kept his eye on, with his back to me all the time, with his left hand on the instrument. He took the plate out as before, and Mrs. Mumler came into the room. She looked as if she was under spiritual influence. I asked her—"Do you see any spirits present?"

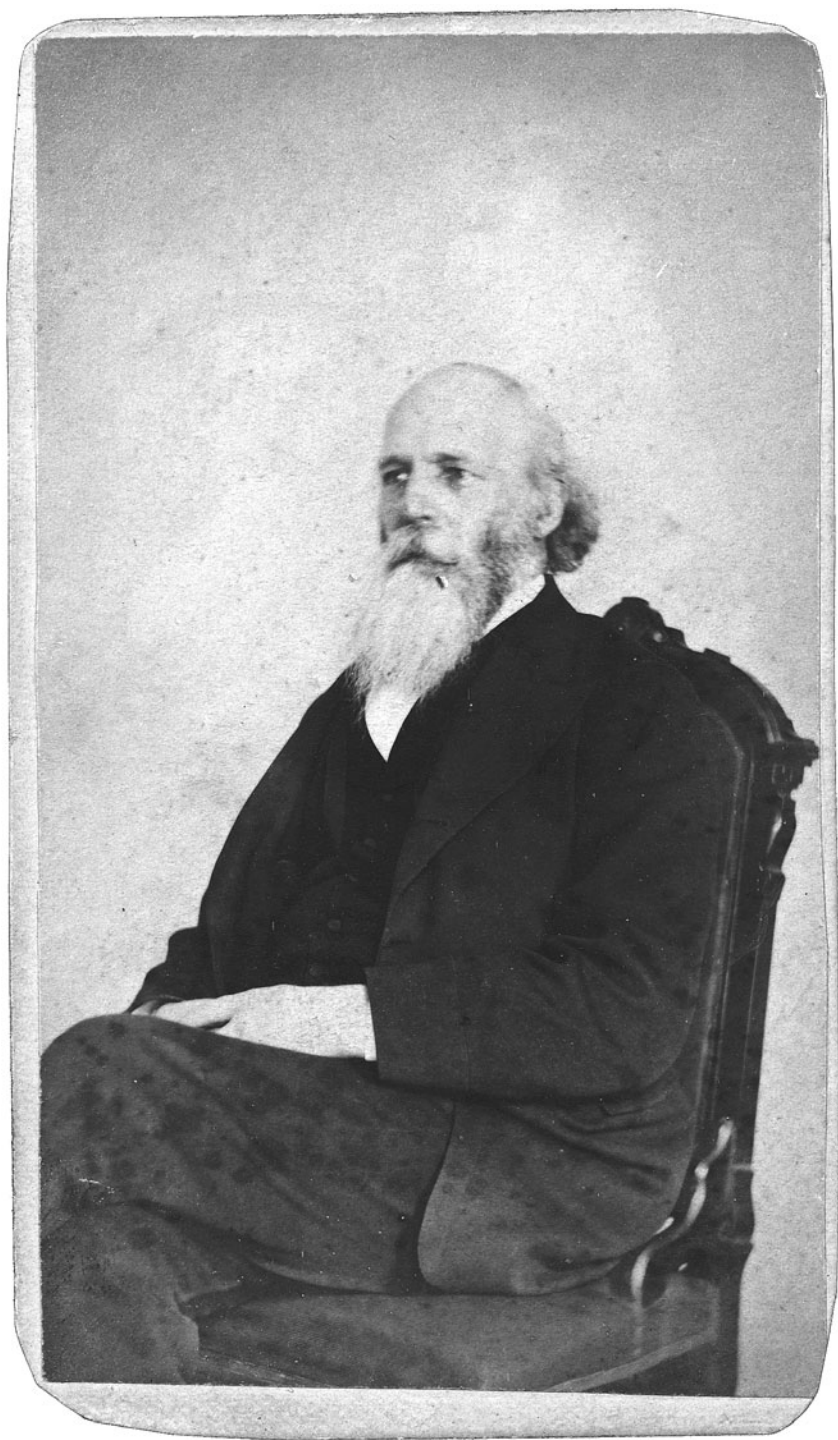


FIGURE 21. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Man with Barely Perceptible Spirit," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.21).

“Yes,” said she; “I see a beautiful spirit”; and immediately she was entranced, and under the control of Mabel, who said:

“Now I shall give you my picture; it will be here in a few moments. I shall have a wreath of lilies on my head, and a *dress that will not be positively striped, but the lights and shades will indicate stripes*. I put into it all the magnetism which I possessed.”

Mrs. Mumler then came to herself, and at the same moment Mr. Mumler entered with the plate.

“Have you got a picture now?” ask Mrs. M.

“Yes, I think I have,” said he.

I took the plate and looked at it, and saw on the glass my own picture distinctly given, and close to my side was that of a lady with a wreath of flowers around her head, as she had promised. Mr. Mumler said he would send me proof the next day. It did not come, however, till two days after. The picture was small, but by the aid of a microscope it was magnified to the natural size of the human face, and in that face I saw the *perfect* picture of my friend [Plate 2]. I was both surprised and delighted, and wrote to Mr. Mumler and told him I was *perfectly satisfied*, and gave him my true name.

The next time I met Mabel at Mrs. Hardy’s she said she wished I would get it enlarged while the conditions were favorable for doing so. I suppose if Mr. or Mrs. Mumler should die, the conditions would be changed, for I think the combination of magnetism is the source of the remarkable power which they have of taking this kind of pictures.

I have given here a simple and condensed account of my experience in spiritual manifestations. Should I write them out in detail, they would fill a large volume. I wish to say a word about spirit-pictures, and then I have done. It is often said that such pretensions are an imposition, *because* Mr. Mumler was prosecuted in New York for making them. It may do for rival photographers to denounce him, for it places him in a position which they cannot attain. But when the spirit of a friend, whom I have known for years, tells me that she will give me a picture of herself on a particular *day*, and at a particular *hour*, and tells what shall be the dress and decorations, what she will wear and what position she will take, and the picture is then taken and thus costumed, where is the *humbug*?

The picture presents me as sitting upright in a chair, with my legs crossed. My hands lie on my lap, with the fingers locked together. Mabel stands partially behind my right shoulder, dressed in a white, well-fitting robe. Her hair is combed back, and her head is encircled by a wreath of

white lilies. Her head inclines forward so as to lay her cheek on my right temple, from which my hair is always parted. Her right hand passes over my left arm, and clasps my hand. Her left hand is seen on my left shoulder, and between the thumb and forefinger of this hand is held an opening moss rosebud, the exact counterpart of the one that I placed there while she lay in the casket, at her funeral. Her head partially covers my forehead, showing that my picture was not taken on a previously prepared plate.

That picture contains in itself a volume of proof of the reality and reliability of spiritual manifestations. I have indubitable evidence that in *this* instance it is true; and if *this* is true, may not other similar pictures be *bona fide*? It also proves the truth of all that Mabel has told me in her communications, as she has sealed the document with her honest and truthful face.

It also proves the immortality of the soul of man, and that that immortality is a blissful one. It also negatives the idea of there being any misery for the soul after it has left this body of clay, in which alone are garnered all the seeds of temptation and sin. Freed from that body, it is a spirit-form, and is free to act itself; and that it will advance in brightness and glory during the endless ages of eternity.

The picture also assures me that we have our friends about us, watching over us at all times; and the influence of such thoughts is to warn us in the hours of temptation, and also to reconcile us to the trials of life, and open our hearts to deeds of charity.

PART FIVE

MRS. W.H. MUMLER,

my wife, is a natural clairvoyant for diagnosing and treating disease, and has been subject to this influence since her earliest recollection. It is probably hereditary with her, as her mother to-day is one of the best medical clairvoyants in this country.

After I commenced taking spirit-pictures, my wife began to give her attention more to treating disease *as a business*, where before she had simply done so for pleasure, or gratuitously to those who were suffering. A great many instances of wonderful cures which have been effected through her medium powers, could be given; but as that is only indirectly connected with the subject in hand, I must forego that pleasure. I cannot refrain, however, from speaking of her wonderful *magnetic powers*, as I believe them to be directly connected with spirit-photography, and that to

them I am largely indebted for my ability in taking the likenesses of those who have passed on; also for my first development.

Mrs. M. is a perfect battery in herself, and, on her placing her hands upon the head of a patient, the subtle current is felt distinctly coursing through every tissue of the body. I have seen men faint, under the peculiar reaction caused in their systems by imparting this wonderful, life-giving principle of *animal magnetism*.

In making an examination and while under influence, if the question was asked, "Who gave this diagnosis?" the reply would always be "*Benjamin Rush*." After I commenced to take spirit-pictures I made many sittings of my wife, with the desire of getting a picture of her control, but without success, there appearing instead friends, relatives, and sometimes strangers. I often inquired of the Doctor, when she was under control, why he did not show himself? The general reply was, "Don't be in a hurry, young man; you shall have my picture in good time." After repeated failures in trying to obtain the desired picture, I came to the conclusion that I could not control the inhabitants of the spirit-world and wisely decided to await their own good time.

It was not until about four years since that I succeeded in getting his picture. My wife was engaged at that time in making a medical examination of a lady in a room assigned for that purpose, a door of which opens directly into my parlor, where I take pictures. I stepped into the parlor for the purpose of getting a letter that I left on the table, and, knowing she was engaged, and seeing her door partially open, I was very quietly retiring from the apartment, when a voice from her room, which I instantly recognized as the Doctor's said, "Young man, if you will prepare a plate I think you may succeed in getting my picture." I thanked him, and replied that I would be ready in a moment. I cannot express at this time the joy which those words gave me. For nearly ten years I had been anxious for the consummation of this object. I had tried and tried in vain, but now the auspicious moment had arrived.

I well remember the inward hurry that I felt; it seemed as if it took twice as long as usual to coat the plate, and I could hardly wait for that important part of the experiment to be finished. At last the plate being coated, I placed it in my holder, and going into the parlor, arranged my background and camera, and then said: "Now, Doctor, I am ready." My wife immediately started, *while yet entranced*, and coming into the room where I was, seated herself in the chair placed there for that purpose. I then focused her, removed the ground glass, placed the plate in position and exposed it.

After sufficient time had elapsed, I covered up the tube, and said, "That will do, Doctor." Mrs. M. then went into her room, taking her usual seat, and continued the examination as though nothing had happened.

I went into my closet, and pouring on the developer, a distinct form of an elderly gentleman was seen standing behind her, with one hand resting upon her head, while from the other, which was extended in front of her, appeared rays of light that seemed to be passing from his hand to hers, which were folded in her lap. This the Doctor subsequently told me was *the magnetism* which was imparted to the patients through her organism. This picture of the Doctor is a most truthful one, as will readily be seen when compared (as it has been a number of times) with an oil painting that now hangs in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, *but in an entirely different position*. The oil painting above alluded to I have never seen myself, and only state what has been told me by gentlemen who have taken the trouble to compare the pictures; but as an evidence of the truthfulness of the likeness, I will say that an elderly lady, an entire stranger, called on me one day in relation to spirit-photographs, when her eye resting upon this picture, which I had enlarged, and which hangs on the wall of my parlor, she exclaimed, "Why, that is Dr. Rush." I asked her how she recognized it, when she replied that when she was a young girl about eighteen years of age, he acted as physician in her family. Looking up to the picture, with both hands clasped, she enthusiastically said: "I remember his dear, good, pleasant face as well as though it were but yesterday since I saw it."

MRS. J. H. CONANT,

medium for the Banner of Light. From the extended circulation of the Banner, there is probably not a Spiritualist in the world who is not familiar with the remarkable mediumship of this lady. She has for years devoted three days a week exclusively for the benefit of those spirits, of whatever nation or condition, who wish to return and send messages of love to those who yet remain in the earth-sphere. The answers to questions propounded by the audience, requiring oftentimes an extended knowledge of science of every kind, are remarkable for their directness, showing the great wisdom and intelligence of her spirit-guides; while the invocations that fall from her lips as she presides over the gatherings in the beautiful little hall in the Banner of Light Building, are replete with sentences of pathos and beauty. Mrs. Conant called on me one day for a sitting. Her visit was without any preengagement, and entirely unexpected. Having made the preliminary manipulations of coating a plate, &c., I placed Mrs. Conant in the usual position, facing nearly front. I was about removing

the cloth to expose the plate, when suddenly she started, and turning partially to the right, held out her hand. I asked her if she saw a spirit. She replied, "Yes." I told her to remain perfectly quiet, and then removed the cloth, exposing the plate the usual time.

On developing the negative there appeared the form of a young girl, bearing the features of a white person, but dressed in Indian costume, with feathers on her head, large rings in her ears, while encircling her neck was a chain, to which was attached a charm of crescent shape, which was shown to Mrs. Conant by "Vashti" (the spirit-girl,) a few evenings previous to her sitting for the picture [Figure 22].

Vashti first controlled Mrs. Conant in 1870, as the latter was slowly recovering from a severe illness. The circumstances attending Vashti's birth were as follows: A white woman, from Illinois, crossing the plains with an emigrant party, was taken prisoner by the Indians, and fell by lot to the share of "Big Buffalo," of the Piegan tribe, as his wife. The Indian wife of the chief failed to relish her new domestic partner, and used every means to exhibit her hatred. In time said squaw gave birth to a child, which, (in direct obedience to the law of pre-natal influence,) by reason of its mother's continued thought of her pale-faced rival during the gestative period, resembled a white child in a strongly-marked degree. The squaw mother detested it in consequence from the moment of its birth, called it "Vooshti," (the captive,) in derision of the prisoner woman, and endeavored to kill it on several occasions, but was prevented by the white woman, who took pity on the oppressed little one. "Vooshti," when about seven years of age, was, together with her father, "Big Buffalo," slain at the massacre of the Piegans on the Yellow Stone River by the troops of Gen. Sheridan, in December, 1869. Her name, "Vooshti," being difficult of pronunciation by white lips, became gradually modified to "Vashti" by those who attended Mrs. Conant's private séances, and by the latter name she is now known.

After taking the negative of "Vashti," I made another sitting, and was this time rewarded by a most beautiful picture. Three *materialized* hands and arms appeared, distributing flowers on and around Mrs. Conant, who seemed to be literally entwined with them [Plate 3]. I then made another sitting, and this time succeeded in getting an unmistakable likeness of her brother [Figure 11].

DAVID WILDER, ESQ.,

of Boston, Mass. This gentleman, who is well known in Boston, holding a position in the State Treasury Department, had a sitting with me some



FIGURE 22. William H. Mumler, "Fanny Conant with Vashti, a Spirit Girl," 1870–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.14).

twelve or thirteen years since, and received the likeness of a young lady that was fully recognized. Some three years since, while Mr. Wilder was conversing with Governor Andrew through a medium, he asked the Governor if he would show himself with him if he (Wilder) would sit with Mr. Mumler. The Governor said he would try. Mr. Wilder came directly to my studio, and the picture was taken, showing an excellent likeness of the late Governor Andrew, in a different position from any taken of him during life.

MR. A. BAKER,

of Boston, Mass., formerly of San Francisco, Cal., came to me a perfect stranger, and desired a sitting. On receiving his picture he recognized the likeness of this boy, about eight years of age (of whom there was no picture), who had passed to spirit-life some two years previous. To satisfy himself still further in regard to the likeness—thinking perhaps that others might not see it as he did—he determined to have removed by an artist all traces of its spiritual origin, preserving the face intact, but “painting” a jacket on his similar to one worn in life. After this was done he submitted it to some relatives without a word of explanation, when with one accord they exclaimed: “Why, where did you get that picture of Willie? I thought you had no picture of him?” Mr. Baker said: “Are you sure that is Willie?” “Why certainly,” they replied, “there is no mistaking it.” Mr. B then told them how he procured it, which, however, did not change their opinion concerning the likeness.

Mr. Baker wrote me that he showed it to Willie’s playmates without saying a word, when every one said at once, “That is Willie Baker.” He sent a picture to his school-mistress, with the request that she would show it to his schoolmates, and ask them who it was. She returned it with the statement that every one who knew him called his name at once, and she with the rest thought there was no mistaking the likeness.

The above is most satisfactory evidence, from the fact of there being no picture of the child in existence.

MR. WILLIAM A. DUNKLEE,

of Boston, in an article on “Unconscious Cerebration,” published in the *American Spiritualist* of September 8th, 1871, after relating other instances of spirit-photography, says: “On the 6th day of July, I went myself and sat to Mr. Mumler for a picture. In ten minutes from the time I sat down a negative was shown me of myself and a light form standing behind me. When printed and sent to me, I found it to be the one I desired mentally to be present, although out of the body thirty-six years, and no other likeness of her in existence.”

MR. SAMUEL CARTER

This gentleman, who is a well-known merchant of Boston, had a sitting with me, and received correct likenesses of his wife and two sons. The wife stands in a position which is at once beautiful and suggestive, being in the act of crowning him with a wreath of laurel. This picture, Mr. Carter assured me, was recognized by every one who knew her in life.

A very interesting picture was taken for

MR. JOSEPH JEFFERSON,

the well-known actor. Mr. Jefferson called at my house with a friend, in my absence, and made an engagement with my wife to have a picture taken the next day, giving the name of Johnson. Neither my wife nor self had ever seen Mr. Jefferson, except once, and that was on the stage in his famous character of "Rip Van Winkle." The next day, punctual to the hours appointed, in walked "Mr. Johnson," accompanied by two ladies. I asked the gentleman if he was Mr. Johnson, and was answered in the affirmative.

I then made a sitting for him, and succeeded in getting the form of a lady standing behind him with both arms clasped around his neck. He then asked me to take a picture of one of the ladies, which I did, and got the same form that appeared with him, only the face was turned slightly to one side. I then took my engagement-book and said, "Mr. Johnson, please give me your full address; there are a great many Johnsons, and, if you should send for more pictures, I might mistake some other negative for yours." "Well," he said, "my name is not Johnson. I was going to give your wife my right name, but my friend who was with me nudged my elbow, and I called it Johnson. My true name is Joseph Jefferson, and the lady you have made a sitting for is my daughter." He requested me to send the pictures to him, which I did, and heard nothing from him until about a year afterwards, when he came to my house to receive the pathetizing treatment of my wife for a disease of the brain. At this time he told me that the form that appeared on *both* pictures was a perfect likeness of his wife, and mother of the young lady who had the sitting. He said, (to quote his own words,) "When those pictures arrived, my wife's brother was in the house. I showed one to him, covering my picture entirely with my hand, and asked him who it was. He replied immediately, calling her by name."

MR. E. M. WINSLOW,

of Boston, a gentleman of wealth, had a sitting, and received the likeness of a brother and aunt, and over the head of the latter appears a crown of light, which Mr. W. says is a fitting emblem, as she was when in the form

a very spiritual woman. The likeness is both truthful and satisfactory—as evidence of which, Mr. W., at considerable expense, had the picture enlarged and handsomely framed.

SAMUEL HASTINGS,

of Boston. This gentleman, who at the time was communicating with a lady spirit friend, through a medium, asked if she would show herself with him if he would sit for a picture. She replied that she would. Accordingly Mr. Hastings had a sitting, when the spirit-form appeared, as promised, which was fully recognized.

COLONEL CUSHMAN,

of Chicago, Ill. This gentleman, who is well known in the locality in which he resides, received a very satisfactory test, the circumstances of which I will relate to the best of my recollection. The Colonel came to me an entire stranger, and desired a sitting. On examining the negative after development, the form of a lady was seen standing behind him, with both arms encircling his neck. Her hair was dressed in the old-fashioned manner, spread out widely on each side, and in the lap of the Colonel appeared a Quaker bonnet, also a lock of hair. The Colonel, on seeing this, took from his wallet a similar one to that shown on the negative, and said: "Mr. Mumler, this lady passed to spirit-life some twenty years since; she belonged to a Quaker family, and this is a lock of hair that was cut from her head" [Figure 23].

MR. HERBERT WILSON,

of Boston, Mass. This gentleman, an entire stranger, called on me to have his picture taken, not mentioning what he desired or expected. The form which appeared was that of a young lady holding an anchor of flowers. On examining the picture he fully recognized the form as that of a lady to whom he was once engaged to be married, and was very much pleased with the test. In a few weeks he returned to ask me if I had seen any name on the picture. I told him I had not, when he pointed out to me, in the cross-bar of the anchor, the name "Nellie S.," perfectly plain after having seen it, but scarcely perceptible before. Mr. Wilson informed me that this was correct [Figure 24].

Now here is a test (the truth of which can easily be ascertained by any person desirous to investigate it) that can hardly be accounted for on the ground of *mistaken identity*, for, even allowing *that* to be possible, there can be no "mistaken identity" in her correct name; and as they both appeared at the same time on the negative, and from the same source, is it not fair to suppose that the likeness is equally as correct as the name?

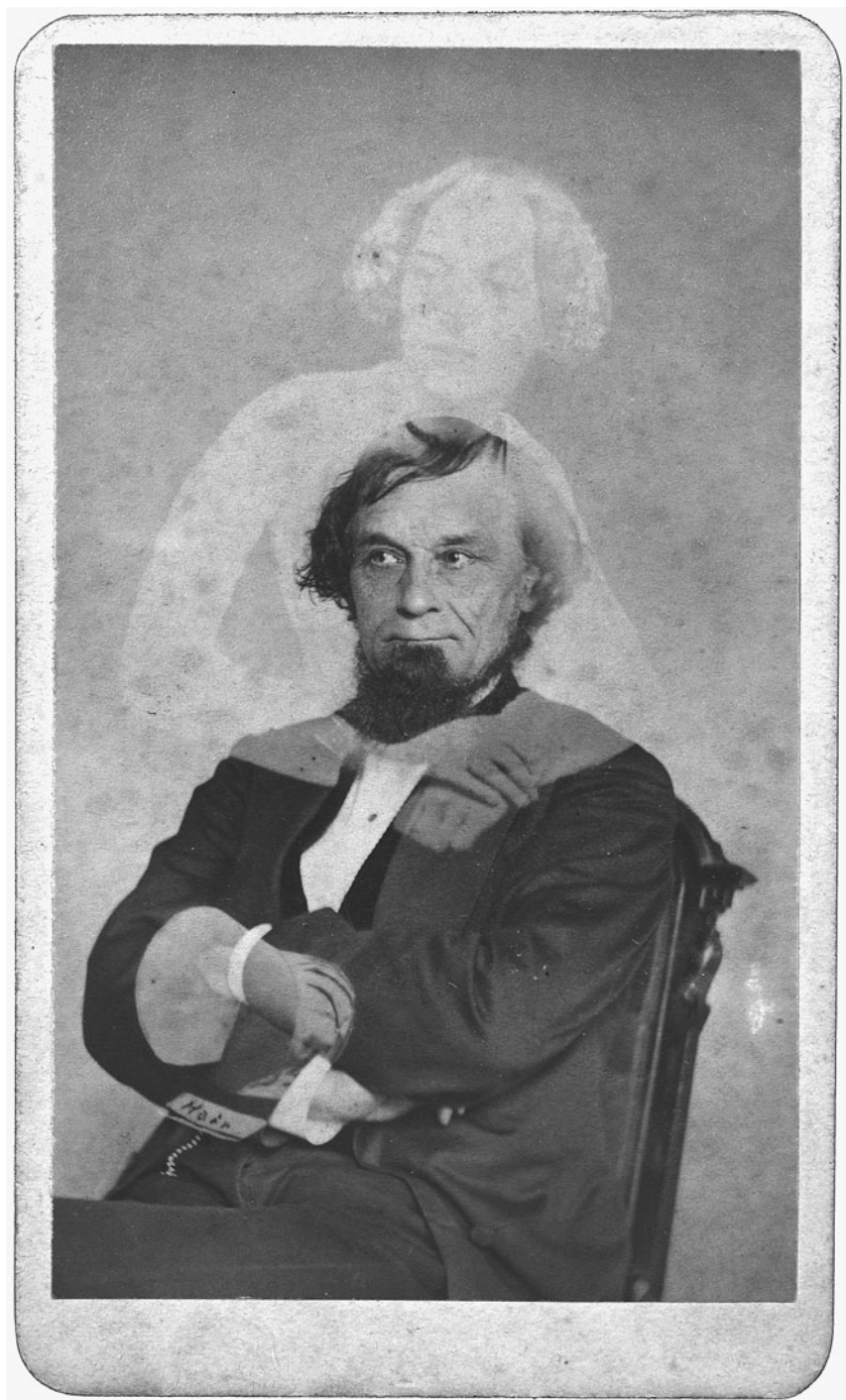


FIGURE 23. William H. Mumler, "Colonel Cushman with the Spirit of a Quaker Lady," 1870-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.5).



FIGURE 24. William H. Mumler, "Herbert Wilson with the Spirit of a Young Lady to Whom He Had Once Been Engaged," 1870-75. Courtesy of George Eastman House.

This is not the only instance that the name of a spirit has appeared in a similar manner.

Mrs. Cottrell, the late wife of

MR. JOHN COTTRELL,

of Boston, a gentleman well known in this city by those in the book trade, called on me for a sitting. I was entirely unacquainted with Mr. or Mrs. Cottrell before this, and consequently could not have known who they desired to get a picture of. On taking a picture for Mrs. C., a child appeared sitting in her lap, and in the lap of the child was a wreath of flowers, in the center of which was the name "Millie," that being the correct name of the child, which was fully and unmistakably recognized by the parents. Could it be possible that both parents were mistaken in the likeness of their child? If so, we will see what an expert in photography has to say in relation to it.

A few months since Mr. B. P. Shillaber, the poet, well known as the author of "Mrs. Partington's" droll sayings, made a friendly call on me, and in the course of conversation remarked that a few days previous he had visited Mr. Allen, the well-known photographer of this city, and in speaking of spirit-photography was surprised to hear him say that he believed in Mumler's pictures. "I asked him," said Mr. Shillaber, "what gave him the belief. He answered by saying, 'Mr. Mumler took a picture for a friend of mine, a Mrs. Cottrell. Now,' Mr. Allen continued, 'there was no picture in existence but the one I took of that child, and while the one Mr. Mumler took is identically the same face, yet it is an entirely different position from the one taken by me.'"

Here, then, is the unsolicited testimony of one of the best photographers of this city, in favor of the correct likeness of the child, which is valuable not only by his being an expert in photography, but doubly so from his intimate acquaintance with the child when in the form, and with the family.

Another very interesting picture is one taken for

MRS. H. B. SAWYER,

of Winona, Minn. This lady left her home in Minnesota to come to my studio for the purpose of fulfilling a compact made between herself and husband before he passed to spirit-life. Nothing was said to me in regard to this promise until after I had taken her picture. I sat her in the usual position, when she asked if I would allow her to sit as she pleased. I told her I had no objections, when she held up her arms as if in the act of holding something, and with her head bent a little forward, and looking down



FIGURE 25. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. H. B. Sawyer with the Spirits of Her Husband and Baby," 1870-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.23).

upon what she was apparently holding. I remarked that the position was a very uncouth one; to which she quickly responded, "No matter; take it so." I did as she requested, and on developing the negative, the form of a man was seen standing behind her, leaning forward, apparently in the act of placing a spirit-babe in her arms [Figure 25].

She remained in Boston until the pictures were finished, and on receiving them, instantly recognized them as her husband and babe. She then told me that her husband died of consumption; that about three months before he died he sent to me for specimens of my pictures, which, on receiving, he became intensely interested in, and calling her by name, said: "When I am gone, I wish you to go to Mr. Mumler's and sit for a picture, and *if possible* I will show myself, and place our spirit babe in your arms."

In a letter which I received from Mrs. Sawyer after her return to her home, she says: "My husband's picture is unmistakably recognized here by his friends and associates, and the dear little babe is unquestionably mine."

JOHN. J. GLOVER,

later of Quincy, Mass., had a picture taken, and received a truthful likeness of his aged mother, which is at once recognized, even by strangers, in comparing it with a picture taken of her while in the form, which was furnished me by Mr. Glover for that purpose [Plate 4].

PART SIX

CHARLES H. FOSTER

This celebrated test medium had a sitting with me, which is valuable as further proof of spirit-photography. Sometime in June, 1871, Mr. Foster came to my studio in great haste, saying, "Mr. Mumler, a spirit friend of mine has just written through my hand that if I could come here she would show herself with me, and I immediately started, leaving a whole room full of people. Can you take me now?" I replied that I could not, as a lady who was present at the time had just made an engagement for a sitting. The lady at once said, "Mr. Foster, you may have my time. I am in no hurry." Mr. F. thanked her very kindly, and took his seat in front of the back-ground. I immediately went into my closet and coated a plate, and when I returned I found him, as the old saying is, "on a broad grin." I asked what he was laughing at. He replied, "Oh, not much; only your camera has been dancing a jig." He had hardly finished speaking, when, sure enough, the camera commenced to dance again, keeping time with the raps, which were audible in any part of the room. I waited sometime

for it to stop, but in vain; I then requested the invisibles to cease manifesting in that way, saying that Mr. Foster was in a hurry, and my plate was getting dry; but the oscillation of the camera did not cease. Mr. F. then requested it to stop, but with no better success. At last, out of patience, he started to go, saying, "I did not think I was coming up here to be fooled by my spirit-friends," when the whole thing ceased. I asked him to take his seat again, which he did, and I took the negative. On developing it, a beautiful face of a lady appeared, with a wreath of flowers on her head. On looking at the negative, Mr. Foster clapped his hands and exclaimed, "That's her, my dear friend Adah Isaacs Menken" [Figure 26].

It is not an unusual thing to have physical manifestations at the time of taking pictures; indeed, the whole process, with the exception of coating and developing, is conducted by my guides entirely by raps that are audible in any part of the room.

As another instance I will mention the case of

DR. W. N. HAMBLETON,

of McConnelsville, Ohio, which was printed in the *Banner of Light* of August, 1871, but will bear repeating here:

A VISIT TO W.H. MUMLER.—Believing your motto to be, Mr. Editor, "Line upon line and precept upon precept," as relates to those demonstrable truths which underlie and enforce belief in the philosophy of Spiritualism; and having, during my recent visit to Boston, applied to W.H. Mumler, 170 West Springfield street, for a "spirit-photograph," I will, with your permission, present your readers with a brief statement of the result.

On reaching his residence, I stated to Mr. Mumler my desire to sit for a spirit-picture; and in due course of time he moved out from against the wall of the parlor in which we were, a light frame, supporting a white muslin screen; then wheeled out from the wall and adjusted his camera, remarking that he sat his customers thus in the parlor, lest any one might suppose he had negatives or reflectors concealed, to produce the desired result, as might be suspected by some if he had his fixtures permanently located in a room, after the manner of ordinary photographers.

I took a seat in front of the instrument, and immediately the screen at my side shook and rattled as if vigorously disturbed by a human hand; yet Mr. Mumler and myself were the only visible persons in the room. The plate was then exposed, and the picture taken exactly in the usual manner; yet it presented, standing at my back, with the left arm extending across and resting upon my breast, a very correct likeness of my father, who



FIGURE 26. William H. Mumler, "Charles H. Foster with the Spirit of Adah Isaacs Menken," 1871. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.9).

passed on to spirit-life twenty-six years ago, and of whom we had no form of picture. The countenance represented in the photograph has been recognized at sight by a number of his old acquaintances—among whom is the physician who attended my father in his last illness—as an excellent likeness of him.

Thus is added another of those incontrovertible evidences that our friends *can* return from the “other shore,” bringing us the knowledge of their heavenly home and of their undying sympathy for the children of mortality.

DR. W. N. HAMBLETON.

McConnelsville, O., August 28th, 1871.

BRONSON MURRAY,

of New York. In regard to this gentleman's picture, no stronger testimony can be offered than to reprint his own statement, which appeared in the *Banner of Light*, January 25th, 1873:

PHOTOGRAPHING A SPIRIT.—The latter part of September last, while Mrs. W. H. Mumler, of 170 West Springfield street, in your city, was under trance condition, treating for disease one of her patients, she suddenly stopped, and remarked to me that, when my photograph should be taken by Mr. Mumler, there would appear upon the plate with me the figure of an anxious wife, holding in her hand an anchor composed of flowers, who was seeking to impress her husband of her existence; that she had sought in vain for channel to reach him, but now believed, through me, she could do so. Mrs. Mumler added, “There will appear on the plate, visible only with the aid of a glass, the letters, ‘R. Bonner.’” I asked if it was Robert Bonner, and got no reply.

When I did proceed to sit for my picture I was, as never before, overcome by a trance, and resisted Mr. Mumler's efforts to place me in position. He could not induce me to sit up and use the iron rest. Therefore I was taken in the condition he will exhibit to you, and the female figure, with the anchor and the letters composed of flower-buds, appeared as promised; but I knew no person named “Bonner” who could be the one wanted [Plate 5].

Returning to the city, I mentioned the above facts to several. One lady said to me that she lately accidentally met a Mr. Bonner from Georgia, and wished a picture to show to him. Two weeks after, she sent for me to call at her house; and soon after a gentleman—a Mr. Robert Bonner—entered and said the picture was that of his wife. He had seen it in the



FIGURE 27. William H. Mumler, "Portrait of Ella Bonner," before 1870. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.2).

lady's possession, and the image was perfect. No one here disputes the perfection of the likeness. But this is not all.

On first seeing my photograph referred to, Mr. Bonner wrote a letter of inquiry to his wife, and, securing it against being opened, sent it by mail to Dr. Flint, in this city. Next day came back the letter, unopened, and with it a reply of seven pages. In it, Mrs. Bonner gives her name—Ella—and she says she did ask permission to appear on my plate, and did so appear. She says Mr. Bonner's brothers, William and Hamilton, are with her, and also his old friend, rough but good Sam Craig; that she will before long, write, through Dr. Flint, a letter to her little son, Hammie, of whom she said Mr. B. was taking good care; also, she begged him to go to Boston, to the spirit-artist, she would go with him, and appear on the plate with him, holding in one hand a wreath of flowers, on her head another wreath, and with one hand pointing upwards. I read this in her letter; and Mr. Bonner added, "To-morrow I go to Boston; and, reaching there, I shall give no clue to my name for any one." Four days later, Mr. B. made his appearance at my house. He had been to Boston, mentioned his name to no person, but had procured the promised photograph, with the promised "wife" upon it, all as stated.

Any inquirer can see these photographs at Mr. Mumler's in Boston, or by applying to me, in New York.

Here is an admirable combination of circumstances which vouch for the truth of spirit communion, and, at the same time, that both Mr. and Mrs. Mumler, of your city, and Dr. Flint, of this city, are the true prophets and mouth-pieces of the spirits. Mr. Bonner says that he, himself, is widely known in Georgia and Alabama.

Any person who knows me, knows I have nothing to gain or to ask for by presenting this statement to the public, and I vouch for its correctness. They who prefer to shut their eyes to what goes on in the world can hug to their hearts the cherished hope (?) that, after this life, come ignorance, or endless sleep, or roasting, or broiling, or what they will; but he who has the mind of a "little child," willing to learn, can learn in this day, as in the past, what the spirit-land says to earth-people.

BRONSON MURRAY.

238 West 52nd street, New York City, January 7th, 1873.

The following letter, from Robert Bonner, is a valued addendum to the above statement of Mr. Murray. Taken as a whole, it is one of the most complete and satisfactory evidences of immortality:

NEW YORK CITY, *January 12, 1875.*

MR. W. H. MUMLER—*Dear Sir:* Having learned that you intended publishing some truths connected with Spiritual Photography, I feel it is my duty as well as my pleasure to state to you the following facts:

On the 13th of October, 1872, I was in company with Mrs. Baker, of New York, who told me that she had a spiritual photograph of Raphael, and one of her daughters, who had passed away. I then remarked that I would give anything for my wife's spiritual photograph. Mrs. Baker invited me to call at her house, on 43rd street, and she would gladly show me these photographs. About ten days after, on a Sunday night, I called on Mrs. Baker. When I went into the parlor she told me she had my wife's photograph. I could not believe it. She then showed me a photograph of a stranger to me, and behind him stood my wife, as natural as life. I could not express my feelings of astonishment and pleasure. On the next day, October 14th, I went to my office, and there addressed a letter to my wife as if she was still living. I sealed it up tight, so that it could not be opened, and took the letter myself to Mr. R. W. Flint. The letter was returned by mail to my street and number, and never had been opened until I went up to Mr. Murray's house. There was no address on the envelope, and no person could tell to whom the letter was addressed. In this letter to my wife I wished to know on whose plate she had made her appearance, and asked her to tell me who was with her at this time in the spirit-world, and to write me a long letter and give me the all particulars. On the 16th day of October I received the enclosed letter from her. I then went up immediately to 238 West 52nd street, and found that Mr. Bronson Murray did live there, and all that my wife had written was truth. Mr. Murray told me all about the request of a spirit wishing to appear on his plate. I then went to Boston for the purpose of testing the truth of Spiritual Photography, and stopped at the Warwick House. I did not tell any person the object of my visit, and was a stranger in the city. I inquired the way to 170 West Springfield street, and went up to your house. I refused to tell who I was, or the object of my visit. In a short time Mrs. Mumler came into the room. I would not tell her my name, but had a letter of introduction to her, which I delivered after my photograph was taken. I only sat once for my picture, and my wife appeared on the plate just as she had written me in New York, which is a good likeness, and recognized by all of her relatives in Georgia and Alabama. I have a photograph of her taken in life, and the likeness is perfect.

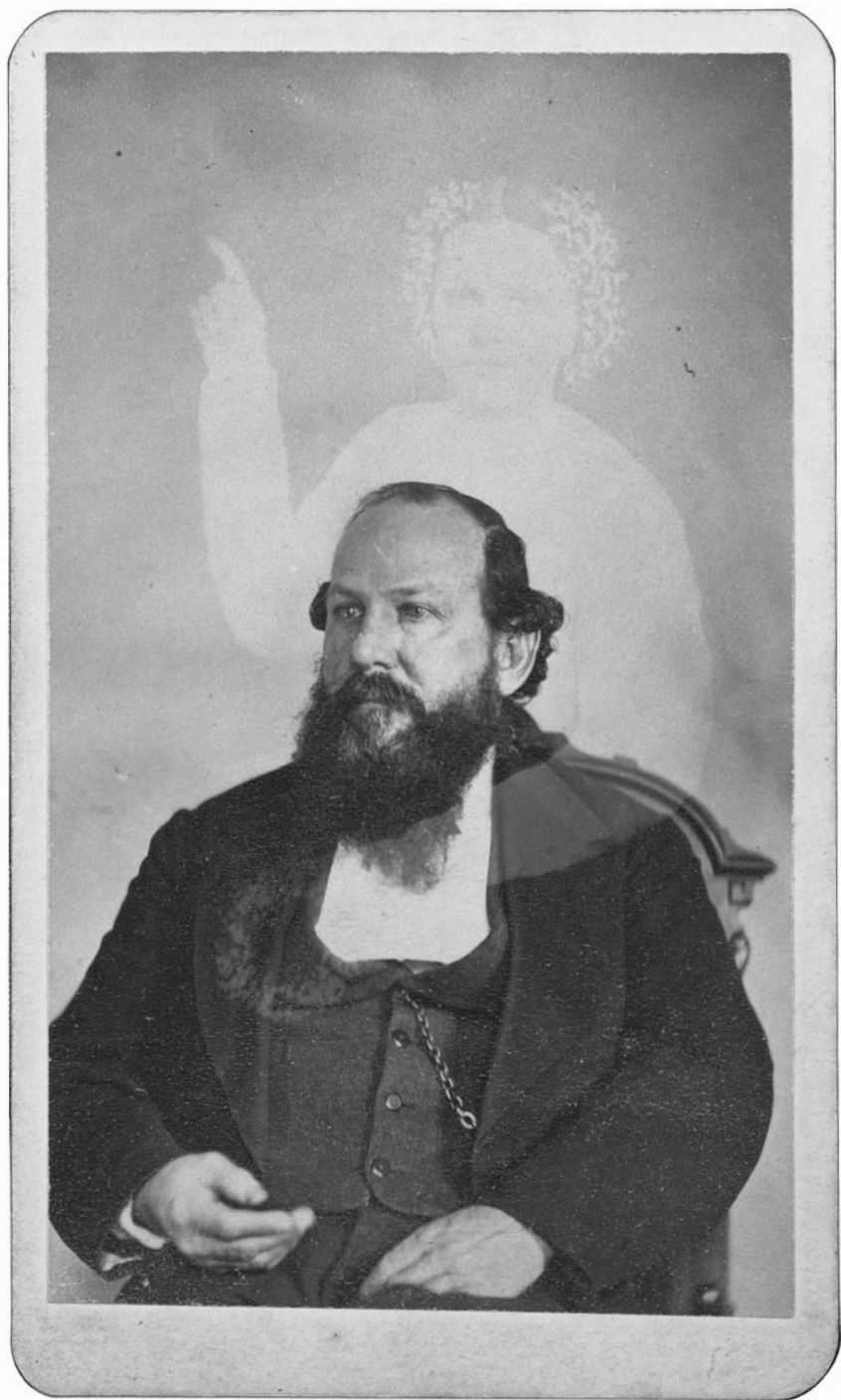


FIGURE 28. William H. Mumler, "Robert Bonner with the Spirit of His Wife Ella Bonner," 1872. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.1).

You are at liberty to publish this letter and the enclosed, which is a true copy of the original. My wife often appears to me, and my dear little children have sat in my lap and taken my watch out of my pocket and placed it in my hand. These are stubborn facts, and no mistake.

Your friend,
ROBERT BONNER, of *Georgia*.

A TRUE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL LETTER, DATED OCTOBER 16TH, 1872.

TO MY DEAR HUSBAND, ROBERT BONNER—*Darling One*: Ella, your own dear wife, again comes to you with a loving greeting. Yes, Robert, I come with a message of love. I am glad that you have again called for me, especially at this time, for, darling, I want to tell you about my picture. I made a request, through the medium's wife, *Mrs. Mumler*, to be allowed to show myself upon the photographic plate of a gentleman by the name of *Bronson Murray*, of your city, No. 238 West 52nd street. I did this, darling, in order to have it reach you. I often came to this channel to tell you of this, but could not well express what I so much desired to make known to you. Oh, my husband! do, do go to the spirit-artist *Mr. Mumler*, in Boston. I shall accompany you there, and show myself upon the plate with you; I will appear with flowers upon my head, a wreath in my hand, pointing upwards. The dear children will not have strength sufficient to materialize themselves so as to appear on the plate with us. Oh, husband! I have so many things to tell you and our darling little *Hammie!* You have been so good to him. I will soon dictate a message for him. Your dear brother, William Hamilton, and sister Sallie are now with me; they are very anxious to have a word with you. *Tom Craig*, your old friend—*he, too*, is present, and anxious to communicate; he desires to communicate when we are not present; he is rough, but good. Oh! how often our dear children speak of papa and dear little *Hammie!* How wishfully they look up to me and ask, When will *papa* and *Hammie* come?

Darling, with much love, I am, as ever, your own wife,

ELLA.

P.S.—For the present, good-by. Remember, darling, go and see the spirit-artist.

Your loving wife,
ELLA E. BONNER.

Many instances can be stated where the spirits themselves have given to their friends the first intimation that their photographs could be taken.

For example: about two years since, Mr. Heinemann, residing in Chester Park, this city, accompanied by Mr. H. Small, of Louisville, Ky., (both gentlemen of the Jewish persuasion,) called on me, Mr. Small desiring to have a sitting. His picture was accordingly taken, and he was successful in getting the true and unmistakable likeness of his mother. In relating the circumstances how his friend Small came to me for a picture, Mr. H. said his friend called on him, on his arrival in Boston the day before, and asked him "if he had ever heard of a photographer by the name of Mumler?" Mr. H. replied that he had. Mr. Small then said that his daughter had, for a number of months, at times been entranced, and many of his friends and relatives who had died had conversed with him; that just before leaving for Boston, his mother took possession of her and said, "When you go to Boston I want you to find a man by the name of Mumler. I wish you to sit with him for a picture, and I will show myself with you." Mr. Small said that he had never heard of such a thing being done, and placed but little confidence in it, deeming it an impossibility, and was greatly surprised when assured by Mr. Heinemann that such was the fact. Mr. H. said that when his friend received his pictures he was overcome with joy, and wept at seeing the well-remembered features of his mother.

MR. F. VOGL,

of Boston, a gentleman well known among furniture dealers in this city, and who is strongly mediumistic, had a number of interesting pictures taken. On expressing a desire to Mr. Vogl that I would like his experience in spirit-photography, he very kindly sent me the following statement:

Early in the spring of 1872 I called one day at my friend W.B. Lord's store in Utica, N.Y. A gentleman was just making the remark, "Spiritualism is all a delusion and a humbug!" I looked at him and saw his positive nature, so I walked up to him and said, "Do you know me, sir?" He answered, "No." I sat down in front of him and asked, "Has this gentleman any spirit-friends present?" ANSWER: "Yes." How many? "Two." My hand was at that time controlled without my volition. I described an old lady very minutely, who said she was the gentleman's mother. The next spirit was a little boy, who gave his name, through the alphabet, as Leon. He gave his age minutely, and day of death down to the hour of the day. After obtaining this information, I said to the gentleman, "Sir, your mother and your little son have control. You may ask them *mental* questions if you like." The gentleman was afraid of mind reading, and wrote his questions out and passed the paper to Mr. Lord who asked me mental questions,

and obtained correct answers. When I closed the sitting I asked the gentleman, "Is all this true and correct?" He answered, "I don't know how it is done; you are a perfect stranger to me, and I am a stranger in Utica, but the statements are the literal truth." We took this gentleman with us to a circle held at a private family that evening, apologized for not introducing him, and held our little circle. Annie M—, only developed the night before as a writing medium, whilst entranced, wrote the following communication:

"Papa, when Mr. Vogl goes to Boston let him visit Mumler's, and I will give him a picture of myself."

The gentleman then asked the following question:

Leon, where did you first communicate with me?

ANSWER—At Lord's store.

QUESTION—How?

ANSWER—Through Mr. Vogl's hand; afterwards at the table.

I agreed to the proposal with little Leon, but in course of time forgot all about it.

A long time afterwards Mr. Lord came to see me in Boston, and one afternoon we called at Mumler's. Mr. and Mrs. Mumler and Mr. Lord sat opposite to me, when a spirit touched me on the shoulder. Not recognizing the touch I called to the alphabet, and got "Leon." I simply said, "Mr. Lord, here is the little boy for his picture!"

Agreeably to appointment we met next morning at Mumler's to sit for our pictures. It was June 25th, 1872. Mr. Lord sat first. As the curtain fell over the camera I said, "This is your little niece, Mr. Lord, and a very good picture." And so it proved when the plate was developed. Mr. Lord sat again, and as the curtain dropped I said, "Mr. Lord, this is your father; it is a good picture, and he had given us a Masonic surprise"; and so it proved. The picture shows the spirit holding a Master Mason's apron, with the emblems of the craft on it, over his son; also shows the peculiar manner in which the spirit used to braid his hair on top of his head. Mr. Mumler knows nothing of Masonry. Mr. L.B. Lord, the spirit, was a very enthusiastic member of the Masonic fraternity; his son, W.B. Lord, of Utica, is a Past Master in the Order. The writer, F. Vogl, of Boston, is a Master Mason. We therefore had peculiarly favorable conditions—a Masonic Triune. This is the only picture ever taken by Mr. Mumler with Masonic emblems. My next sitting resulted in a picture of my mother holding an anchor of flowers over me. Mr. Lord subsequently obtained some nice communications at Mansfield's in New York, about this Masonic picture.

I sent the pictures of the little boy to his father in Albany, and some days afterwards received the following report from a gentleman who called on me. Mr. Worlock, the father of little Leon, had not informed his wife of his experiences in Utica at all, but on receiving the pictures, handed them to his wife, asking, "Do you know this gentleman?" his wife, the mother of little Leon, looked at the picture and answered, "No; but here is my little Leon," and burst into tears.

The testimony in regard to this picture is very conclusive and valuable. First, the introduction of the spirit-child to the skeptical father; the promise of the picture through an entranced writing medium, an entire stranger to the father; the promise realized after a long time; and the full recognition of the spirit-child by the mother. I have never met the father but that one time in Utica; I have never seen the mother of the child; I never knew the child in earth-life.

The witnesses in the above narrative are: W.B. Lord, Utica, N.Y.; W.W. Worlock, 10 Myrtle avenue, Albany, N.Y.; F. Vogl, 729 Tremont street, Boston.

F. VOGL

While pursuing his legitimate vocation Mr. Vogl finds time to dispense his spiritual food to the hungry "without money and without price."

In corroboration of Mr. Vogl, and in reply to a desire to have Mr. Lord's statement, I will quote from a letter received from that gentleman, dated Utica, N.Y., January 17th, 1875 wherein he says:

Before knowing you I had some experience with a Mr. Nolan, of Waterville, N.Y., and, not getting one out of thirty pictures that I recognized, I became very skeptical, and desired, as a proof, the likeness of my father, who was a very peculiar looking man. His hair was white, although he was but forty-seven years of age when he passed away, and he wore it braided in a cue. No picture of any description was ever taken of him when in the form. My father was an enthusiastic Mason, and desired that I should join the Order when of age, which I did. When I visited your studio, in company with Mr. Vogl, and sat for a picture, you will recollect that, before you removed the cloth to expose the plate my father said, through Vogl, "I shall give you a surprise on the picture." You were very much astonished when you showed me the negative, and so was I, for there I saw my father, with his hair braided on top of his head, as he wore it in life, and holding in front of me the Masonic apron with the emblems on it.

After having my picture taken, I visited a Mrs. Cates, a well-known medium in Boston, when my father controlled the medium and said: "My son, thank God, 'from whom all blessings flow,' that I was enabled to come and give you what I did; and, as the All-Seeing Eye beholds all men, we, as brethren, should meet on the *level* and part on the *square*. This was the lesson that was intended to be conveyed in the surprise."

The above was an excellent test, for any Mason knows that it would be impossible for a woman, without some knowledge other than her own, to use such expressions.

After leaving Boston I went to New York, and called on Mr. Mansfield immediately on my arrival, as my father had promised, through Mrs. Cates, that he would communicate further through him. Mr. Mansfield, being controlled, wrote: "Well, my dear son, according to promise, I am with you: came along with you from your visit to Boston. I am thankful you made that visit. You have that which, after a while, *you will consider a treasure*. I did the best I could to condense the elements about you and the medium, to give you even more than you received; but I am satisfied with what I was enabled to give, and that you recognized me. Your father, LYMAN B. LORD."

I think (taking the above as a whole) it constitutes such a test that no reasonable man can ask for more. I am known, in my business relations, from Maine to California, and also as a firm defender of spirit-photography, for I know whereof I speak, and dare maintain it.

Yours in the cause of truth,

W.B. LORD.

MR. WILLIAM TINKHAM,

of Lowell, Mass. This gentleman called on me some three or four years since, and left his picture, to copy. The result of the experiment was a truthful likeness of his first wife, recognized not only by himself, but by all of her relatives and friends who beheld it [Plate 6]. This was almost his first experience in Spiritualism, which to him was so satisfactory that he began to investigate further. In time he not only became convinced, but by being often with mediums, became developed as one himself, and was controlled by an Indian spirit. Mr. Tinkham passed to spirit-life about two years since. A few days before his decease he called Mrs. Tinkham, (his second wife, now residing in Charlestown District,) to his bedside, and said: "When I am gone I wish you to go to Mr. Mumler's and sit for a picture; my guide tells me that we shall both show ourselves with you."

Mrs. T. promised to do as he desired, and accordingly a short time after his death called on me for a sitting. The picture was taken, and on the card appeared the unmistakable features of Mr. Tinkham and his Indian guide.

About two years ago an elderly lady and daughter called on me for a sitting. The picture was taken, and on receiving it the lady instantly recognized her husband, Mr. Peak, a well-known undertaker of this city.

MR. D. H. HALE,

of Roseclare, Ill., had a picture taken, and received a likeness of his sister and daughter.

A number of pictures have been taken for Mr. Thomas Ranny, of Newton, all of which are recognized.

MR. J. T. CLEVELAND,

of Texas, son of Father Cleveland, who passed away a short time since, in this city at the extreme age of nearly one hundred years, had a number of sittings with me, and had satisfactory results, each picture being fully recognized.

A DAUGHTER OF MR. C. D. PRATT,

97 Bedford street, Boston, had a picture taken which proved a remarkable test.

CAPT. BROWN,

of New London, Conn., has had a number of pictures taken, all of which he recognizes.

JOHN NESMITH,

of Charlestown District, received on a picture with himself the unmistakable likeness of his wife.

MR. J. H. SMITH,

of Springfield, Mass., had a picture taken, and recognized the likeness of his mother.

N. B. CLOUDMAN,

of Boston. About five years since I took a picture for this gentleman, and succeeded in getting a likeness of his wife. In a note to me under date of January 12th, 1875, he said:

It matters not how many may claim to be deceived by spirit photographs, I am very certain that the picture you produced for *myself* nearly five years ago is a correct likeness of the "one departed," and has always been recognized at once by all, even by our most *skeptical* friends. And as at that time you were an entire stranger to me, it makes the test more convincing.

Yours for Truth and Progress,

N. B. CLOUDMAN.

MR. J. F. SNIPES,

editor and critic, New York Phonographic Society, not long since induced a friend to send his picture to me as an experiment. At the time appointed I took the negative, but was delayed in printing and finishing the pictures, which is often the case, as that portion of the business is done by outside parties. Not hearing anything from me, he very naturally concluded he had been deceived, and so stated in a letter. The pictures were sent as soon as finished, and I subsequently received a note of acknowledgment, acquainting me with the fact of recognition. The following is a statement forwarded me by Mr. Snipes concerning the case:

W. H. MUMLER, ESQ.—*Dear Sir:* Permit me, as one of the many, to say I have weighed you in the balances of a fair trial, and found you weighty with astonishing truth. A few weeks since I induced a friend, Colonel C—, of this city (formerly commander of a regiment in the army, a man of mind, and strong prejudices), to experiment for a spirit-picture. Appointing a day and hour for mental concentration, and not hearing from you for some time, we both concluded you were a fraud. After further waiting he received the result—a full sized female figure in white raiment, standing beside his photograph on the card. He came to me, exclaiming: “That man is no humbug!” I said, “Do you recognize that picture?” “Of course I do—*that is my sister!*”

This was sufficient for him—presuming he knew his own sister—but to fully satisfy myself we visited a lady friend, a good Methodist consciously, and a good medium unconsciously, for further development. Without stating our object, and after much natural timidity, she consented to entrancement, when the Colonel had the pleasure of speaking at once with his spirit sister, who gave him the names of the members of his family with her in spirit-life, the manner of her own death, and declared that the picture was hers. Thus encouraged I sent you my *carte de visite*, also, and am well satisfied with the result.

J. F. SNIPES.

Box 4928, New York, January 18th, 1875.

HERN HUGO LEIBING, ESQ.,

No. 65 Grassbeeren street, Berlin, Prussia, left his home last summer to visit this country. On his arrival in London he received news that his son had accidentally shot himself in the hand, but as nothing serious was anticipated he continued his journey. On his landing in New York he

received news of his son's death. Such sad intelligence he had not expected, and the shock was very great.

Having had some experience in Spiritualism, he naturally sought for consolation from that source. He called on Andrew Jackson Davis, and seeing my pictures on exhibition obtained my address, and started for Boston, determined to have a picture taken. On making known his desire I made a trial, and succeeded in getting the likeness of a young man some sixteen or seventeen years of age, which Mr. Leibing recognized instantly as a truthful picture of his son. Who can describe the joy that filled this father's heart when he discovered that his son *was not dead?* that in passing through the change he had become more closely allied! He felt that the gloom that surrounded him had been dissipated, and looked forward with pleasure to the time when they should meet on "the evergreen shore."

HON. HENRY WILSON,

Vice President of the United States, had a number of sittings with me. On one of the negatives appeared two forms; one of them seemed to be bending over him, and holding in front of him the representation of a parchment, on which characters in writing were plainly to be seen. Mr. Wilson accompanied me through the process, and when this negative was developed he immediately took it in his hand, and, holding it up to the light, said: "I recognize the writing."

Some of the words are partially lost by coming across a portion of his apparel, but the sentence has been deciphered to read:

"HENRY,

Defend all rights,

Resist all wrongs.

CHARLES SUMNER."

One of the faces appearing on this negative is unmistakably that of President Lincoln, while the other bears a strong resemblance to the late Charles Sumner, but is not so good a likeness of him as the one I previously took with

WILLIAM LLOYD GARRISON.

In this picture the likeness is unmistakable, and the broken shackles which he holds in his hand are characteristic of him [Figure 29].

PART SEVEN

SPIRIT-PHOTOGRAPHY SCIENTIFICALLY CONSIDERED.

I have a great many more evidences I might offer, of pictures taken for ministers, judges, doctors, lawyers, and people of all grades of society, but

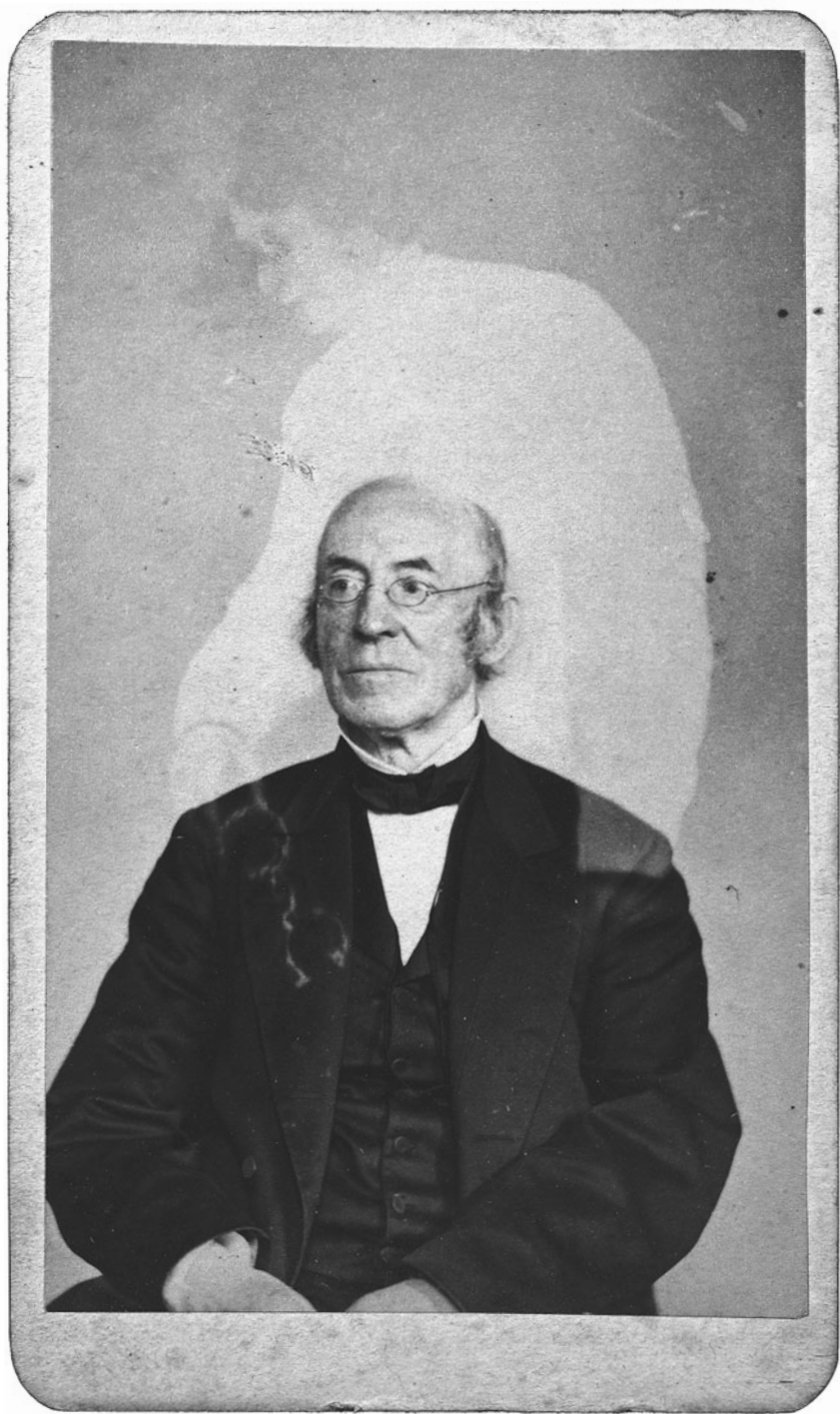


FIGURE 29. William H. Mumler, "William Lloyd Garrison with the Spirit of Charles Sumner and Broken Shackles," 1870-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.28).

will not draw this account to any greater length, preferring to close with a few remarks upon the above theme:

One of the most frequently repeated arguments brought against the possibility of spirit-photography is the assumption that what the eye cannot see cannot be photographed. A few months since an article was printed in the *Scientific American* concerning the discovery that quinine, dissolved in water, when painted or written upon white paper, was *invisible*, but a negative being taken of this paper, the painting or writing would appear *black*, or nearly so. Among other things it was stated that this was probably the way that spirit-photographs were taken—the spirit-form being painted upon the background, was invisible to the sitter, but was readily seen upon the negative. Now, although it would be impossible to produce a picture in this manner and have the form represented behind, with arms or hands extended in front of the sitter, as is the case with many of my pictures, yet this statement in the *Scientific American* conveys a fact that proves beyond a doubt the fallacy of the statement that nothing can be photographed except what is visible to the human eye.

Again: Prof. C.F. Varley, of London, the celebrated electrician, says (see *Eclectic*, June, 1871, p. 765) he was making experiments by passing a current of electricity through a vacuum tube, the results of which were indicated by strong or faint touches of light about the poles: “in one instance, although the experiment was carried on in a dark room, the light was so feeble that it could not be seen, and the operators doubted if the current were passing. But at the same time photography was at work, and in thirty minutes a very good picture was produced of what had taken place. This is a remarkable fact—indeed, it borders on the wonderful, that a phenomenon *invisible* to the human eye should have been, so to speak, seen by the photographic lens, and a record thereof kept by chemical agency. It is highly suggestive, and we may anticipate that it will be turned to good account by practical philosophers.”

At the time of my trial in New York City the editor of the *British Journal of Photography*, writing on that subject, said: “*Apropos* of the Mumler spirit-photographs a good many absurd things have been said, *pro* and *con.*, on the subject. But a writer in the latter category, who asserts that anything that is visible to the eye of the camera, and thus capable of being depicted by photography, must therefore necessarily be visible to the human eye, is surely ignorant of that important branch of physics popularly known as fluorescence. Many things are capable of being photographed which to the physical eye are utterly invisible. Why, for the matter

of that, a room may be full of the ultra-violet rays of the spectrum, and a photograph may be taken of that 'dark light.' Objects in a room so lighted would be plainly visible to the lens of the camera; at any rate, they could be reproduced on the sensitive plate, while at the same time not an atom of luminousness could be perceived in the room by any person possessing ordinary human vision.

"Hence the photographing of an invisible image, whether that image be of a spirit or a lump of matter, is not scientifically impossible. If it reflect only the florescent or ultra-violet rays of the spectrum, it will be easily photographed, although it will be quite invisible even to the sharpest eyes."

Here then is an article from high authority in photography, that not only completely answers the argument against the possibility of spirit-photography on the ground above stated, but at the same time suggests the very means by which spirits may be able to be photographed, viz.: by reflecting the ultra-violet rays.

The question might be asked, how can they reflect these rays? As I am yet in the material form, I cannot positively give the "*modus operandi*," but believe they are enabled to attract from certain organisms elements that are capable of reflecting these dark rays of light. I believe that it is necessary for spirits to reflect these rays of light, in order to be seen by the medium. My wife has often seen and described spirits perfectly before being photographed, as in Mr. Dow's case; witness also the case of Alvin Adams, Esq., which I have before stated, where the medium saw and described the spirit; also that of Mrs. Conant, where she saw "Vashti." And but a few weeks since I took a picture of Mrs. Ireland, a Boston medium, who saw a little boy (her step-son, in spirit-life) sitting in her lap. I told her to put her arm around him, which she did, and the picture itself is evidence that she saw the form.

What is electricity? We know it is a force; it passes silently and invisibly over the wire and performs its work; therefore we know it exists. But can this same electricity be made visible? Yes, by employing *a medium*, in the shape of a vacuum tube, when by connecting it with the battery, a stream of invisible electricity is made visible to the human eye, in its natural condition. Mediums stand in the same relation to spirits as vacuum tubes do to electricity: they supply the necessary elements by which spirits are enabled to be seen; whether those elements be aura, magnetism, or anything else, they are in my belief, essential to all spiritual manifestations. Mediums are persons of that peculiar organization that exude these

elements, when in the proper conditions, unconsciously to themselves; but when these conditions are disturbed—that is, when the medium is ill, or harassed by any exciting influence—this exudation ceases; hence oftentimes the failure of receiving manifestations. This is an important fact, and one but little understood, even by Spiritualists. It is often the case that persons going to investigate spirit manifestations will, first of all, insult the medium by making some remark of a character that leaves said medium to infer that he or she is suspected of being a knave, thus at once breaking the very conditions necessary to the gaining of the manifestations desired.

It is a favorite argument that “If you are innocent the accusation will not disturb you”; but I deny this when applied to mediums, who, being constantly brought in to contact with skeptics, (who, as the name implies, are doubtful in regard to the truthfulness of the manifestations,) are continually under suspicion. If a man occupying a position of trust, knowing in his own soul that he is strictly honest, is suspect or accused of dishonesty, it will not disturb him much, for he knows that an investigation will exonerate him; but let this same man be under constant surveillance, suspicion and accusation, and how long will he continue to occupy his position?

These facts are important to investigators. Harmony is one of the first principles of all spiritual manifestations. It is the conducting wire through which our spirit-friends are enabled to transmit their messages of love. Cut this wire, and the circuit is broken. I do not wish to prevent investigations from using every means consistent with the necessary conditions to prevent deception, but I object to this idea of first calling a man a deceiver, and then trying to prove his honesty.

The necessity of right conditions is another matter which is much ridiculed and ignored by some of these unreasoning skeptics. They do not seem to realize that conditions are necessary for the successful accomplishment of the simplest things in this material life. The fine and delicate hair-spring is one of the necessary conditions for the successful running of the watch; all chemists are aware of the nice conditions necessary to the successful accomplishment of analytical experiments; the yellow light, or the dark closet, are the conditions necessary to photography. Suppose for a moment that some ignoramus should say to the photographer, “I don’t believe it necessary for you to go into that dark closet to prepare your plate. I believe you are preparing some deceptive arrangement! Come out here in daylight, under the broad canopy of heaven, where you will be above suspicion, and perform your work! Then I will believe it!” The

photographer would necessarily reply: "That is an impossibility; the closet is the necessary condition in taking a picture." Then if material things require conditions for their successful accomplishment, how much more delicate must necessarily be the conditions in order to obtain true spiritual manifestations.

I have, in the course of the narrative which now reaches its conclusion, endeavored to state as succinctly as possible the salient points of my experience as an instrument in the hands of the dwellers in the invisible world, and have also reverted briefly to such light as Science throws upon the particular phase of phenomena for whose presentation I have been developed. The truth of that which I have herein stated will be cheerfully testified to by many living witnesses, to whom, in closing, I would respectfully refer the inquiring reader for further particulars.

W.H. MUMLER

**ELBRIDGE T. GERRY, THE MUMLER “SPIRIT”
PHOTOGRAPH CASE (1869)**

The Mumler “Spirit” Photograph Case—
Argument of Mr. Elbridge T. Gerry,
Of counsel for the People

Before Justice Dowling, on the Preliminary
Examination of Wm. H. Mumler, charged
with obtaining money by pretended
“spirit” photographs.

May 3rd, 1869
Reported by Andrew Devine

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Argument

MR. GERRY *said*:—

May it please the Court, I have listened with great pleasure to the remarks of the learned counsel for the defence (JOHN. D. TOWNSEND, ESQ.). If legal acuteness and professional ability alone, would suffice to extricate this client from the consequences of his crime, they certainly have not been spared in the presentment of his cause; but while I am compelled to admire the subtlety of the argument, I shall endeavor to expose its fallacies.

I should, however, do great injustice to my own feelings, as well as to those of my learned associate, if, before presenting the case in behalf of the People, I omitted to express my gratification at the latitude which your Honor has allowed in its investigation. Whatever may be the result of this protracted hearing, neither the prisoner nor the public can complain that a fair and impartial hearing has not been allowed him. Whether he be released, or be held here to await the action of the grand jury, no one can in truth or justice say that the charges and defence have not been fully investigated. And in these degenerate days, when public opinion is too often invoked to influence or censure the conduct of a magistrate in the discharge of his duty to the Bench, it is gratifying for the People to know that there is at least one judicial officer whose integrity is above reproach, and whose ability in the investigation of truth is equaled only by his patience in hearing all that can be urged in the cause of justice and right. I will not wrong my learned adversary, who has conducted this case for the defence with his usual skill, by supposing for one moment that he does not heartily concur with me in the view just expressed. It is but a naked truth, certainly not imputable to adulation; but yet one, the proper application of which to the cause at bar can be best judged by those who know and feel its force.

This is no private prosecution. One of the gentlemen connected with a public journal of this city—well called the *World*, from the universality of its topics—had his attention called to these so-called "spirit" photographs. Satisfied that a huge swindle was being perpetuated, he brought the matter to the attention of the chief magistrate of this city,¹ who at once directed his right-hand man, his Chief Marshal, Mr. Tooker, to investigate it personally; and he did so. I insist, therefore, that any assertion that private malice instigated these charges, is wholly without foundation. I was not surprised at the silly remarks of the prisoner in his statement; but I

certainly was at the criticisms of my learned friend upon the personal appearance of Marshal Tooker and his standing in court, for they were uncalled for as they were pointless. As to the attack upon the Mayor, his character is too well known to require any apology for his course in the matter, and I can only regret that circumstances have deprived the People of his personal conduct of this investigation.



FIGURE 30. Anonymous, “Elbridge Thomas Gerry (1837–1927),” 1875. Courtesy of New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

The prisoner at the bar, William H. Mumler, stands charged by the People (in substance) with the commission of three distinct offenses; two of the grade of *felony*, and one of *misdemeanor*.

First. Upon the complaint of Joseph H. Tooker, with having in the month of March, 1869 (with the collusion and assistance of one William Guay), designedly and by *false pretences* defrauded and cheated him out of, and obtained from him the sum of ten dollars, lawful money of the United States of America.²

Second. Upon the further complaint of Joseph H. Tooker (with a concurrent complaint of P.V. Hickey), with having designedly, and with intent to defraud, obtained from said Tooker the sum of ten dollars, by means of gross frauds and cheats which were practiced by the prisoner habitually *upon the public* for the purpose of obtaining, and with the result of obtaining, sums of money from many credulous persons; and that the prisoner was therefore indictable as a cheat at common law, within the meaning of the statute.³

Third. Upon the complaint of Joseph H. Tooker (with concurrent complaints of P.V. Hickey and Oscar G. Mason) with stealing, taking, and carrying away by trick or device the sum aforesaid from said Tooker, and other similar sums from other persons. This brings within the statute of *larceny*.⁴

Now this case early assumed a phase which, if carefully considered, will materially assist in removing any doubt of existence of sufficient probable cause to warrant the holding of the prisoner to await the action of the grand jury upon each and all of these charges.

The facts upon which the charge of *false pretences* is based are in substance:

First. A statement made by the prisoner, "that he was a spiritual medium; that he produced spirit likenesses; that no other person could take such wonderful pictures; that the pictures were not the result of a trick or deception"; coupled with the exhibition of a picture with a faint outline of another form than that of the sitter, and a further assertion by the prisoner, "that he (Tooker) would come to recognize the face as that of some relative or friend."

Second. A previous payment of two dollars by Tooker on the strength of a previous similar statement made by one Guay, who acted as agent for the prisoner; and a subsequent payment by him of eight dollars on the strength of the prisoner's statement, and on the furnishing of certain photographs purporting to be of spirit forms, and on receiving a printed book

containing an additional statement by the prisoner, over his signature, and designed to further induce a belief that the indistinct form on the picture was not produced by mechanical or natural means.

Third. A discovery by Tooker, after parting with this money, that the photographs *were* ordinary photographs, and that all the forms on them *were* produced by mechanical means.

These facts, coupled with the further statements made on oath by the complainants, to the effect that the prisoner was in the common habit of deceiving the *public* by these means, and of extorting money from the credulous by what was in reality only a gross fraud and cheat, amply sustain the complaint as for a *common law cheat*, as I shall presently show. And then, in addition to these facts, it being further stated that the parting with the money was not intentional, in the absence of the subsequent production of a photograph of a spirit by supernatural means, it follows that the taking of money in advance, and retaining it, without giving in return the article it was paid to obtain, was a *larceny of money by trick and device*; because the intention of the owner was to part with the money only on receiving a certain article, and if that article was not produced, he did not design to part with his money at all.

Now, when the People rested their case in chief, the defence seem to have considered that probable cause had been shown to exist. No motion to discharge on the evidence as it stood, was made, but evidence was at once adduced for the prisoner. And then the prisoner took the remarkable position—always a last resort in a desperate case—that the charges made against him were ostensibly true, that he did obtain money by these so-called "spirit" photographs, but that they were not the result of mechanical artifices or means. Admitting the pretences, admitting the receipt of the money upon the credit of the pretences, and admitting that the pretences were made for the purpose of obtaining the money, he traversed the falsity of the pretences. In other words, he asserts that these so-called spirit forms are produced by means wholly beyond his control, for which he cannot account, and that those means are unknown, and not human. And then, by way of logical sequence, he insists as his learned counsel has insisted in his argument, that he is not to be punished, because he has *not* used deceit, or mechanism, or sleight of hand, to produce these so-called spirit pictures.

Now, the Law does not deal with the supernatural, nor recognize it as an element in its dealing with facts. It never attributes to unusual causes, results which may be accounted for by the employment of ordinary means

to produce them. And hence, when, as here, an averment is made of the existence of things, knowledge of which cannot be had by means of the exercise of the physical senses, the party making the averment must prove it as made. The *onus*, in other words, rests on him who asserts that unnatural means did produce a natural result. This is the ordinary common law rule applied daily in cases of common occurrence—where, for instance, in actions against common carriers for negligence, the *act of God* is pleaded as a defence. To sustain any such defence, the party averring it must prove that an influence or occurrence in nature, beyond the possibility of human influence or control, produced the result in question; and further, that no portion of the result was or could be attributable to human or physical causes or means. The Court of Appeals, in a recent case,⁵ thus drew the distinction:

“By the act of God is meant something which operates without any aid or interference of man. When the loss is occasioned by, or is the result in any degree of *human* aid or interference, the case does not fall within the exception.”

I call your Honor’s attention to the able opinion of Judge Wright in that case, showing the distinction between the act of God and what is known as “inevitable accident.”

In all these cases, therefore, where the act of God is pleaded, the party relying on that fact as a defence, must prove it, because the law presumes its non-existence, and hence it is a matter of affirmative defence. This rule is not confined to civil cases. Equally wise and stringent is the provision of the criminal law, that the law presumes a man charged with the commission of an offense to be sane until the contrary be proven. This is on the principle that “general sanity is the natural and ordinary condition of the mind, and is to be presumed until the contrary is established,” a principle which has long been settled in this State by the Court of last resort. It was decided as far back as the case of *Gardner v. Gardner*,⁶ and reiterated in the case of *The People v. Robinson*,⁷ and in *Sellick’s* case.⁸ The case of *The People v. McCann*⁹ which seemingly held the contrary doctrine was subsequently overruled in the cases of *Ferris v. The People*,¹⁰ and of *Walters v. The People*.¹¹ And so in numerous reported cases, as where a man laboring under a hallucination hears voices ordering him to commit murder, or sees forms pointing him to the commission of crime—any defence based on the assertion that those forms or voices were real, would be held untenable in law, for the reason that the law does not recognize the possibility of any superior or spiritual influences to justify what it declares to be a felony. So

that, for instance, if Mumler to-day were to commit a murder, and were to assert, as a defence, that for a long time past he had been urged by spirits to commit it, and that he believed that a spirit hand held the dagger and guided it as he plunged it into the victim, that would constitute no defence whatever. The only available ground of defence in such a case is, that the moral sense of the prisoner was so paralyzed at the time of the act, by the existence of morbid physical or mental influences, over which he had no control, that he could not have been, and, in fact, was not aware of the heinous nature of the act committed.¹²

Look now, in this light, at the evidence offered by the prisoner. I insist that it not only fails to sustain the attempted defence, but furnishes ample proof of probable cause, if any more be needed, to warrant his commitment on each and all of the charges.

We need have no uncertainty as to the defence intended to be proved in this case, for the prisoner has stood all along in the position which he voluntarily assumed at the outset. He has put in here a written paper, stating specifically what he means to rely on:

- I. That there is no trick, fraud or deception in what are called spirit pictures by the accused.
- II. That in order to produced those pictures, nothing more is done or used by him than by ordinary photographers in producing their pictures, than mere resting his hand on the camera.
- III. That the spirit pictures coming or abstaining from coming is in no respect subject to his control or volition.
- IV. That the process of taking them has been again and again carefully scrutinized and watched in its every step by men of intelligence and by those skilled in the art of photography, whereby it has been ascertained beyond doubt that there is no deception or fraud about it.
- V. That there has been produced on the same plate with the picture of a living person, the picture or ghost-like image of persons who have died, which have been recognized as likenesses of such persons by those who knew them in life.
- VI. That this has been done in cases where there was no likeness or picture in existence of such deceased person, and whom the operator had never seen or heard of.
- VII. That it is now some twelve or fourteen years since these spirit pictures were first heard of in this country; that within the last four or five years the taking of these pictures has been publicly heard of and

known in Boston, and there frequently investigated with the utmost care and scrutiny, and that simultaneously with their production in New York they have been produced in Paris, and in Poughkeepsie, and Waterville and Buffalo in this State.

- VIII. That in the various attempts to imitate these pictures, and which some photographers claim are the same thing, there are essential points of difference, plainly to be discovered by the practical or the discerning eye, and which distinguish the genuine from the false, and which cannot be produced by the imitator.
- IX. That the accused does not know and never has pretended to know by what power or process, other than that of producing an ordinary photograph, these spirit pictures are produced. That he has often solicited and obtained the closest scrutiny by men more capable than himself of understanding the process, and he is now at all times ready and willing to have this work scrutinized and watched in the most critical manner. And to that end he invites an investigation by a delegation of the most expert and experienced photographers in town, and pledges himself to afford the fullest opportunity therefor.
- X. That there are a great many intelligent men and women, who, after a careful investigation, are firm believers that the pictures are truly likenesses of the spirits of the departed, and that he and such believers are of opinion that the taking of these pictures is a new feature in photography, yet in its infancy, surely but gradually and slowly progressing to greater perfection in the future, requiring for such perfection time and a scientific knowledge of the power that is operating.

And now the question is, how has this defence been sustained? Their first witness was William P. Slee, the celebrated Poughkeepsie witness, who watched the camera during Mumler's operations, and who believes in spirits—especially, as he says, *ardent* spirits. He only looked into the camera, and he observed that Mumler kept his hand on it while the process was going on, and that he put the cloth over his head before he put the slide in with the plate. This witness believes it was supernatural, simply because he did not see or know how it was done! He proved exhibits Nos. 1 to 9 for the People, two of which are photographs taken for Tooker and Hickey by Mumler, as appears by the printed statement on the back of them, and he admits they can all be done by mechanical means.



FIGURE 31. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Female Spirit with Photograph on Table," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.33).

Their next witness is Wm. Guay, a partner in the swindle, and as I shall presently insist, a principal in the felony. He took the money from Tooker. He is a disciple of Andrew Jackson Davis, and believes in this theology "up to the hub." He was authorized by the prisoner to receive the money, and he proves that a great many persons called to have their photographs taken with these "spirit" forms, and paid their money for that purpose. It seems that Mumler did not trust *him* with the knowledge of the trick. Guay himself admits that the ghost might have been produced by means within the camera; but contradicts himself on the cross-examination, and says that he is not certain about it because he has never tried it. And yet he told Tooker it was his belief that those pictures were produced by spiritual agency. He connects Mrs. Mumler with the swindle by showing that she was always present on these occasions; and he states specifically what his own part in the swindle was—he was allotted by Mumler "to stay on the second floor to carry on the business on systematic rules and principles generally."

Now observe, that this witness has a pecuniary interest in testifying as he did, because he has not yet received his share of the plunder, or profits, whichever you choose to call them. He is liable to be, and, as I shall insist, ought to be, held for the felony, as well as Mumler; and I shall dismiss him here with the remark, that his testimony tends to sustain the propriety of the old rule of law which excluded the testimony of a witness who was shown to have a pecuniary interest in the case.

But the next witness for the defence is one of a very different character. A gentleman who has adorned the Bench, ever kind and obliging to his juniors at the Bar, and who is, perhaps, second to no one in the city of New York as an able jurist, certainly not surpassed by any as a criminal lawyer—Hon. John W. Edmonds.

I shall consider his testimony on the subject of spirits, in connection with that of Mr. Paul Bremond, hereafter. He went to this gallery of Mumler's on a preconcerted notice. He knew nothing of photography, and as he was already a believer in spiritualism, it is fair to presume that he did not require very strong proof to insure his belief that Mumler's spirit forms were supernatural. Yet even now, your Honor will observe, that, cautious lawyer as he is, he does not commit himself, for he says: "I do not say that they (the spirit forms so-called) are produced by supernatural means." He never examined the photographic process at all, and does not pretend that he did. He paid ten dollars for the first and five dollars for the second sitting, and went away satisfied. When called upon, he came here upon the stand as a witness for the defence, and gave his

testimony fairly and impartially. I do not suppose that any one for a moment doubts that he really believes, that what he stated here about the appearance of a spirit to him in the court room, did actually appear.

Then comes a photographer, Wm. Gurney. He knew but little about the matter. He saw Mumler have his hand on the camera but could not discover the trick; and although a photographer for twenty-eight years, he could not have known much about the processes of taking ghosts artificially, for he says it is not possible to produce such an object unless it be outside the instrument.

Next comes a strange anomaly, a detective reporter, Mr. Snodgrass—or more correctly, James R. Gilmore, *alias* "Edmund Kirke." He calls on the prisoner, sees his accomplice Guay, and notifies him in advance what he is about. He is a sharp, shrewd man, not a believer in spirits, and is even now satisfied that there is a "nigger in the fence" somewhere, although he does not know exactly where to put his hand upon him. But his mistake in this case was in giving Mumler warning of what he was going to do; and in this he reminds me of the immortal Snodgrass, who, says Dickens, "in a truly Christian spirit, and in order that he might take no one unawares, announced in a very loud tone that he was going to begin, and proceeded to take off his coat with the utmost deliberation." Like Mr. Snodgrass on that occasion, this witness was "immediately surrounded and secured," and the result was that he sat twice, but the pictures were not distinct. It is evident that Mumler was disconcerted on that occasion. The witness next tried Rockwood, who produced similar "ghosts" in different ways; and he finally came to the conclusion that although not exactly a "spiritual" process, there was certainly something remarkable about it—an opinion in which undoubtedly we all concur.

Next, by way of variety, comes Elmer Terry, the intelligent oyster dealer of Bleecker St., who "shelled out" five dollars to Mumler for six pictures. He went there expressly to get a picture of the spirit of a deceased friend. He paid his money in advance on the statement that he would be furnished with such a picture, and he paid afterward when he thought he had it. He recognized the "spirit" of a four year old boy who died twenty years ago, and he recognized the picture of Miss Frances Catlin, whose portrait he had seen only four days before this photograph was taken.

Then comes his friend Jacob Kingsland, who recognized the likeness of Miss Catlin, but could not speak positively of the children. Now I ask, where is Miss Catlin's picture? The defence say the People should have produced it, but I insist that *they* should have produced it. *Their* witness

said it was in the possession of his friend, and could be had at a moment's notice. Why then did *they* not show it to your Honor, in order that you might determine by examination and comparison whether in fact the likeness was real or not? And it is to be noted that this is a piece of *comparative* testimony, because the impression of Miss Catlin's features was kept alive in the witness' mind by his having her portrait ready at hand to refresh his memory whenever occasion should prompt.

Then comes Mr. Paul Bremond; a sensitive, courteous old gentleman, although occasionally betrayed into a little vivacity of temper, when provoked by sarcasms or doubts as to his spiritual faith. He is shrewd and sharp enough to invest \$250,000 in Texas railroads, and to make money by the operation; although he concedes he was not invited to do so by "spiritual" suggestions. But he labors under a hallucination as to sounds. He is a firm believer in "spirits," and was so fifteen years ago, when he used to hear the voices. He kindly expressed his pity for my incredulity, and of course he recognized the "ghosts" that Mumler photographed as likenesses of the departed. He particularly recognized "Elizabeth Trapp," and thus fell into the *trap* that was laid for him, and swallowed Mumler whole, "yellow-covered book" and all.

Following up this shrewd investor in Texas railroads, comes a railway contractor, David A. Hopkins, who paid his money and watched the prisoner. He went there to get a "spirit" photograph, and identified one of the "ghosts" as that of a lady deceased, whose portrait a Mr. Stallman has. Why is not that portrait produced?

William W. Silver is the next witness. He is a believer in the supernatural. He says that Mumler closed the slide on every occasion when a spirit appeared. He is the gentleman who sold out to Mumler his entire stock, included his stock of old glasses, and he naturally watched Mumler's process without detecting the trick. No doubt he would like to be received as a partner, like Guay.

Then comes Mrs. Luthera C. Reeves, a credulous old lady, who went with her nephew, Mr. Welling, and the result was a "spirit" which she identified as her son, *by the length of his ears!* If the departed son could only speak, I have no doubt he would have exclaimed, with Mercutio, "I will bite *thee* by the ear for that jest." She made a curious blunder about the spirit of the child with the spinal disease, which "went against the stomach" of the sitter; and the best of the joke is—if such a fraud can be regarded as a joke—that what she thought a *boy*, any person in the possession of his ordinary senses would pronounce to be a *girl!* But the

reason of her mistake is obvious. What, with the raps she heard and the "spirits" she saw, she undoubtedly became converted, and cheerfully paid her five without a murmur.

Next we have an artistic view of the case. Samuel R. Fanshawe says he went there and saw Mrs. Mumler, and, like Gilmore, announced in advance that he was a skeptic. He was anxious to exchange pictures with Mumler—to pay him in works of art instead of money. After having notified them in advance that he meant to find out the trick (it is needless to add that he did not), his credulity led him to recognize the ghosts of his mother and son, although they were so indistinct that it was almost impossible to recognize any shade at all.

Then follows Mr. William F. Kidney, a photographer from up the North River, who certainly will never set it on fire, if he does not study more than he has done about light and heat. A man who does not know what a prism is, is certainly more of an expert of ignorance than of photography. Why he did not even know the color of sunlight, but had a general idea that it was "red"—which is certainly more than he could say for himself.

Mr. Charles F. Livermore adds another name to the list of the credulous. It took him five sittings to get what he wanted, and he finally succeeded in getting a floral ghost without a spiritual smell. He recognized it as his wife's picture, an accurate portrait of whom he has before him every day in his room. Even he says he does not yet believe in photographing spirits; but, Polonius-like, he sees in the cloud either a whale, or any other shape that the adroit operator claims that it assumes. Three different pictures are produced by him here in evidence, and a comparison will satisfy any person that the three "spirit-forms" are not of the identical person. They are taken in different positions, and even the most powerful microscope will not detect the likeness—showing the credulity of a mind prepared to believe.

The closing witness for the defence is Mrs. Ann F. Ingalls, who recognized in the photograph her mother, son, and brother, all of whom died years ago. She went there, she says, to get a "spirit" photograph, and she certainly got more "spirits" for her money than her fellow-victims.

Now what does all this prove? Why, first that the trick was so cleverly done that not even photographers could discover *how* it was done. Second, that very many persons of ordinary intellect, competent to conduct the every-day business of life, went to the prisoner, paid their money, received these "spirit" photographs, fancied they recognized likenesses of



FIGURE 32. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Woman Seated with Barely Perceptible Spirit," ca. 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.27).



FIGURE 33. William H. Mumler, "Charles Livermore with the Spirit of His Wife," *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869, cover. Wood engraving after spirit photograph.

their departed friends, and therefore believed the prisoner's statement. Your Honor will note that in cases where persons went there avowing skepticism and their intention to investigate the matter, they had, in nearly every case, to sit more than once; and the inference is that they grew more careless every time they watched the performance. Those who went prepared to believe, of course did believe on very slight proof. And that is all this evidence of the defence proves. It proves *the existence of a belief* in the prisoner's statements, not *the truth* of those statements. There is no positive proof whatever of any spiritual agency, only evidence that certain persons *believe* it exists. Just as well might my friend undertake to prove that the tricks of Heller, Anderson, Blitz, or Hart, are the work of supernatural agency; because they are the fools who believe them to be so, for the reason that they cannot discover how they are done.

Man is naturally both credulous and superstitious, and in all ages of the world imposters and cheats have taken advantage of this credulous and superstitious nature to impose upon their fellows less sharp in intellect than themselves. Hence it is no wonder, that a man who puts forth such claims and pretenses as the prisoner does in this yellow book (Exhibit No. 10), should find a sufficient number of credulous dupes to make the imposture profitable. Hear what he says:

"My object in placing this little pamphlet before the public, is to give to those who have not heard a few of the incidents and investigations on the advent of this new and beautiful phase of *spiritual manifestations*. It is now some eight years since I commenced to take these remarkable pictures, and thousands, embracing as they do scientific men, photographers, judges, lawyers, doctors, ministers, and in fact all grades of society, can bear testimony to the truthful likeness of their spirit friends they have received through my mediumistic power. What joy to the troubled heart! What balm to the aching breast! What peace and comfort to the weary soul! to know that our friends who have passed away can return and give us unmistakable evidence of a life hereafter—that they are with us, and seize with avidity every opportunity to make themselves known; but alas, in many instances, that old door of sectarianism has closed against them, and prevents their entering once more the portals of their loved ones and be identified. But, thank God, the old door is fast going to decay; it begins to squeak on its rusty and time-worn hinges; its panels are penetrated by the worm holes of many ages, through which the bright, effulgent rays of the spiritual sun begin to shine, and in a short time it will totter and

tumble to the earth. Boston has been the field of my labors most of the time since I commenced taking these wonderful pictures, where I have been visited by people from all parts of the Union; but at the earnest solicitation of many friends, I have concluded to make a tour through the principal cities of the United States, that all may avail themselves of this opportunity to obtain a likeness of their loved ones. I am often asked, “are there no other mediums for this phase of spiritual manifestations?” I answer, there are a number now, in the United States and Europe, that are taking them with more or less success, and there are hundreds of photographers who have taken what I call an approximation to the spirit form. If they will but look carefully at some of their cards or negatives, they will see a semi-indefinite form. To those who find these forms on their negatives, no matter how vague or indistinct, let me assure you that you are capable of becoming a medium for this beautiful manifestation, if you will but give the proper time and attention to your own development. Let me entreat you to persevere, throw aside all skepticism, sit as often as you can with some good medium for development, and I hope the time is not far distant when I shall have hundreds of co-workers in this beautiful *Spirit* Photography.

Yours, truly,
WM. H. MUMLER.”

Now what is this modern *Spiritualism*, which is here relied on in support of these pretended miracles? The truths of the Christian religion, as asserted in the Bible, have always been acknowledged by the people of this Nation. That religion is the basis of all human law, and constitutes the vital essence of our legal system. It was for this reason that in our own State, in *The People v. Ruggles*,¹³ the court held, that blasphemy against God, and contumelious reproach and profane ridicule of Christ or the Holy Scriptures, were offenses punishable at the common law in this State as public offences. And CHANCELLOR (then Chief Justice) KENT there said “that to revile the religion professed by almost the whole community is an abuse of the right of religious opinion and free discussion secured by the Constitution; and that the Constitution does not secure the same regard to the religion of Mahomet or of the Grand Lama as to that of our Savior, for the plain reason that we are a Christian people, and the morality of the country is deeply engrafted upon Christianity.” This same view was reiterated by a unanimous court in *Lindenmuller v. The People*,¹⁴ where Judge Allen said:

"It would be strange that a People, Christian in doctrine and worship, many of whom, or whose forefathers, had sought these shores for the privilege of worshipping God in simplicity and purity of faith, and who regarded religion as the basis of their civil liberty and the foundation of their rights, should, in their zeal to secure to all the freedom of conscience which they valued so highly, solemnly repudiate and put beyond the pale of the law the religion which was dear to them as life, and dethrone the God who, they openly and avowedly professed to believe, had been their protector and guide as a People. Unless they were hypocrites, which will hardly be charged, they would not have dared, even if their consciences would have suffered them, to do so. . . . It was conceded in the convention of 1821 that the court in *People v. Ruggles* did decide that the Christian religion was the law of the land, in the sense that it was preferred over all other religions, and entitled to the recognition and protection of the temporal courts by the common law of the State; and the decision was commented on with severity by those who regarded it as a violation of the freedom of conscience and equality among religionists secured by the Constitution.¹⁵ Mr. Root proposed an amendment to obviate that decision, alleged by him to be against the letter and the spirit of the Constitution, to the effect that the judiciary should not declare any particular religion to be the law of the land. The decision was vindicated as a just exponent of the Constitution and the relation of the Christian religion to the State; and the amendment was opposed by Chancellor Kent, Daniel D. Tompkins, Colonel Young, Mr. Van Buren, Rufus King, and Chief Justice Spencer, and rejected by a large majority, and the former provisions retained, *with the judicial construction in People v. Ruggles fully recognized.*"

Now this theory of Spiritualism, when carefully examined, is only an old form of infidelity in a new dress. Its idea of Deity is old heathen pantheism—the doctrine that God is absorbed in Nature, and that the Universe and God are identical. It is directly antagonistic to the Christian religion. Let me say here that I do not wish to misrepresent or misconstrue the doctrines of Spiritualism, and that I rely for the accuracy of my statements upon a volume which purports to be written and published by Andrew Jackson Davis, the teacher of this "improvement" on Christianity, and which is entitled, *The Present Age and Inner Life; Ancient and Modern Spiritual Mysteries classified and explained*. The publishers, in the preface, say: "We take pleasure in offering this volume as a compend of the harmonial philosophy of spiritualism. . . . Of all the author's

works this is, without doubt, the most complete, being most thoroughly devoted to a consideration and elucidation of the facts and principles of spiritualism.”

This Spiritualism consists, first of all, in a denial of the authenticity of the Holy Scriptures. On page 74 of his book, Mr. Davis says: “I am fully impressed with the historic fact, well known to the ecclesiastical antiquary, that the present books of the Bible were brought together under very suspicious circumstances.” And he goes on to say: “All this throws a mantle of doubt over the alleged verity of the supernatural accounts of the Bible.”

But I am not going to waste time upon this. Professor Greenleaf, before he went to his eternal rest, after having produced the treatise on *Evidence* which made him a standard author in our jurisprudence, left a rich legacy to the world in his work on the *Testimony of the Four Evangelists*, in which he shows conclusively that the authenticity of the Scriptures can be proven beyond a doubt by the application of the ordinary rules of evidence which obtain every day in our courts of common law.

Spiritualism, again, denies the faith of Christ crucified, and the efficacy of the Atonement, for under its system there is no need of a Redeemer. This is clearly proven on page 60 of this infamous book (*Spiritual Mysteries Unveiled*), and again on page 31, where the author says: “It is also said that the Testaments contain all the wisdom, all the light necessary for man. But time, bringing with it the combined and conspiring testimony of departed and retiring generations, has demonstrated this assertion to be a fallacy.”

He then goes on to sneer at the “moral perceptions,” to which, he says, the Savior directed his teachings.

Spiritualism also denies the doctrine of a general resurrection and of a final judgment to come.¹⁶ After denying the Divinity of Him who is the Resurrection and the Life, this naturally follows. It asserts that the resurrection takes place at the instant of his death; thus fulfilling the words of St. Paul, of those who say that “the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some.”¹⁷

And what does Spiritualism offer its votaries by way of a Heaven—what substitute for that beatific hereafter which the Christian sees with the eye of faith? Why a “summer land”—a land of spiritual trees and spiritual brooks, and ghostly sunshine, and ghostly shade, a nice sort of a place for spiritual pic-nics! I have not the slightest doubt that if the accident which happened to Hull, when he forgot accidentally to wipe out a photograph of High Bridge before he again used the plate, had occurred to Mumler,

he would have found persons credulous enough to believe and swear that it was a spiritual photograph of the "Summer Land." Mahomet peopled his Paradise with *houris*, for the reason that those he wished to convert were *men*; and the Mahometan Paradise never was an attractive place for women, because there were too many of their own sex there. But Spiritualism seeks to convert women as well as men, and therefore it puts forth this idea of a beautiful "Summer Land,"—formed according to the idea of the great seer, Mr. Davis, by a sort of *quasi* perspiration of the earth and the other different worlds in the universe, and a conglomeration of the atoms thus thrown off!¹⁸

Our law interferes with and constrains no man in the exercise of his religious belief; but it does restrain men of every opinion and creed from acts which interfere with Christian worship or which tend to revile religion and bring it into contempt. The law places the Bible in the hands of every convict in our state prisons,¹⁹ and it punishes the use of profane or blasphemous language as a misdemeanor.²⁰ And the law does not recognize any individual belief, as an excuse for infringing its provisions made for the safety of the whole community. It does not exempt the Mormon who chooses to marry two wives in this State, from punishment for bigamy because he is a Mormon. Nor on the other hand, if any persons, believing in human sacrifices as a part of their religion, should attempt to sacrifice human life in that way, would they be excluded from punishment for murder, upon the ground that their religious belief justified or required the act. When, therefore, as here, a man is shown to have obtained the money or property of others by means which the law proscribes as criminal, it does not permit him to plead as an excuse his religious views or belief, except so far as such a plea amounts to that of insanity.

The fundamental error of spiritualism consists in regarding the mind of man as infinite,²¹ whereas it is only finite. The range of human thought is limited by physical agents and conditions. Let a man of greatest intellect be stricken down by brain fever, and see where is his boasted power to control his mind or direct it in any channel of thought. Prostrate a man upon a bed of sickness, and what becomes of his "lofty exercise" of mental power? Is it not absurd in this nineteenth century to talk of the absolute power of man's brain or thought, when it is so checked, limited, and controlled by physical causes wholly beyond his control?

Man, as originally created, and before the fall, was an immortal being, with a mind untrammelled by physical causes or influences. His own sin and folly subjected him thereafter to physical influences, which before had

no control over him. The culmination of those physical influences was death to his physical existence. The scheme of the Redemption alone could, by the laws of Eternal Justice, rescue his soul—his immortal part—from eternal perdition, the just punishment for his offence. Modern spiritualists wholly repudiate the doctrine of original sin, although they illustrate it every day of their lives. They must repudiate it, because it destroys their theory *in toto*; and therefore they are driven to the old pantheistic theory, which they offer as an *improvement* on the Christian religion! My learned adversary fell into an error when he said there were but ten millions of Christians. Why, Davis, in his own book concedes there are not less than three hundred and ninety-three millions of Christians in the world,²² and this is far below the real truth.

Where is the argument to support this Spiritualism? Let us look at it for a moment, for it will not bear investigation, but will explode and vanish in the light which the law throws upon it.

The counsel insists that because we have not produced likenesses of deceased persons made by mechanical means, we have not met the line of argument for the defence; and to show that the claims of his client may be well founded, he cites the cases of Moses and Elias appearing on the Mount, and says that the law which governed them as to the reflection of light may apply here. He does this to account for the damaging fact, proven here again and again, that in many of these "spirit photographs" *the sitter and the "spirits" are in different lights*. Now if any one will refer to that passage of Scripture,²³ he will find nothing there about Moses or Elias shining at all. The statement is simply: "And there appeared unto them Moses and Elias *talking* with him."

Equally unfortunate is his allusion to the case of Balaam's ass, for he seems to concede that an *ass* would be more likely than an ordinary man to perceive a spirit, and I concur with him in this view. This present case proves there are more asses existing at the present day than there were in the days of Balaam.

Again, the learned counsel, speaking of the witch of Endor, says, "this is the precise thing done then, and done to day, and done everywhere." Now the whole fallacy here, consists in looking at the English translation of the Scriptures as if it were the original. Man, as I have shown, is controlled in the exercise of the intellect by physical causes. His physical nature being finite, the language in which he seeks to convey his ideas is also finite. There are very many ideas incapable of being conveyed at all, through the medium of language. And again, there are very many things

which the human mind is incapable of comprehending at all. The mind, in other words, which is more or less influenced by the physical condition of man at the time, is as finite as his physical condition is; and every known human language differs from the others, in the range and extent of its vocabulary and its ability to present ideas in words. The English language, for instance, is vastly inferior to the German in the mode of coining a word to express a thought: and both the English and German are altogether inferior to the Italian in conveying musical sounds. And it is because of these differences in languages, because of their innate incompetency to convey the real impression, that persons who read the Bible ordinarily, without either believing in its inspiration or seeking the aid of the Holy Spirit in its perusal, wrest the words of Holy Scripture to their own destruction. For instance, an examination of the passages in the Old Testament referred to by the learned counsel, to prove the appearance of spirits on earth, will show that in every one of them the word used in the Hebrew signifies "messenger"—not necessarily an angelic messenger, but a "messenger": or else that it is a statement of the appearance of the Almighty Himself, as in the case of the ANGEL appearing to Hagar where the word is JEHOVAH in the Hebrew.

Strange indeed it is, that these Spiritualists first deny the truth of the Holy Writ, and then refer to its evidence of past events to support their theories. They have a precedent for this in the Enemy of mankind, who, centuries ago, both quoted and perverted Scripture in his arguments with the Saviour. And the illustration has its force when we reflect, how those arguments melted like wax before the Divine Logic of the Great Exemplar!

Now let us take the cases which are cited by the defence from the New Testament. Here again we find that the word *angel* in the original Greek means *messenger*. That is exactly what it means in the case which he cites (Acts, iv. 9–11). The words used are "Two men"—that is to say, forms having the appearance of men. But where, I ask, in the Old Testament, in the passages he has cited (with the exception of the case of Saul and Samuel), is there any evidence that the angels or spirits which appeared *were the spirits of departed persons*—shades of those who had lived on this earth? Now, as to the case of Saul and Samuel, I concede frankly and openly, and I do so advisedly, that the Bible unquestionably does assert the appearance of supernatural beings to man. GOD in His wisdom has given us a book, containing a perfect record of all the visible and audible appearances to man of Himself and of those authorized to appear for Him. He has there chronicled the occasions, in which in the past, at sundry times and in

divers manners, He spake to our fathers. He has sealed that record with a fearful denunciation against any who shall dare to add to, or detract from it; and I pray in all charity, that none of these spiritualists who attempt to assail the doctrines of Scripture, will ever bring themselves within the scope of the fearful denunciation which closes the book of Revelations.

But I turn again to the considerations of the evidence of two of the witnesses for the defence, Judge Edmonds and Paul Bremond. Their extraordinary testimony, as to what they saw and heard, can be accounted for only as statements of hallucinations; in other words, that what each described was "a false creation, proceeding from the heat oppressed brain." Let me not be misunderstood. I do not assert that they are insane. They are not the only men of intelligence who have been afflicted in this way with mental delusions. Ben Jonson saw Tartars, Turks, and Roman Catholics fight around his arm chair.²⁴ Lord Castlereigh saw the figure of a beautiful child surrounded by a halo, shortly before he committed suicide.²⁵ Byron was visited by a spectre which he knew and admitted was owing to overexcitement of his brain.²⁶ Cellini, when imprisoned, had a beatific vision, and saw both the Savior and the Virgin.²⁷ Cowper heard a voice from Heaven ordering him to commit suicide, and he actually did attempt it with a pen knife, but was detected in time.²⁸ Still more remarkable was the case of the great German author Goethe, who could at will produce spiritual flowers and phantasms in his imagination.²⁹ But of all these, De Boismont well remarks: "These kinds of hallucinations may be produced at will, either physically or intellectually. They sometimes appear without any obvious signs of disordered organization, but they also frequently arise from a derangement of the nervous and circulating systems. Some of these hallucinations establish the transition from reason to insanity."

Even Andrew Jackson Davis himself admits that these spiritual manifestations are sometimes the secondary cause of insanity.³⁰ He addresses a chapter *to the insane* on the subject. He had far better have dedicated the whole book to them. They are undoubtedly more competent to appreciate its contents, than any other persons.

I do not assail nor ridicule the belief of any, that the spirits of the departed still hover around the living. But when, as here, it is gravely asserted as an existing fact that such spirits do manifest themselves visibly and audibly to the living, I insist that something more, than visions seen and voices heard by only single individuals at a time, must be proven to show that such visions and voices are not, what medical science has

demonstrated them to be, the phantasma of day dreams—the "rooted fancy" of "mind diseased." De Boismont adds: "The continuance of hallucinations, although their character be understood, may occasion the saddest results, even *death* itself!"

"The LAW IS LIGHT." And this case, when viewed in the light thrown on it by the evidence for the People in rebuttal, not only explodes the whole theory of the defence, but fully sustains the charges against the prisoner. *Nine* methods have been shown by competent experts, whose evidence remains unshaken by the most searching cross-examination, each of which methods will produce by mechanical means, what Mumler says can only result from a supernatural process or power. Mr. Hull has testified to *seven* distinct methods, as follows:

1. The process by a positive in the slide. A glass plate containing a previously prepared positive is placed in the plate-holder, in front of the sensitive plate, so that the image on the glass will be taken with that of the sitter at the same time. The distance between the plates varies the size and distinctness of the form.
2. A figure clothed in white can be introduced for a moment behind the sitter, and then be withdrawn before the sitting is over, leaving a shadowy image on the plate. This is known as "Sir David Brewster's ghost."
3. A microscopic picture of the spirit form can be inserted in the camera box, alongside of the lens, in one of the screw-holes; and by a small magnifying lens its image can be thrown on the sensitive plate, with that of the sitter.
4. A glass with the spirit image can be placed behind the sensitive plate after the sitting is completed; and by a feeble light the image can be impressed on the plate with that of the sitter.
5. The nitrate of silver bath could have a glass side, and the image be impressed by a secret light, while apparently the glass plate was only being coated with the sensitive film.
6. The "spirit" form can be printed first on the negative, and then the figure of the living sitter added by a second printing; or it can be printed on the paper, and the sitter's portrait printed over it.
7. A sensitive plate can be prepared by what is known as the dry process, the spirit form impressed on it, and then, at a subsequent time, the portrait of the living sitter can be taken on this same plate, so that the two will be developed together. This result Mr. Hull had several times obtained by accident, having used one of these dry sensitive plates for

a landscape, and forgotten to develop it, and then used it again, and then found the two landscapes curiously intermingled.

Mr. Mason adds *two* other methods, making nine in all.

8. By first taking a negative of a ghost, and then taking a positive from the negative. If the camera be used only for the negative, the ghost is "*stopped out.*" This is done by exposure for an instant before developing.
9. By the mica positive, inserted in a match and placed in the shield during exposure in the camera. This mica can be removed and concealed in the hand, and is probably the process used by Mumler when defying detection.

Now, if the Court please, each and all of the exhibits offered in evidence by the defence, are explainable by one or another of these nine processes. Exhibits Nos. 1 and 2 produced by Judge Edmonds (the "ghost" in the first of which bears a remarkable likeness to Lady Washington), Mr. Hull says could be printed subsequently; and I beg your Honor to compare it with No. 21 for the People, which Mr. Bogardus produced.

No. 3 is a picture of Livermore and his supposed wife, with a spiritual bouquet, produced by Mr. Gurney. Mr. Hull says this can be done by the dry plate process. Mr. Mason has produced similar pictures by the stopping out process, and a comparison will fail to show an essential difference in the appearance upon the plate.

No. 4 is a picture of a medium, writing, with a "spirit hand," so-called, guiding him, and a "spirit" child. It was produced in evidence by Wm. Gurney. Mr. Hull says that this may be done by the positive in the slide, the first of the nine processes already enumerated. The left "ghost" could be done by second printing, and could be taken on the negative by being placed in the slide, or printed in the dark room.

No. 5 is a photograph of James R. Gilmore, amateur detective and reporter, and was produced in evidence by him. The "ghost" is very indistinct; and Mr. Hull says it may be produced by process No. 1, the positive in the slide. So also in regard to the photograph by Rockwood, No. 6, with a "ghost" from an engraving. Mr. Gilmore produced it here. Mr. Hull says that it can be done by process No. 1. And so of the photograph by Rockwood of James R. Gilmore, No. 7, with Rockwood as ghost. This may be done by Sir David Brewster's process, and Mr. Hull says it may be done by the positive in the slide.

Their Exhibit No. 9 is precisely the same as this last, except that the ghost is very indistinct.

No. 10, a photograph by Rockwood of Mr. Gilmore, produced in evidence by the latter, is done by exposure to the light with the positive plate after the negative of the sitter is taken, and Mr. Hull says it may be done by process No. 1.

Nos. 11 and 12 are photographs of Elmer Terry, one with the "ghost" of a little *girl* (which he says is a *boy*), and the other with the "ghost" of Miss Catlin. These were evidently printed subsequently, because the figure of the "ghost" appears *over* the sitter, and by comparing it with No. 1 for the defence, and No. 20 for the People, they will be seen to be almost identical in character.

Exhibit No. 13 for the defence is a photograph of a lady friend of Paul Bremond, Elizabeth Trapp. Mr. Hull says this may be done by the positive in the slide, or by a microscopic lens in the camera. Mr. Bogardus says it was evidently copied from some old picture. Mr. Boyle says that the ghost could not have been produced by any form in front of the camera at the same time as the sitter, because the lights are different; and Mr. Fredericks gives the same opinion.

No. 14 is a photograph of Paul Bremond, with what is called the ghost of his daughter. Mr. Hull says this may be done by a positive in the slide, or that it might be done by a microscopic lens in the camera, or by the dry-plate process. He says that the "ghost" must have been on the plate in front of the negative. Mr. Boyle says of this what he said of No. 13.

No. 15 is a photograph of David A. Hopkins, railroad car contractor, with what is evidently the "ghost" of a girl, though Hopkins says it is a boy. Observe that in this picture the "ghost" projects *over the sitter*, and must, therefore, have been done by subsequent printing, the same as No. 1 for the defence. I ask your Honor to compare this with the No. 20 for the People, produced by Mr. Bogardus.

No. 16 is a photograph of Charles Welling, nephew of Mrs. Luthera C. Reeves, with the "ghost" of her son, which she identifies by the length of his ears, and which certainly looks more like a girl than a boy. Mr. Hull says this may be done by process No. 1, the positive in the slide.

No. 17 is the photograph of an old man, also produced by Mrs. Luthera C. Reeves, with two ghosts, one of which "goes against his stomach." Mrs. Reeves says it is the ghost of her boy, who suffered from spinal derangement; although he was not so afflicted at the age at which he appears in the picture. The picture, however, is really that of a girl. Mr. Hull says that

this could be done by second printing, and it could also be done by using a positive.

No. 18 is a photograph of Samuel R. Fanshawe, the artist, with the "ghost" of his mother. The figure of Mr. Fanshawe in this and in No. 19 (which is a photograph of Mr. Fanshawe, with the "ghost" of his son, who died in the war, at the age of twenty-four), is *under* the "ghost," and therefore these two exhibits come within the explanation of No. 20, which is a photograph of Charles F. Livermore, with the "ghost" of his wife pointing upwards. Mr. Bogardus says, that this picture could just as well have been made with the arm of the ghost around the sitter; and Mr. Mason says, that the "spirit" form could not have been in front of the camera at the same time with the sitter. Mr. Boyle says, that he also is positive that the "spirit" was not in front of the camera at the same time as the sitter; and Mr. Fredericks is of the same opinion. And they not merely express this opinion, but they give a reason which accounts for it, although it is not accounted for on any theory of the defence. The reason is *that the lights are different*. There could have been no duplicate light at the same time, unless one of the lights was invisible; and these witnesses also testify that the lights on these two pictures were unquestionably from different directions.

So, in photograph No. 21, where the "ghost" holds a crown behind Mr. Livermore's head, Mr. Hull says that the "ghost" in this case could not have been in front of the camera, for it would have obscured the picture, generally. Mr. Mason says these figures could not have been in front of the camera when the picture was made, because all objects in front must have their lights similar; while here, the shadow on the ghost is on one side, and that of Livermore is on the other. Hence it is not one picture but must have been made at different times and by mechanical means. Mr. Bogardus says this is a "transparent lie," for the same reason. He well characterizes it. Mr. Fredericks is of the same opinion.

Nos. 22 and 24 are photographs of Mrs. Ingalls, with the "ghost" of her son. Mr. Mason says that in No. 24 the "ghost" might have been inside the camera, but could not have been taken in front; and Mr. Boyle and Mr. Fredricks concur in the same view.

No. 23 is a photograph of Mrs. Ingalls, with the "ghosts" of her mother, and brother, and two children, very indistinct. This falls within the explanation of the Exhibit No. 20 for the defence.

Now, I insist that it is idle to say, that the People must show which of these tricks Mumler did use. They have shown *nine* processes or methods,



FIGURE 34. William H. Mumler, "Charles Livermore with the Spirit of His Wife," 1869. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.18).

each capable of producing similar results to those produced by him, and they are not bound to say which one of those methods he used. As well might an indicted forger claim, that to convict him, the People must prove with which particular pen the forgery was committed. Indeed, the real truth is, that Mumler used whichever process was least capable of detection. When watched very closely he was often unsuccessful, and his best pictures were produced where time was allowed him to print, because then detection was impossible. And our view is, that these different results were produced by his being compelled at times to resort to the mica process, or the microscopic process, or some one of those processes requiring sleight of hand—the difference arising when he came to print off the pictures. Where is the evidence that any one watched him *print* the pictures? They were all shown the plates, but there is not a witness produced here who saw him *print* the pictures. It is very true that in his "yellow book" he showed some modes of doing the trick, but is that remarkable? Do not Heller, and Anderson, and other magicians of note, publish books explaining certain ways in which some tricks can be performed? But do they not always add that these are not *their* ways of doing the tricks? Now what was the object of publishing this book? Why plainly, to distract attention from the real character of Mumler's operations; and to direct it to other points connected with the subject so as to keep the real way of doing the trick undiscovered.

The People have further shown in rebuttal, not only that Mumler's pictures may be produced by mechanical means; but that when so produced, persons of ordinary and even extraordinary intelligence were unable to detect the trick. Charles Reiss and Doctor Fry, of Bellevue Hospital, watched Mason in vain. The second time that Fry watched, he found out something, but did not at first. P.T. Barnum—the immortal Barnum—who has been all his life engaged in amusing and interesting the American people by showing them humbugs, but, as he says, giving them their money's worth every time, even *he*, with all his native shrewdness (and he knew of this business seven years ago), tried in vain to detect Mr. Bogardus. But he detected Mumler years ago, and put his "spirit" pictures in the museum, and labeled them what they were, "bogus spirit photographs."

The people have further and finally shown, that a camera may be constructed, as John Jones testifies, capable of producing "ghosts" by artificial means, which would deceive any photographer, unless he took it to pieces.

And it is perfectly idle to say on behalf of the defence, now, when no seizure has been made, that the People should have seized Mumler's

apparatus, and proved the fraud, if there was one. And it is especially idle to say, that this should have been done after the arrest was made, and when it was very easy to remove any evidences of the crime. Why, has your Honor ever gone from the bright sunlight into the "dark room" of a photographic gallery, where the eye is so instantaneously contracted that for the first two or three moments you cannot see anything? And with that experience, have you any doubt that any attempt to detect the deception in this case by such means would be a failure? And as to the means used to deceive the credulous, how easy it would be to have a plate of glass movable with a spring, by which to throw a ray of light at the right time, so as to produce some of these results. It would not be very difficult for an ingenious man to devise means of producing results which would almost defy detection; and I think the language of Shakespeare in his play of Henry IV.³¹ may be applied with singular appropriateness here, substituting only the names of the characters in this case for those which Shakespeare uses:

MUMLER.—"I can call spirits from the vasty deep.

HULL, MASON, AND OTHERS, IN CHORUS.—"Why so can I; or any other man.

"But will they come, when you do call for them?

MUMLER.—"Why I can teach you, cousin, to command the Devil.

MASON.—"And I can teach thee, coz, to shame the Devil,

"By telling truth; tell truth and shame the Devil.

"If thou have power to raise him, bring him hither,

"And I'll be sworn, I have power to shame him hence.

"O, while you live, tell truth and *shame* the Devil."

And Mumler might well say of any of his witnesses:

"He suspects none, on whose foolish honesty

My practices ride easy:—I see the business."

Now, the People submit, that upon the whole evidence in the case, there is probable cause to warrant the commitment of the prisoner Mumler, of his wife, and of Wm. Guay, to await the action of the Grand Jury. It is very true that no specific complaint in writing has as yet been made against either Mrs. Mumler or Guay; but your Honor is too familiar with your power as a magistrate sitting in first instance, not to know that where, in

the course of a legal examination before you, it appears that a person charged with one offence has been guilty of another of the grade of felony, or that other persons not before you have been guilty of a felony, you have the power, at your own instance, to arrest them and hold them to await the action of the Grand Jury.

And upon the charge of FALSE PRETENCES the People urge this.

At common law, where one, by artifice or fraud, obtained money or property from another, this did not in every case constitute an indictable offence, for the reason that in many instances a civil suit lay. Thus, a mere lie was not indictable at common law, even if money was obtained on the strength of it. An artful contrivance had to be proven to sustain a conviction.³² The reason was obvious. The Law presumed both parties equally intelligent, and a naked assertion acted on, showed only want of ordinary caution in the party wronged.

In order to reach this evil, in cases of private fraud which did not come under the head of cheats (for reasons which will be subsequently shown), a series of statutes were passed, which form the basis of our own. The first was in 1542, and made the obtaining of money from another, by color and means of a false token, indictable.³³ The next followed in 1757, and is the statute on which our own is based. It enacted that all persons who should obtain money from others by false pretences, with the intent to cheat and defraud such persons, shall be deemed offenders against the Public Peace. And it was passed, as Lord Denman said, “to protect the weaker part of mankind.”³⁴ In other words (as will be considered more fully hereafter), “the common law extended to cheats effected by means of any false token, having the semblance of public authority, or in any manner touching the public interest. . . . The statute 33 Hen. VIII. cap. 1, extended the common law rule, but still required some false token to be used. But this being found too limited to prevent the evil intended, the statute of Geo. II. was passed, which adopted the more general terms of *false pretences*, and which had been considered, in *England*, as extending to every case where a party had obtained money or goods by falsely representing any occurrence that had not happened, to which persons of ordinary caution might give credit. . . . If the false pretence created the credit, it has been considered as bringing the case within the statute.”³⁵

Our statute provides “that every person who, with intent to cheat or defraud another, shall, designedly, by color of any false token or writing, or by any other false pretence, obtain the signature of any person, or any money, personal property, or valuable thing, shall, upon conviction, &c.”³⁶

Now, to constitute the offence under this statute, three things are essential. *First*. A false representation of an existing fact; *second*, a reliance on that representation as untrue; and *lastly*, the payment of money upon the strength of that representation,—the payment of the money being the gist of the offence.³⁷ There must also exist an intent to cheat and defraud some person, and for that purpose some false pretence must be designedly used, and the fraud must be accomplished by means of the false pretence. Or, if not wholly by that means, it must have had so material an effect upon the mind of the party defrauded, that without it he would not have parted with the money.³⁸

Now, apply these rules to the present case.

First. As to the prisoner. He owned the establishment, and hired Guay to conduct the money-receiving part of the business. If Guay was innocent in the matter, he was Mumler's agent for making the false statements, and receiving the money thereon. Where a man in Ohio employed an innocent agent here, to receive money on false representations and a false token, the innocent agent was excused, but the principal was convicted and the conviction was sustained.³⁹ Mumler concurred in Guay's and Mrs. Mumler's statements, for Exhibit 10 shows he authorized them. And hence, if the statements were false, and he knew it, the rule applies to him, that a party who has concurred and assisted in the fraud, may be convicted as a principal, even though not present at the time of making the pretence and obtaining the money.⁴⁰

The pretences on which he obtained money from Tooker, the payment by the latter on the strength thereof, and the fact of the falsity, have already been shown at the outset of the case. And whether Tooker did or did not take the money to entrap him, makes no difference in Mumler's culpability.⁴¹

The falsity of the statement "that he was a spiritual medium, and produced spirit likenesses, which no other person could take," clearly appears. So the further statement that "such pictures were not the result of a trick or deception," is shown to have been false. Coupled with the exhibition of one of these pictures there was the direct assertion "that (on having his picture taken, &c.) he, Tooker, would come to recognize the face (of the spirit) as that of some relative or friend (not present, but) nearest in sympathy with him." In other words, besides the false assertion of the existing fact that Mumler had produced these photographs by supernatural means, there was an inducement further held out at the time, of an act to be done *in futuro*, which never was done, nor was then intended to be done.

The rule of law is, that where a false statement is made as to the *status* of the prisoner at the time, calculated to induce the confidence which led to the prosecutor parting with the money; this brings the case within the statute, even though such statement be mixed up with false pretences as to the prisoner's future conduct.⁴²

A strong case in illustration of this was that of Maria Gilles,⁴³ otherwise called the "cunning woman," tried in 1865, in England, and convicted. She falsely pretended that she had power to bring back the husband of a Mrs. Fisher, who had deserted her, and said that she could bring him back "over fences, hedges, and ditches," and would do so, provided Mrs. Fisher would pay her a shilling, which Mrs. Fisher did. It is needless to add, that after the shilling was obtained, Mrs. Fisher did not get back her husband—at least by that means. Then she discovered that she had been deceived and defrauded, and she had the "cunning woman" indicted. The counsel for the prisoner insisted that the conviction should be reversed (for the woman was convicted on the spot), upon the ground that "there was no evidence that the prisoner knew the statement to be false. The belief in supernatural power has prevailed and still prevails to a wide extent." To this Justice Blackburn replied: "She says what is untrue, and there is nothing to show that she believed it to be true. If people of this sort make money by the pretended exercise of supernatural power, the jury may well presume that they know their pretensions to be unfounded." Chief Justice Earle, affirming the conviction, said: "The material part of the false pretence is, that the prisoner had power, which must be understood to mean supernatural power, to bring back the prosecutrix's husband. That is a sufficient false pretence within the meaning of the statute." This shows that the courts enforce the proposition of law I have here submitted, that the Law does not credit the use of supernatural agencies, nor attribute to them results which may be produced by ordinary means.

So as to an article sold. Here it purported to be a photograph of both a living and a deceased person. The case is similar to that where tobacco was sold by the barrel, and on delivery proved only part tobacco—tobacco on the top, and other leaves at the bottom; and it was held to be a case of pretences.⁴⁴

So a statement that the prisoner had bought certain skins, and *would* sell them to the prosecutor, held a sufficient false pretence,⁴⁵ on proof that he had not bought them. And in Fry's case, where the prisoner stated that he kept a shop, and that if a certain woman would pay him so much

money, she *might* live with him. It turned out that he did not keep a shop at all, and it was held to be a case of false pretences.⁴⁶

So again, in Jennison's case,⁴⁷ where a married man represented that he was a single man, and agreed that if a certain woman would give him so much money, he would marry her. She did so, and it was held that it was a case of false pretences, although the money was obtained upon the representation of what he *would* do; as it was upon the basis of the existing fact that he was a married man, when he represented himself to be a single one.

Now, the plates shown, the yellow book, and the printed pictures, all constituted *false tokens*, apart from any oral communications. And the prisoner, in Tooker's case, as well as in every other, *himself produced all these tokens*.

Second. As to Mrs. Mumler. She was present when Tooker had his portrait taken, and left as soon as he paid his first advance. Her participation generally in the cheat will be considered more fully in a subsequent branch of the argument.

Third. As to Wm. Guay. He was the prisoner's partner, interested in the profits, made some of the false statements, and received the money of Tooker. Now, in Young's case,⁴⁸ it was distinctly held that where several parties act a different part in obtaining money by false pretences, no matter who speaks the words, all are guilty of the imposition jointly. The same rule was again asserted in Kerrigan's case⁴⁹—that the moment a previous connection between two of them is proven, the act of the one is the act of the other. Bear in mind, Guay was to have half the proceeds. Now, one of the essential elements of the offence of false pretences consists in obtaining the money. Unless money be obtained, the offence is nothing but a mere lie.⁵⁰ And Guay swears expressly he took the money by Mumler's orders. This makes even a stronger case than is necessary to charge both.⁵¹

The SECOND offence charged against the prisoner and his confederates is CHEATING. At common law, where one, by means of a false *symbol or token*, fraudulently obtained the property of another, such fraud and artifice being one which affected or might affect *the public*, and against which common prudence could not guard, he was punishable as a *cheat*. The offence differed from that of false pretences, first, in that no verbal statement was required; second, the fraud must be of a general, not a private, nature, affecting not only the individual, but the Public; and, third, such fraud must be one not discernable by the exercise of common prudence.⁵² In the case of Sully, the Court said: "A cheat or fraud, to be a criminal

offence at common law, must be such a fraud as affects *the Public*, and against which common prudence cannot guard, and must indicate a general intent to defraud."

There is a curious trial of one Richard Hathaway,⁵³ as a cheat and imposter, before Lord Chief Justice Holt, in 1702-3. He was prosecuted on an information for pretending that he was bewitched by one Sarah Murdock; and that he could only be cured by drawing blood from her by scratching her arm, which he did. No money was averred to have been obtained by him; but he seems to have been convicted of an imposture. He was detected in rapping with his feet, and he pretended he could vomit pins. Lord Holt, during the trial, gave an admirable definition of a cheat.⁵⁴ He said: "A cheat is a design to impose on the credulity of others, to induce them to believe a thing that is not true." It was within this same rule that, at common law, if a goldsmith sold buttons made of base metal as silver buttons, he was indictable as a cheat.⁵⁵ And so, if a clockmaker sold an imitation case for pure gold, it not being the article represented, and being sold by a public manufacturer or artizan in the course of his ordinary vocation, the seller was indictable as a cheat.⁵⁶ So also, selling a copy as an original picture, with false marks on it to imitate the genuine, is a cheat at common law.⁵⁷ And the reason was, that in all these cases the knavish artizan was pursuing a vocation open to the *public*, and was engaged in selling wares and merchandize to the Public at large. He kept, in other words, an open shop, to which any might resort for the purpose of buying, without previous introduction or personal acquaintance.

Bearing in mind what constitutes, as shown, a cheat at common law, let us look at our own statute.

In 1853 our Legislature passed "an Act to punish gross frauds and to suppress mock auctions," which provided that "each and every person who shall . . . *by means of any . . . gross fraud or cheat, at common law*, designedly and with intent to defraud, obtain from any other person any money, &c., shall on conviction be punished, &c."⁵⁸

This statute was drawn by one of the ablest criminal lawyers, that ever adorned the Bar of the State of New York.⁵⁹ He has passed away, leaving this and other records of his great genius and industry. His son (GEORGE W. BLUNT, ESQ.) is here to-day as my associate, and the representative of the People in his official capacity as Assistant District Attorney. His conduct of the rebutting evidence in this case has shown, that his father's mantle has fallen on no unworthy shoulders.

This statute was framed on that of 7 & 8 Geo. IV., Chap. 29, § 53, which was intended to prevent a subtle distinction between larceny and false pretences; but which did not provide against the commission of gross fraud, as our statute of 1853 does. Only one reported case under our statute will be found, that of *Ranney v. The People*,⁶⁰ but which could hardly be said to be a decision on the statute, for in that case it was conceded (p. 414) that the cheat was not indictable as such at common law; because it was a private lie, unaccompanied by any false token, and had no reference to the *public* interest. The authority is valuable, however, as showing what constitutes a false pretence.

Now I insist that the facts shown in the present case bring it clearly within this last statute, as a common law cheat. We have, first, the assertion of power to produce by supernatural means "spirit" pictures; coupled with the exhibition of pictures alleged to have been so produced, and the sale and receipt of money therefor. This, by a public photographer, in his open store, to the Public. Second, the fact that not only Tooker, but very many other persons were victimized out of money by this means, makes the injury a public wrong.

The evidence shows that Tooker paid Mumler for these so-called spirit photographs eight dollars; that Judge Edmonds paid fifteen; that Elmer Terry paid five; that David A. Hopkins paid also certain sums; that Luther C. Reeves paid fifteen dollars; and that Charles F. Livermore paid twenty dollars. And Mumler's confederate partner, Guay, testifies that in almost every instance these moneys were required to be, and were, paid in advance.

So that this man Mumler, if his only theory be true, stands in the position of one prostituting his religious belief as a means of making money. That is why I am surprised at gentlemen, who honestly believe in Spiritualism, pinning their faith to this case and to this man's performances as evidence of its power. If their faith be true, then Mumler has prostituted his religion for the sordid purpose of gain, and the case comes directly within the principle of the celebrated case which was tried only a short time ago in the northern part of this State—the case of *The United States v. Colchester*⁶¹—where the defendant was indicted for practicing the tricks of a juggler for the purpose of making money thereby, without having taken out a government license to do so. In that case, this same plea, that Spiritualism is a religious belief, and that the tricks were miracles, was made, and the same specious arguments were urged as in this case, but the jury convicted him.

So, in the recent English case of *Lyon v. Home*,⁶² where a widow aged seventy-five years was induced by a "spiritual medium" to adopt him as her son, and gave him nearly all her property, amounting to many thousand pounds sterling, under the belief that she was thereby fulfilling the wishes of her deceased husband. The Court of Chancery set the whole conveyances aside, as fraudulently obtained from the old lady while she was under the influence of delusions produced and encouraged by mechanical contrivances of the "medium." On the trial of that case, some forty persons swore to their belief in miraculous appearances, raps, voices, and visions; but the Court summarily disposed of these exhibitions of credulity, and Vice Chancellor Gifford said, in his opinion in that case, speaking of "spiritualism," "the system as presented by the evidence, is *mischievous nonsense*, well calculated, on the one hand, to delude the vain, the weak, the foolish, and the superstitious; and, on the other, to assist the projects of the needy and of the adventurer!"

So in the present case (and this shows how extensively this fraud affects the public interest), the following persons, after witnessing Mumler's performance, were actually induced to believe that there was some supernatural appearance of the so-called ghosts, not attributable to mechanical or artificial means: William P. Slee, Judge Edmonds, Elmer Terry, Paul Bremond, David A. Hopkins, William W. Silver, Luthera C. Reeves, and Ann F. Ingalls. All these were certainly persons of at least ordinary intellect and common prudence, and most of them took extraordinary care not to be deceived. This illustrates how this man's performances are working the greatest mischief, namely, by imposing on the credulity of the Public. It is no mere sporadic imposition, but the credulous portions of the Public are systematically induced to part with their money by false pretences.

Now, what had Mrs. Mumler to do in this business? Tooker says she left, and went out as soon as he paid the money. Guay, Mumler's partner, says she was always present, and as a general rule, down stairs, and was present when Tooker had his portrait taken. Jas. R. Gilmore, who sat the first time without success, says: "Mrs. Mumler, who sat in front of me at the second sitting said to me while Mumler was closing the aperture, 'Now you will have a picture, and a good one'; and he adds, that she went on to describe the individual whom she saw standing at his back, and who would go on the photograph."

This shows that *she* knew how the trick was done. Mumler trusted *her*, if he did not trust any one else.



MRS. W. H. MUMLER.—BY MUMLER.

FIGURE 35. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. W. H. Mumler with Female Spirit," *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869, cover. Wood engraving after spirit photograph.

Silver says: “Her duties were in the reception room, which was on the first floor, below the photographic room. She received the orders, and sent them upstairs. . . . She received the customers, took their names, and sent them upstairs. She sometimes came up in the operating room. She gave cards to the customers to take upstairs.”

Mrs. Luthera C. Reeves (who identifies her deceased relatives by the length of their ears), saw Mrs. Mumler come up and hold her hand on the camera about midway on the edge, and then she (Mrs. Reeves) heard raps upon the floor.

Mr. Fanshawe, the artist, saw Mrs. Mumler in the gallery, and told her he was not a believer, and had come to investigate the matter. He is not certain whether she went up with him or not.

Finally, Mrs. Ingalls says that Mrs. Mumler was the person she saw, and the one to whom she complained that the likenesses were so indistinct.

All these facts taken together show:

First. That more than one process was resorted to by the prisoner, and that he varied the process to suit the intelligence of the sitter.

Second. That in almost every case he received notice in advance of the age and appearance of the victim, so as to guess about the kind of relative deceased.

Third. That even with Mrs. Mumler’s aid, he was not always able to accomplish the trick; especially when sharply watched, as by Livermore, who sat five times.

Fourth. That Mrs. Mumler’s aid was valuable, when two persons were present, to distract attention by raps, as she did in the case of Mrs. Reeves.

Fifth. That *she* knew the trick, and could tell when it was successful.

Sixth. That she was a *particeps criminis* in the matter. The Law does not, in such a case, excuse a wife, nor presume that she acted under coercion of her husband.⁶³

Lastly, in one aspect of the case, the prisoner was guilty of LARCENY by trick and device. I ask your Honor to bear in mind the definition of larceny: “The wrongful taking possession of the goods of another, with intent to deprive the latter of his property in them.”⁶⁴ Now Tooker never intended to part with his money to Mumler, unless he received in return therefor a picture of a “spirit.” It was only after he had parted with the money that he discovered it was a trick.

In a recent English case,⁶⁵ a Gypsy woman pretended she could lay spirits, and promised to do so, provided a certain sum of money were placed in the ground at a certain place by a Mrs. Prior, agreeing that in case she

failed to lay the spirits, the money should be returned. Mrs. Prior fulfilled her part of the agreement, and the money disappeared; and Mrs. Prior, not being satisfied that the Gypsy was acting in good faith, had her indicted. And the court held that if the agreement was a mere trick or device to get possession of the money, with no intention to return it, the woman was guilty of a felony; and she was convicted of larceny.

A word in conclusion. In discharging my professional duty here I may have seemed to occupy time unnecessarily. But this case is simply one of many, where an adroit criminal is attempting to evade the hand of justice, and to practice, untrammled by fear of human consequences, a most wicked fraud as a livelihood. The Law is not only for the protection of the strong and prudent. "It grants no license to the cunning man to deceive the simple by artifices, which he proportions to the mental strength of those with whom he has to deal, just as the poisoner proportions his drugs to the bodily strength of his victims."

The Chief Magistrate of this city, with an energy that does him honor, has determined to put a stop, if possible, to these wholesale swindles. The Arm of the Law should be liberally extended to aid him in his efforts. And I submit to your Honor, with entire confidence, that probable cause *has been shown* in this case, to amply warrant the commitment here asked for. If the prisoner's innocence is as strong as his supernatural powers are said to be, perhaps, like some of his "spirits," he may be able before a jury of his countrymen, to create in their minds a marked impression of that innocence by his own reflected light!

MUMLER IN THE PRESS

THE TRIAL (1869)

The Spiritual Magazine, LONDON, MAY 1, 1869, 226.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

Mr. W. H. Mumler, of Boston, U.S.A., some of whose spirit photographs we re-published several years ago, respecting which we had at the time many paragraphs in the Magazine, has now removed to 630, Broadway, New York. We have received his prospectus, containing many testimonies, a few of which only are recent. The dates of the most of them are as far back as 1862, and it certainly seems a strange fact, to be accounted for, that if the photographs were genuine, there should have been a cessation of them for so many years, and that they should now re-appear at "10 dollars in greenbacks or post-office order." However as we do not profess to settle any question *a priori*, and prefer to let everything new and old rest on its own basis of fact, we shall be happy to receive any well accredited and scientific testimonies in favour of the spirit photographs.

New York Daily Tribune, APRIL 13, 1869, 8.

ALLEGED PHOTOGRAPHIC SWINDLE

William W. Mumbler, a photographer, and William W. Silver, alias Gray [Guay], his assistant, of No. 630 Broadway, were brought before Justice Dowling at the Tombs Police Court yesterday, charged with having



FIGURE 36. Attributed to William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Female Spirit with Photograph on Table," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.20).

swindled sundry credulous people by means of what they represented to be "spiritual photography." By a process well known to professional photographers and scientific men, they would take the photograph of a sitter with a spectral figure in the back ground, which to any person over imaginative might easily be converted into the likeness of a departed friend or relative. Before being brought within the focus of the camera, the victim of this alleged swindle would be asked by the operator to designate some departed friend or relative whose picture he would like to have taken in connection with his own. On naming such a person the "mystic art" of the photographer would be brought into play, and the result would be a decidedly vague and indefinite figure in the background—a figure more spectral than the ghost of Hamlet's father, or the still more spectral "Cock Lane Ghost." If the victim—or the sitter—chanced to be gifted with an excess of imaginative powers, he could easily trace in the background figure the etherealized lineaments of his departed father-in-law or grandfather, or what not. The alleged swindle was discovered by Mr. P.F. Hickey, Scientific Editor of *The World*, who complained of it to Mayor Hall. By the order of the latter Marshal Tooker was directed to "work up" the case, which he did at a total expense of \$10. The Marshal sat for his picture, and requested that his deceased father-in-law be induced to have *his* taken at the same time. No objections being made, either on the part of spirit or operator, the double picture was taken, and as far as the Marshal's face was concerned, was a very passable one, but the likeness of the father-in-law was a most dismal failure; and although spectral and ghostly enough to have been a veritable emanation from the spirit land, bore not a ghost of a resemblance to the deceased gentleman. The facts of the case elicited at the trial yesterday were mainly as above set forth. Marshal Tooker's affidavit shows that the operator (Mumbler), pretended that the second picture was produced by supernatural means, and that he (Mumbler) was a "medium." The charge for the pictures was \$10 per dozen, which the Marshal paid, protesting that it was exorbitant. He was told that the price had been so fixed because "the spirits did not like the throng, and that to exclude the vulgar multitude the price was fixed at the high rate," &c. Having deposited \$2.50 as security, the Marshal was ushered into the gallery where his picture was taken. The affidavit minutely detailed the whole operation of the picture-taking, as well as the conversation of Mumbler, from which it appears that the latter endeavored to produce in the mind of the Marshal a train of thought that would eventually lead him to confound the shadowy background picture with the well-remembered features

of some departed friend. Mr. Hickey's affidavit showed that pictures similar to those taken by Mumler by his "spiritual process" could be equally well taken by any other photographer, by means of purely mechanical appliances, and without the aid or consent of "spiritual beings."

At the conclusion of the reading of the affidavits, the magistrate asked the accused what they had to say in their defense. Mumler denied that they had committed any offense, and asked for time in which to prepare a defense. He added that their representations had not been made with a view to deceive. The magistrate replied that he should hold them to bail to await an examination on Friday next, and as the prisoners were unable to procure bail at that hour, they were committed to the Tombs.

New York Herald, APRIL 17, 1869, 5.

THE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

SPIRITUALISTIC GENTLEMEN IN LARGE ARRAY AT THE TOMBS—POSITIVE AGENCY OF THE SPIRITS PROCLAIMED—LINE OF DEFENCE IN THE FORTHCOMING EXAMINATION.

Persons of spiritualistic proclivities, as is well known, make up the majority of those appearing at the Tombs Police Court. It was so yesterday. The spiritualistic proclivities of the morning's assemblage, however, were diverse from the ordinary channel—not the besotted, wretched, maudlin subjects of benzine and fusel oil, but those having to do, or rather professing to have to do, with the spirits of the vasty deep, or heavens above, or anywhere where the spirits of the dead make their abode when freed from the cerements of our earthly clay. In other words, the crowd was made up of Spiritualists. The occasion of their presence was an expected examination in the case of William H. Mumler, the spirit-photographer, whose arrest on a charge of perpetrating deception and fraud upon the public through the medium of alleged spirit photographs, has already been announced in the *Herald*. Ex-Fire Marshal Baker and Albert Day appeared as counsel for the accused. Ex-Judge Edmonds, though doing most of the little talking that was done, announced himself only as the friend of the prisoner.

"Are you ready to proceed with your case?" asked Judge Dowling.

"Yes, sir," answered ex-Judge Edmonds. "We have from twenty to thirty witnesses here from Boston, Poughkeepsie, Buffalo and elsewhere."

“The Mayor sent the case here,” remarked the Judge, “and expressed a desire to be present at the examination, and asked me to postpone it on account of his inability to be present this morning.”

“Of course the Mayor’s wishes must be regarded, but will you allow,” asked the Judge, “Mr. Baker to read a paper prepared on behalf of the accused, as showing the line of defence we propose to enter upon?”

“Why do you wish to read it now?” inquired Judge Dowling.

“The late publications in the papers have destroyed Mr. Mumler’s business, and through giving this equal and immediate publicity we desire to restore the public confidence, to which he is justly entitled,” urged Judge Edmonds. [. . .]

At the conclusion of the reading of the document came a discussion upon the time to which to adjourn the case. The Judge wanted to put it off two weeks, but the defence had an important witness who lives in Texas and would have to leave for home before that time. Regarding this witness—a very gray-haired and gray-whiskered gentleman—the Judge stated that he had been informed by an officer that he was a sort of an outside *attaché* of the establishment, and did a certain amount of roping in of customers through showing pretended spirit photographs. It was finally arranged to have the examination take place at nine A.M. of the 21st inst., in the courtroom of the Special Sessions. This manner arranged, the spiritualistic gentlemen left, and business in the courtroom settled down to common “bummers” and low-lived larcenies and assaults—things decidedly “of the earth earthly.”

New York Times, APRIL 21, 1869, 10.

THE SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHS

Hon. Judge Dowling,

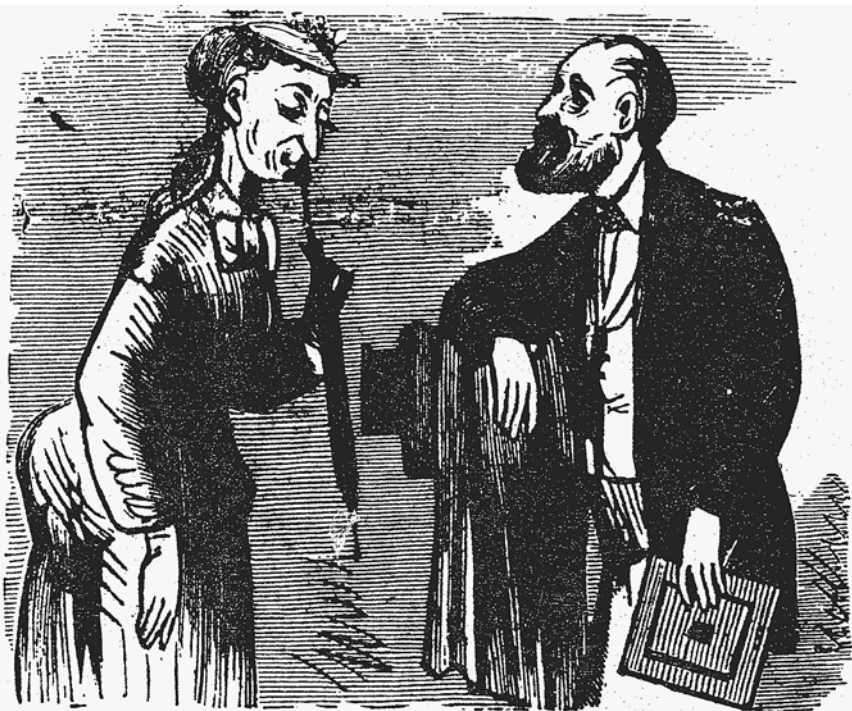
The interest in the doctrine I believe and the request I desire to make must be my apology for taking the liberty of addressing you in behalf of many of my sex who wish to be present at the examination on Wednesday next, before you, relative to the “spiritual artist.” We desire, without interfering upon your duties, that suitable accommodation may be granted to us of the “weaker sex” who wish to be present at this, the first time that our belief has been made the subject of judicial determination. Let me say to you that a great responsibility rests upon you, and your decision, which will no doubt be given after a careful consideration of the subject, will be looked after by the “spiritual world” with more than ordinary anxiety.

Trusting you will be equal to the emergency, I am spiritually yours,
 Amelia V. Brooks

New York Daily Tribune, APRIL 22, 1869, 2.

SPIRITUALISM IN COURT

In all the annals of criminal jurisprudence—and they comprise an array of crimes of almost every description—there has seldom, if ever, been recorded a case analogous to that now pending before Justice Dowling, in the Tombs Police Court, in which the people are the prosecutors, and Wm. H. Mumler of No. 630, Broadway, is the defendant. The specific charge brought against Mumler is that by means of what he termed spiritual photographs, he has swindled many credulous persons, his representations



Spinster.—“If it’s the same to you, Sir, I’d prefer a gentleman spirit beside me.”

FIGURE 37. Spirit photography cartoon, *The Star-Spangled Banner*, July 1869.

leading the victims to believe that by means of communication with the spirit land, it was possible not only to bring back the departed spirit, but to photograph their immaterial forms, thus forever perpetuating the memory of their spiritual presence. How many have been induced to speculate on the features of departed relatives and friends it is hard to say, but that the number was large the prosperity of Mr. Mumler's establishment seems to have proven beyond controversy, and, at the same time, that many were duped, and seemed to appreciate the fact. A few, predisposed to seize with morbid avidity anything savoring of the supernatural, gave implicit credence to the spiritual photographer, and refused to be convinced of what the majority of the world fully believed. On these parties Mr. Mumler mainly relied for evidence in his defence.

The announcement that the examination of the case would be continued yesterday, drew together a large and miscellaneous audience, including a number of the most distinguished of the believers in, and propagators of, the doctrines of Spiritualism, many legal gentlemen, curious to note the points of law which might arise during the trial, and a sprinkling of middle-aged ladies, believers evidently, who watched the proceedings with an interest scarcely exceeded by that of the party principally concerned. The examination was held in the Special Sessions Court Room; members of the bar, distinguished Spiritualists (among them Judge Edmonds and Mr. McDonald), and the ladies, being accommodated with seats inside the railing.

The principal defendant, Mr. Mumler, a man of about 40 years of age, with dark hair, beard, and eyes, and olive complexion, was seated next to his counsel, Messrs. J.T. Townsend, Day, and ex-Fire-Marshal Baker, and appeared perfectly calm and self-possessed, ready at a moment's notice to whisper to his counsel a question touching some important point which he desired to elicit from the witness. Mumler's face is one of the few from which one fails to gather any trace of character. It is calm and fathomless, and although it would be harsh to say that it is unprepossessing, it is yet a face which one would scarcely be able to believe in at first sight.

The People were represented by Mr. Eldridge Gerry, and the first witness called was Marshal Joseph H. Tooker, through whose instrumentality the spiritual photograph business was brought to the notice of the authorities. He deposed that in consequence of information from Mr. P.V. Hickey of *The World*, the Mayor had ordered him to "look up" the case, which he did by assuming a false name, and having a photograph taken by Mumler. After the taking of the picture the negative was shown him, with a dim, indistinct outline of a ghostly face, staring out of one corner, and he was

told that the picture represented the spirit of his father-in-law. He, however, failed to recognize the worthy old gentleman, and emphatically declared that the picture neither resembled his father-in-law, nor any of his relations, nor yet any person whom he had ever seen or known. The other portions of Marshal Tooker's testimony were published in *The Tribune* at the time of the first discovery of the alleged swindle, and therefore it would be useless to recapitulate. With this testimony the prosecution rested.

For the defence the first evidence introduced was that of Wm. P. Slee a photographer of Poughkeepsie. He had thoroughly investigated Mumler's process, but could find no device or trickery in it. Mumler had produced spiritual photographs in his presence, and from the camera in use at his gallery in Poughkeepsie, but with his knowledge of photography—a knowledge extending over several years—he was utterly unable to discover how the thing had been done. He thought the same result could be produced by natural or mechanical means, but could not make a positive assertion to that effect, never having tried it.

William W. Guay, who was employed as an assistant to Mumler, receiving one half of the profits of the business, testified: I have a recollection of having met Marshal Tooker at No. 630 Broadway; he called there and expressed a desire to have a spiritual photograph taken, asking me whether I could do it, and on what terms. I demanded our usual price (\$10 in advance), but as he professed his inability to pay that amount, I consented to receive \$2 as a deposit. I did not know Marshal Tooker, and had no suspicion of his design. Eight years ago, I was specially commissioned by Andrew Jackson Davis to go to Boston, where Mumler was operating, and make a strict investigation into his process. I made the investigation with the consent of Mumler, and though I tested the process by every means I could devise, I could find no trick or device, and became convinced that the spectral pictures appearing on photographs of living persons were actually and truly likenesses of those departed, and were produced by means other than those known to artists. I know of two or three methods of producing ghost-like figures similar to these: one by placing a person behind the sitter, another by a peculiar arrangement of reflectors, and the third by chemical means. When Marshal Tooker called on me, I told him (as I generally tell most persons) that the spiritual picture shown in the photograph would be that of the spirit most closely in sympathy with him. Mrs. Mumler was generally in the room when customers called. She is a medium. I am a believer in the system of philosophy emanating from Andrew Jackson Davis. I would prefer not to say whether I believe in spiritualism and spiritual manifestations or not.

New York Herald, APRIL 22, 1869, 7.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

THE TOMBS OPENED—JUDGE RHADAMATHUS DOWLING SITTING IN JUDGMENT—LOOK ON THIS PICTURE AND THAT—JUDGE EDMUNDS CHARON ON THE STAND—SPIRITS AVAUNT—GHOSTLY DEVELOPMENTS

Grim goblins stalked about the Tombs long after the cock's shrill clarion proclaimed the dawn of yesterday. The spirits held high carnival at that quaint judicial sepulchre, and gaunt forms flitted about, jubilant, in all directions. The occasion was a mighty one, for "the great council of ghosts was assembled to plead the justice of their cause, the right to a ticket of leave for a roving commission throughout the earth—permitted on this occasion only to revisit the glimpses of the moon." The court room of the Special Sessions was crammed with the disinterred, summoned again to the Tombs before Judge Dowling who was commissioned to hear their ghostly tales and mete out retributive justice according to the deeds done in the flesh. The unearthly looking throng came trooping with all their imperfections on their heads, submitting to the dread tribunal with what composure they might command on so solemn an occasion.

To state the case briefly, it is enough to announce that the arrest of William H. Mumler a few days since as a spirit photographer led to an investigation yesterday instituted by the Mayor into the whole subject of this so-called spirit photographing, the defendant being charged with swindling in that new branch of business. Mr. Gerry appeared for the prosecution and Mr. Albert Day and Mr. Baker for the defendant. [. . .]

New York World, APRIL 22, 1869, 1.

GHOSTS IN THE TOMBS: SPIRITUALISM ON TRIAL IN A PUBLIC COURT

Yesterday there was reached another step in the interesting case of the People against Mumler, the alleged "Spiritual" photographer, charged with obtaining money by "trick and device." At a much earlier hour than that fixed for the hearing of the case the Tombs Police Court was crowded. Persons of all classes, professions, and shades of opinion were present. Journalists, lawyers mighty in criminal proceedings, authors, physicians, artists, sculptors, sent representatives, all deeply interested in the solution of a question which they believe can only be answered by one of two alternatives—"A fraud" or "A miracle." And patiently during four or five hours

the audience, one of the most intelligent that ever assembled in a New York police court, sat watching each point made by the pleaders and testified to by the witnesses. [. . .]

EVIDENCE OF WILLIAM GURNEY

This was the next witness, and in answer to Mr. Day said: I am a photographer at 707 Broadway; I have been engaged in the business twenty-eight years; I have visited Mr. Mumler to have my picture taken; I witnessed the process, but I did not discover any deception; I saw the process of preparing the plate for the taking of a photograph, that is all; I saw him develop the picture, and upon the negative was a shadowy form; in developing it I applied the chemicals; he placed his hand upon the camera.

Q. There is a spirit upon those in front of the sitter; could an object pass before him like that without his knowing it?

A. I think not. I have also witnessed the process in Boston. In all my experience I have never known of a picture being taken by placing an object in the camera; it is not possible to take an object except that it be outside of the instrument.

To Mr. Gerry—I cannot say that he placed his hand upon the same place every time; I could not find out if there was a spring there to produce the effect. [. . .] (Looking at a photograph.) This can be produced by having a person standing behind the sitter or a picture; I do not think that an engraving would do; I did not feel anything cold or clammy or anything to cause a shivering sensation when I had my picture taken; I do not know whether the same might have or have not been produced by putting iodized collodion on a plate imperfectly cleaned.

Mr. Day—You see in that picture that the arm is in front; could such an effect be produced by an object being placed in front?

A. No, not to my knowledge.

New York Daily Tribune, APRIL 29, 1869, 2.

SPIRITUALISM IN COURT

THE MUMLER EXAMINATION CONTINUED—P. T. BARNUM, ESQ.,
ON THE STAND

Yesterday—the fourth day of the Spirit Photograph examination—the Tombs building was again well filled, the assemblage comprising not only the believers in the doctrines advanced by the Spiritualists, but many



FIGURE 38. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. A. L. Chamberlain with Spirit Plucking Her Guitar," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.26).

lawyers, merchants, and other persons drawn to the scene by the unusual interest of the case. Although the rush was great, a marked falling off in numbers as compared with past days was perceptible, and it was only by degrees that the Court became filled. The audience, however, consisted principally of a most respectable and apparently intelligent class.

Abraham Bogardus, having been placed on the stand, testified: I have been a photographer nearly 23 years, and am connected with the National Photographic Association of the United States; the Association was formed for protecting honest people in the trade from patents, and for putting down any humbug we could discover; Mr. Mumler is not a member of that society that I am aware of; I have heard most of the witnesses for the prosecution.

Mr. Gerry—How many processes are there of taking these so-called spirit photographs?

A. I cannot say, we might count them by scores; I can take a man with an angel over his head, or with a pair of horns on his head, just as I wish.

Q. Could you do it without a photographer being able to detect it?

A. A very acute photographer might detect it; I have exhibits by a process not already described (produced); they are made by taking a plate and coating it in the usual way, having an impression taken by any camera out of reach or sight of the sitter, and then putting the plate back into the coating bath; it might be left there as long as you like, and when a sitter comes it can be used, and the first impression will appear with the figure of the sitter; this is easily done; in referring to exhibit No. 20, for The People, in which a hand of the shadowy figure is represented as placed in the hair of the sitter, the witness said that effect was easily produced, and by a little maneuvering the arm might be made to encircle the waist; numbers 21 and 22 are made from sitters; the first is taken from a copy; in taking these pictures, we first take a dim impression from sitters prepared for that purpose, sometimes from a lady dressed in white and veiled over, and this impression might be preserved for almost any length of time; I could take them less distinct; this can be done by not having a proper focus; the more the figure is out of the focus, the more indistinct the picture; when the focus is perfect the miniature is perfect, such as the eyebrows, &c; the recognition of the spirit likenesses depends upon the imagination of the person sitting; I have known persons to come into my gallery and require a portrait of Henry Clay as Gen. Jackson; I have seen a perfect picture taken, and heard four or five relatives standing by say there was no likeness whatever; I have also known persons to come in and

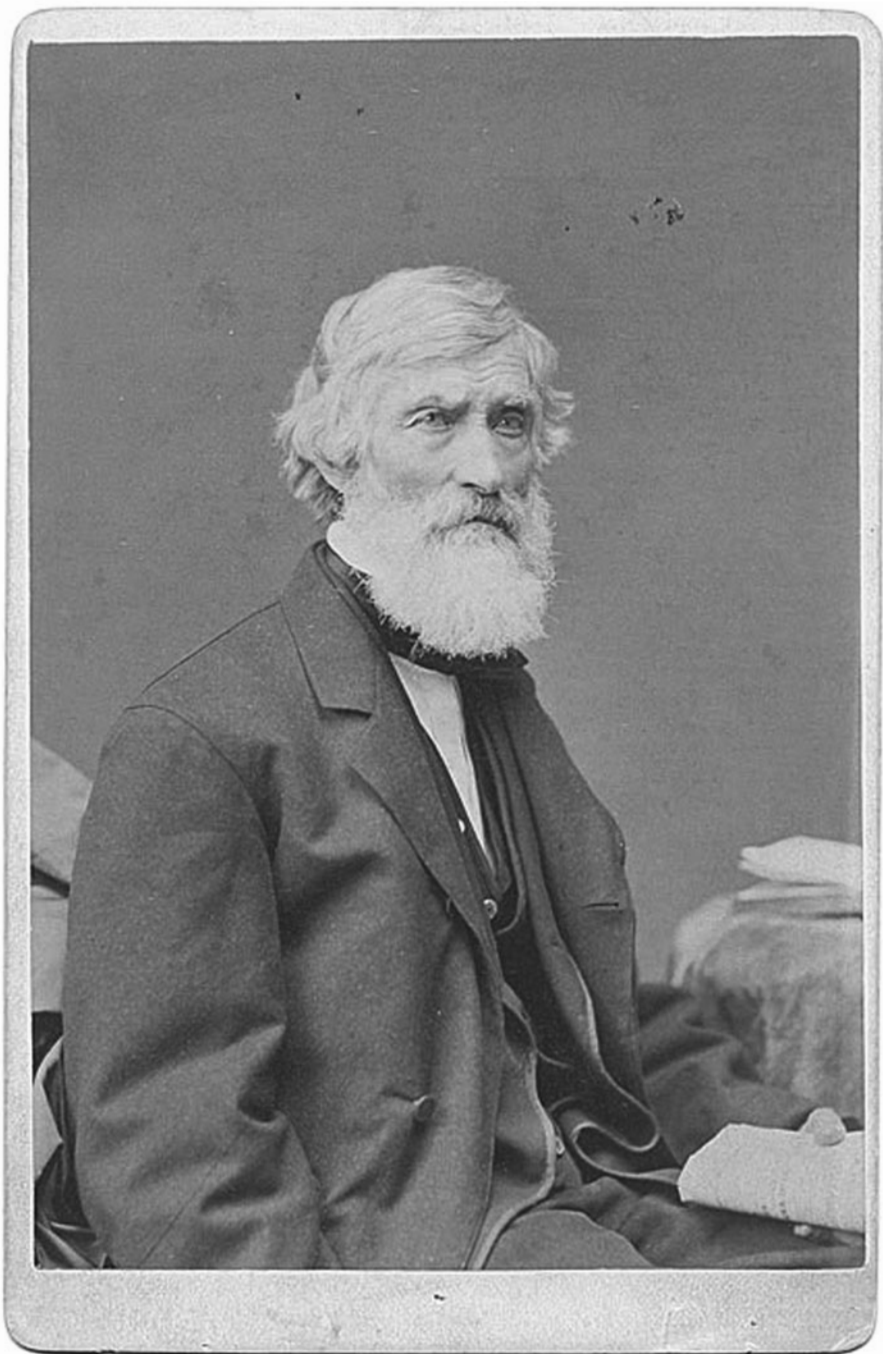


FIGURE 39. Asher B. Durand, "A (Abraham) Bogardus," 1869? Black-and-white photographic print, 17 × 11 cm. Courtesy of the Miscellaneous Photograph Collection, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

want to purchase a portrait of a child, believing it to be that of one of their children, when I have known it has been taken from some one else; No. 24 (produced) was taken yesterday from P.T. Barnum, esq.; in Nos. 21 and 13 for the defense, the so-called spirits could not have been in front of the camera; No. 13 is evidently a copy from an old picture, and, I believe, was made by the process I have described; if the camera was good for anything, the focus would have reached the picture had it been in front; no. 21 for the defense (the Livermore picture), is, to speak emphatically, a transparent lie on its face, the shadow on the sitter being on one side, and the shadow of the spirit on the other; it shows that the two pictures must have been taken at different times; No. 22, for *The People*, is taken by the process I have described.

Cross-examined—I don't know the person who confounded Henry Clay for Gen. Jackson; I do not know whether she had ever seen those two persons; the badness of the picture might have been the reason why my friends did not recognize the portrait of the child alluded to; I cannot produce the likeness of a person after death unless from copy, neither can any other mortal; I am a believer in the Bible.

Mr. Townsend then read from the 3d. to the last verse of the 22nd chapter of the 1st Samuel, asking the witness at the conclusion if he believed the spirit alluded to therein had language and appearance.

Mr. Gerry objected to the question. He did not object to the reading of the Bible in Court, because he thought a person would not be injured by the Scriptures anywhere, but these theological questions were put for the purpose of confounding the witness. The objection was sustained.

Mr. Townsend—I do not propose to direct any question in regard to theology, but to question him as a photographer. I put the question and desire an exception.

Q. If from the reading of that chapter it appears a spirit appeared in form and language, would you consider it as remarkable that a spirit portrait could have been taken, provided photography had then existed?

Mr. Gerry raised an objection, which was sustained by the Judge. [. . .]

Mr. Mason, whose evidence was unfinished at the adjournment of the previous hearing, was now called. He said that in Exhibit No. 20, for the defence, the so-called spirit could not have been in front of the camera when the picture was taken, because the shadow on the sitter was on the opposite side to the shadow on the ghost.

Cross-examined—By no process I know could I take the likeness of a person after death without a copy; I knew there were modes of making

shadowy pictures; the "David Brewster" process was one, which has been previously described by other witnesses; a second process was the introduction of a small plate in the camera; this has also been previously described.

The next witness was P.T. Barnum, esq. who testified: I reside at No. 438 Fifth-ave., corner of Thirty-ninth-st.; I have devoted a portion of my life to the detection of humbugs; I have not personally had any interview with Mr. Mumler.

Mr. Gerry—How long have you been acquainted with Mr. Mumler by reputation in connection with the production of these spirit photographs?

Mr. Townsend made an objection to this question. He said these questions were intended to elicit answers which go to the papers and prejudice the minds of the public as well as his Honor's.

The Judge said the question might be asked and ruled out the objection.

Witness: I think it is seven years since I first heard of Mr. Mumler as the original spirit photographer.

Mr. Gerry: Did you have any correspondence with Mr. Mumler on the subject of spirit photographs?

Mr. Townsend interposed an objection.

The Judge said if the correspondence was in existence the question might be asked.

Mr. Townsend: Your Honor has been so close in ruling against us that I do not see why you should allow correspondence which took place seven years ago to be brought in evidence.

The question having been allowed, the witness replied: There was correspondence between us, but I think the letters were burnt with the Museum.

Mr. Gerry—State the evidence of their contents.

Mr. Townsend again objected. The letters could not be called lost evidence, as the witness cannot swear that they are destroyed.

Mr. Gerry—You wrote in connection with the Museum business.

Mr. Townsend—I object to that also.

The Judge—Did the letters relate to the matter of investigation?

Mr. Townsend—There is no evidence hitherto that the witness ever had any correspondence with *this* Mr. Mumler.

The Judge—Perhaps the counsel for the prosecution can prove Mr. Mumler's location at that time.

After the discussion of other forensic points, witness said: The correspondence was dated in Boston during the time Mr. Mumler was in

the employ of the large jewelry firm of Bigelow Brothers & Kennard; he was engaged there as an engraver; I do not remember the first name of Mumler, and have never seen him until to-day to my knowledge; the letters I received from Mr. Mumler were all dated from Boston; the substance of the correspondence was this: I was about to write a book representing the humbugs of the world, and I wrote Mr. Mumler that I was going to expose the humbug of spirit photographs, and that I wished to purchase specimens of his so-called spirit photographs for the Museum; I bought a number, giving \$2 a piece for them, and they were hung on the walls of the Museum for three or four years; among them were the so-called spiritual appearance of Napoleon Bonaparte and Henry Clay, and the positions of the figures were exactly like the well-known engravings of these personages; the title of my book was the "Humbugs of the World"; all the chapters relating to spirit photographs referred to this Mumler; I went yesterday to Mr. Bogardus's gallery and asked him if he could take a spirit photograph, telling him that I did not want any humbug about it; he said he could do it; I examined the glass and discovered nothing in it; I saw the process of pouring over the first liquid, and afterward the pouring over of nitrate of silver, and then saw it placed in the camera; when done it had my likeness and the shadow of Abraham Lincoln; I saw the ghost of Lincoln as soon as it was developed in the dark room; I was unconscious of any spiritual presence [Figure 40].

Cross-examined: I have never been in any humbug business, where I did not give value for the money; these spirit photographs were labeled "humbug" on the walls of my Museum; the woolly horse was a remarkable reality and curiosity; it was exactly what I represented it to be, having a peculiar form and curled hair; it was exactly a woolly horse; it was not a horse "wooled over"; the horse was "born" exactly as he was when exhibited in my Museum, and there was nothing artificial about him.

Q. Were the representations of that horse, through your paper or through any of your printed matter or representations otherwise issued, for the purpose of deceiving the people?

A. No; as far as the horse was concerned, it was naturally a "woolly horse." The mermaid, at the time I exhibited it, was represented to the public to be exactly as it was represented to me. I never had reason to doubt that it was what I represented it.

Q. Do you wish to state that the mermaid was precisely the same as you represented it? (Ruled out.)

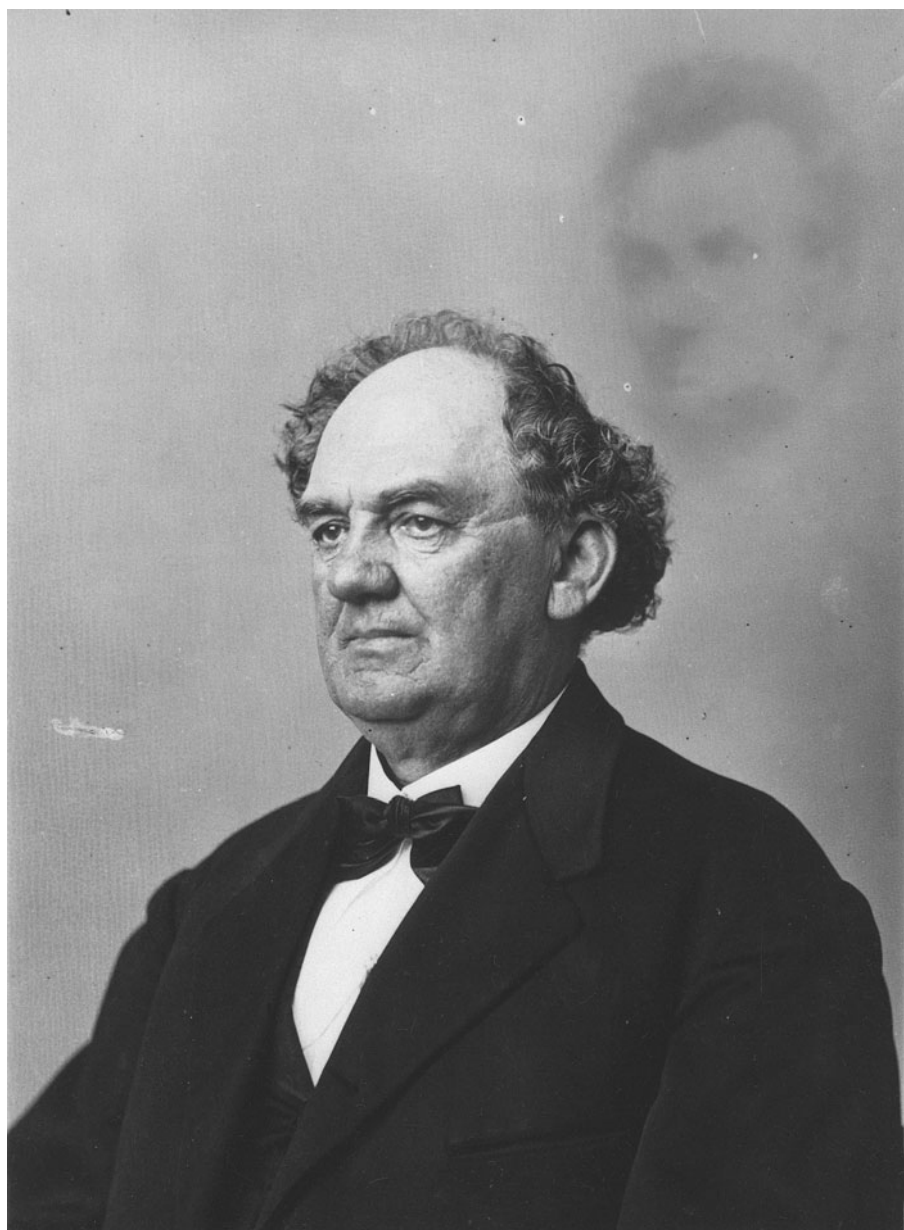


FIGURE 40. Abraham Bogardus, "P. T. Barnum with the Spirit of Abraham Lincoln," 1869.
Courtesy of Picture History.

Q. Have you never presented to the public, matters you knew to be untrue, and taken money for the exhibition of spurious curiosities?

A. I think I *may* have given a little drapery with it sometimes. (Laughter.)

Q. How about the nurse of George Washington? Did you believe she was the person you represent her to be?

A. I have no belief about it. I bought her as such, and the bill of sale has never been disproved. I bought her and paid \$1,000 for her, but before she got through I might have had some little doubt upon the subject. (Laughter.)

Q. Was this doubt ever suggested to the public?

A. I never put myself out of the way about it. (Laughter.) The gentleman to whom I first wrote about Mumler's spirit photographs was the man in whose employ Mumler then was. He gave me Mumler's address.

Q. Did you ever know, except from hearsay, that Mumler was ever in the employ of Bigelow, Kennard & Co.?

A. I only know from hearsay. I wrote to Mumler and got a letter back signed Mumler, and if I saw his handwriting I think I should know it. Mr. Kennard told me that Mumler was a smart fellow, that he deceived the public with his spirit photographs, and charged \$10 a piece for them.

Mumler—That's false.

Q. You never saw Mr. Mumler?

A. I think I have told you so forty times. (Laughter.)

Q. And yet you say that this is the Mumler who wrote the letters. How many letters did you have from him?

A. Perhaps two or three. They passed between us seven years ago; I think it was yesterday I was told I should be called upon to testify; I looked over the letters left out of the conflagration; there were some hundreds, but I could not find Mumler's; I have no doubt Mumler wrote these letters; I cannot swear it, but have no doubt of it; my book is not here, but a copy might be got.

Q. Would it satisfy you if an assertion was made by Mr. Mumler that he had never written to you in his life?

A. I wrote to him, and had letters back.

To Mr. Gerry—I went to Mr. Bogardus's gallery, and asked if he could produce the likeness of the nurse of George Washington; he said he had not enough of vitality left, but he could do it at some other time; I have no doubt he could. (Laughter.) The humorous manner in which this witness gave his testimony elicited considerable laughter from the audience.

New York World, APRIL 29, 1869, 2.

“SPIRIT” PHOTOGRAPHY: CONCLUSION OF THE EVIDENCE IN
THE MUMLER CASE
TESTIMONY OF CHARLES B. BOYLE

Examined by Assistant District-Attorney Blunt—Resides at 111 Third-avenue; is a photographer; has been one over twenty years; is connected with the American Institute; is familiar with spirit photographs, so called; has been familiar with them since they were first taken by Mr. Mumler; his attention was first attracted to the subject about seven years ago; he has made such pictures; first saw Mumler in the gallery known as Mrs. Stewart’s in Boston; saw him previous to hearing of the spirit photographs; thinks he looks older now, but in his judgment this Mumler is the same that he saw in Boston; he (Mumler) was attending to the business in that gallery. (The witness exhibits pictures which he made in Rockwood’s gallery, and also some which he made in a gallery in the Bowery within the last few days.) He explained the process, which is the same as that described by previous witnesses, of making the negative of the ghost first, and obtaining the impression upon the real plate with the sitter on it, by holding it up to the light; he also explained how pictures may be made by what is called the Sir David Brewster’s ghost process; he was also familiar with what is called the screen process, which he described; exhibits twenty, twenty-four, thirteen, and fourteen being shown him, he says that he is positive that the ghost form in those pictures could not have been made by anything in front of the camera at the same time as the sitter of the picture was taken, for the same reason that has been given by previous witnesses.

Cross-examined by Mr. Townsend—Is not a Spiritualist, has looked into the subject; has never heard that spirit forms were acted upon and governed by their own light; he believes there are some things true in the Bible, and, with regard to other things, his opinion is suspended; he can only believe those things that are apparent to his conception. The counsel then read the transfiguration scene on the mount, and asked the witness if he believed that; he answered that that was one of the parts on which his opinion was suspended; says he will only believe that which he can comprehend, and for that reason did not believe in Spiritualism; it is apparent to his reason that Mumler’s process is a humbug for the same reason that he knows that two and two are four; with four nuts he can demonstrate it to his senses. He was asked whether, if this account of the

transfiguration were true, did he believe that they, the spirits, shone by their own light? He said he did not; has never known of a picture being taken of a person deceased.

To Mr. Gerry—Has never known from anything that he has read that these spirits, if they did so appear, appeared by their own light.

In the course of the examination of this witness, Mr. Townsend stated that the Spiritualists believed in the Bible, and that their Spiritualism was in fact the peculiar form of their religion.

New York Times, MAY 4, 1869, 1.

SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHS: ARGUMENT OF MR. TOWNSEND

Mr. Townsend then began his argument for the defence. The case under examination, he said, was one that had excited more than ordinary interest, not only because of its intrinsic merit, but because of the grave charges in which it involved his client. Public attention was not, however, exclusively directed to the prisoner; the interest in the case had spread itself among those who have religious views differing materially from those entertained by the community generally. He would, therefore, direct the mind of the Court, in the first place, to the legal aspect of the case, and subsequently he would touch upon the belief popularly known as spiritualism. He would be compelled to do this, because the question as to what is the belief of spiritualists had been introduced into this examination. He should do it, too, for the purpose of showing that there is nothing in the spiritualistic doctrine that should tend in any way to throw doubt or suspicion on the testimony adduced for the defence.

The gist of the charge made by the prosecution was that the prisoner had obtained money from Marshal Tooker by trick and device, and that he had the intent to cheat and defraud that gentleman, by making false representations as to his (Mumler's) power to produce spirit photographs. In the testimony adduced to support the charge made by the prosecution, including the affidavit of Mr. Tooker, there was nothing that would justify the Court in committing the prisoner to answer to a charge of fraud before the Grand Jury. When Tooker visited the gallery he asked if a spirit picture would be guaranteed him, and he was told it would not. Mr. Guay gave him this answer; and Tooker himself expressly swears, on the stand, that Mumler would not and did not guarantee any such thing. All that he said was, that if a form did appear on his picture it would be that of the spirit nearest in sympathy with him at the time. Was there any fraud here?

Was it anything more, regarding the matter even in its most criminal aspect, than a breach of contract? But Mumler is charged with fraud because the prosecution cannot understand how the spirit form was produced; and owing to the fact that Tooker and those who testify on the part of the People are unable to account for the appearance of these shadowy forms, therefore it is sought to hunt down this prisoner, and fix on him the brand of cheat and humbug. Suppose, when Morse was struggling to put before the world the great fact that by means of electricity communication might be had on the instant between persons hundreds of miles apart, some skeptic should have asked to have a message sent from New-York to Boston; that Mr. Morse, confident of the truth of his discovery, should attempt to send the message, but that, owing to some cause not clearly known to him, the continuity should be broken, and the attempt to transmit the message should fail, would such failure be counted a fraud by any court or jury in Christendom? And yet Mumler is charged with fraud because the spirit figure which appeared on Tooker's photograph is not recognized by Tooker as being the representation of any person known to him. Then, again, when these forms are recognized, the recognition is attributed to the insanity, or something approaching thereto, which is said to characterize spiritualists. Now, we have the authoritative statement of the Catholic Council which not long since assembled in Baltimore, called by a mandate of the Pope, that although the Christian denominations in the United States number about 10,000,000 members, there are 11,000,000 spiritualists in the country. Can it be alleged that all these spiritualists are insane? [. . .] Under the theory held by spiritualists what was more probable than that the villainous countenance that appeared on Tooker's picture should be that of some spirit most in sympathy with him. He was, according to his own statement, acting under an assumed name at the time; he was playing a *réle* of deceit, and if there be any truth in spiritualism, he was likely to be in company with just such a villainous form as stamped its image on his photograph. [. . .]

It was singular that Mr. Mumler, if he be the man represented by the prosecution, was able to produce in his defense such unimpeachable witnesses as have testified in his behalf; and more especially when it is considered that he had been a resident of this city for only a few months. For seven years he had been in this photographic business and during all that time he had not been complained of, had not been called to account by any one for whom he had taken a picture, although he pursued his avocation for years in the most intellectual city in the Union. It remained for

an argus-eyed reporter of a newspaper to discover what the greatest minds had failed to detect—the fraudulent character of the prisoner's avocation.

Mr. Townsend then critically reviewed the testimony for the defence, and claimed that whether considered in regard to the honesty with which it was given, or as the embodiment of facts that the prosecution had failed to controvert, it called for the acquittal of the prisoner. In relation to the experts who gave evidence for the prosecution, he said that they followed the beaten track in which they had trod for so many years. Science had taught them certain facts, and they were unwilling that any one should declare anything not fully within their comprehension—they don't believe that science can improve. Men like these would have hung Galileo, had he lived in their day.

Counsel then alluded to the positive testimony of Mr. Livermore, who identified the spirit likeness of his wife; to that of Mr. Fanshaw, who swore to the likeness of his mother and his son. All these were pictures of deceased persons. He asked whether, in its purported *exposé* of the trick and fraud charged upon the prisoner, it had been able, through any one of its expert witnesses, to produce a picture of a dead person, who never had a picture taken during life. His client, as had been proven on this trial, had done that thing—had taken such pictures, and they had been recognized by the parties most interested. As to the testimony of Mr. Hull, the principal witness for the prosecution, counsel would beg leave to call attention to the fact that that gentleman had pointed out certain exhibits for the defence which could be taken by a process he described. Now, one of these pointed out was the photograph of Mr. Gilmore, who had testified that when that very picture was taken he watched Mr. Mumler, and had been unable to detect fraud. Another witness, Mr. Bogardus, had set himself up as an oracle in things photographic, and said that he could put a plate into a bath, keep it there for half a day, and then, on taking it out, use it, and produce a spirit likeness. This shows that there are immense numbers of ignorant photographers in this City, or that Mr. Bogardus has reached to the very last round of the ladder of science. This witness had pronounced the opinions of Judge Edmonds and other men of great intelligence to be merely matters of imagination, and the learned counsel would leave it with the Court to decide how much such testimony was worth.

If, said the counsel, the spiritual belief is true, then we must admit that there is nothing in Mumler's works to justify the charge brought against him. Spiritualists found their belief on the Bible. Throughout that book we find mention of spirits. Balaam and his ass furnish familiar instance,

and counsel thought that the people of these times were possessed of fully as much intelligence as Balaam's ass, which saw a spirit. The Witch of Endor raised the spirit of Samuel, and if we believe in the Bible—counsel could not see how we can fail to believe that spirits do appear, at times, and are palpable to the sight of those mortals gifted with the power of seeing them.

Mr. P.T. Barnum's testimony was a very pretty illustration of a humbug. His very name smells of humbug. I have no faith, said Mr. Townsend, in such men. Even allowing his testimony to be true, Mr. Barnum violates the great precept relating to honor among thieves, in that he exposed a man whom he claimed was his accomplice. In relation to the charge that because a man is a spiritualist that is proof presumptive of insanity, counsel would ask, if a spiritualist were brought before his Honor on a charge of murder, would the Court, or would a jury, fail to convict him of the crime on due evidence because he was a spiritualist, or because he was in the meaning of that word, as understood by the prosecution, insane? No. His belief would be no mitigation of his crime, and counsel claimed, therefore, that the testimony of defendant's witnesses, as to matter of belief, be taken as any other testimony is taken. What sort of a man must the prisoner be if the theory of the prosecution were correct. First, he would require a gallery of immense proportions; he would be compelled to have on hand negative pictures of the parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and great-grandmothers of all the persons who called to get photographs. Next, he must be possessed of a knowledge of chemistry and scientific matters generally, matters of which he professed no great knowledge. Again, he must have a dexterity surpassing that of Anderson, Heller, or Blitz, and be so shrewd as to defy detection at the hands of the most scientific expert. Did the prisoner present the appearance of any such man? For seven years, he had been engaged in the photographic business, and had submitted his process to the investigation of the most scientific men, and none had ever yet pronounced him a deceiver. In view of these facts, and if the Court believed the uncontradicted testimony for the defence, its decision must acquit the prisoner.

Counsel then read from the Bible various narrations of spiritual apparitions, as therein recorded. He read, also, from Boswell's *Johnson*, from the *Life of Addison*, and the works of Josephus to show that all of these great authors, while they did not absolutely pronounce themselves believers in spiritualism, yet showed that they did to a great extent believe in the appearance of spirits. Counsel averred that, as far as he had seen, he never

knew a class of people to lead more upright lives, or die happier deaths than professed spiritualists. He believed that spiritualism came in time to fill a gap in the religious world. People were drifting rapidly toward total neglect or unbelief when spiritualism appeared and woke them up to the importance of the great hereafter. It was required by the necessities of the times, and if it convinced only one single person of the immortality of the soul it had served a good purpose. It was spreading everywhere. In China and Constantinople, even, it was known and believed, and all the Hulls and Barnums in existence were unable to destroy the faith of those who believed in and adhered to it.

Mr. Townsend closed a two hours' argument by a most powerful and highly finished appeal to the Court to regard the conscientious convictions of the thousands who believed in the spiritual doctrine, and to acquit the prisoner, against whom the prosecution had utterly failed to make out a case.

New York World, MAY 4, 1869, 2.

THE TRIUMPH OF THE GHOSTS

MUMLER DISCHARGED BY JUSTICE DOWLING

There was the usual attendance of Spiritualists and lookers on at the Tombs Police Court yesterday morning, when the Mumler case was called. Justice Dowling, upon taking his seat requested prisoner's counsel to proceed. That gentleman said:

If your Honor please, as I understand that the charge preferred against us is one which, if the prisoner be eventually convicted, would constitute a felony, and be punished by confinement in the State Prison, I ask that he may be allowed to make his statement upon the usual questions put to him.

Judge Dowling, after a little discussion with the counsel, directed that this should be taken, and requested the clerk to put the usual questions to the prisoner, which he did, as follows:

Q. How old are you?

A. Thirty-seven.

Q. Where were you born?

A. At Boston.

Q. Where do you live?

A. At 45 Thirty-first street.

Q. What is your occupation?

A. Photographer.

Q. Have you anything to say, and if so, what relative to the charge preferred against you? Here the prisoner read the following

STATEMENT

In 1861, in the City of Boston, while engaged in business as an engraver, I was in the habit of visiting a young man who was employed in a photographic gallery kept by a Mrs. Stewart, on Washington street. Occasionally I would experiment with the instrument and chemicals. One Sunday, while entirely alone in this gallery, I attempted to get a picture of myself, and then it was that I first discovered, while developing it, that a second form appeared on the plate. At this time I had never heard of spirit pictures, although I had been somewhat interested in the doctrine of Spiritualism. At first I laboured under what is now the general impression, that the plate upon which the picture was taken could not have been clean, and that the form which showed itself beside my own must have been left on the glass, and I so stated to my employer and others. Subsequent attempts, however, made under circumstances which preclude such a possibility have confirmed me in the belief that the power by which these forms are produced is beyond human control, and the experts that have been called by the people have failed to produce a picture in that manner. I wish to state that at the time I developed the shadow or form above alluded to, I was a complete novice in the art of photography, and had no experience whatever in the art of photography, and had no experience whatever in the composition of chemicals used in the business; and that my use of them in my experiments at that time was simply in conformity with what I had seen my friend do, while himself engaged in his business. After getting the form on the plate, at the suggestion of several friends to whom I showed the plate, I made other attempts, and generally with most remarkable results; I then determined to leave my own business and devote myself to photography; before long the subject of spirit-photography, and particularly my success, became the theme of every tongue, and I was overrun with people of enquiring minds, and obliged to go over and over again, for their pleasure, the routine of taking and developing the pictures. For a long time I never refused any person who came to investigate; it soon became apparent, however, that I must either stop it or cease to support myself; for, as a general thing, these *savans*, while greedy themselves for intellectual food, seemed entirely oblivious to the fact that I myself was a material body. (Laughter.) However, I can truly say that I have never

refused, intentionally, any person who desired to have a picture taken from making every examination or inquiry they chose to make, and had I been allowed in this examination to have produced evidence from abroad, I could have shown by scientific men, whose names would have satisfied every one, that the most careful and minute examinations have often been made into all the details of my business while I have been engaged in taking pictures; I solemnly assert here that I have now but a comparatively little knowledge of photography, or chemicals, or science of any kind, further than is absolutely needed to take ordinary photographic pictures; I positively assert that in taking the pictures on which these forms appear, I have never used any trick or device, or availed myself of any deception or fraud in producing them; that these forms have appeared in each and every instance when they have been presented without any effort, except my will-power, to produce them. [. . .]

As to my refusal to entertain propositions from the self-appointed committee of photographers who appeared in my rooms since my arrest, and who desired, as I am informed by Mr. Guay, to make me take pictures for them, whether I would or not, I have only to say, that since my arrest I have placed myself entirely in the hands of my Counsel, and have been guided by his advice, and I am pleased to say that one of the first cautions he gave me was to refrain, during the examination, from being led into any trap of that kind; having been charged with a crime which, temporarily at least, placed me before the public in the same category with gamblers, and men of that ilk; I have been deprived of the privilege of having my utensils seized at the time of my arrest. If I had been engaged in such nefarious proceedings as I am charged with, the implements themselves would have been the strongest evidence against me. They were not touched. They have stood ever since in the position they have always occupied in my gallery, and, for the safety of others who may hereafter be called to occupy my place in a court of justice, I sincerely hope such proceedings may cease.

Judge Dowling, during the reading, interrupted the prisoner at that part relating to the seizure of his apparatus, to say that there had been an application made to him to seize the prisoner's camera, plates, &c.; but that he was opposed to such a course, as it had been condemned during the war: a seizure had been made upon Gurney's place, and the public had condemned it. [. . .]

Judge Dowling now read his judgment in these words: "After a careful and thorough analysis of this interesting, and, I may say, extraordinary

case, I have come to the conclusion that the prisoner should be discharged. I will state that, however, I am morally convinced that there may be fraud and deception practiced by the prisoner, yet I, sitting as a magistrate to determine from the evidence given by the witnesses according to law, am compelled to decide that I would not be justified in sending this complaint to the Grand Jury, as, in my opinion, the prosecution has failed to make out the case. I therefore dismiss the complaint, and order the discharge of the prisoner.”

New York World, MAY 4, 1869, 4.

The spirit-photography case was brought to an abrupt conclusion yesterday by the discharge of MUMLER, Judge DOWLING declining to send the case to the Grand Jury, stating that however he might be morally convinced that there “may be fraud and deception practiced by the prisoner,” yet he did not feel justified in sending the complaint to the Grand Jury, since, in his opinion, the prosecution failed to make out their case. To this conclusion *The World* fully believed that the case would be brought. However convinced any one might be that the man MUMLER was obtaining money by trick and fraud in selling photographs which were claimed to be produced by supernatural agencies, the difficulty lay in establishing the fact; as we said at the beginning of the examination, it would be difficult to prove a negative, even a photographic “negative.” Notwithstanding the fully anticipated termination of this trial, the examination has not been without its beneficial results. It has been shown by accomplished experts that these so-called spirit-photographs can readily be taken by ordinary mechanical and scientific means; and this fact alone ought to prevent people from investing in similar or poorer pictures which profess to be “spiritual,” especially as they can get better pictures of the same character at much more reasonable rates. Nor need any fear that MUMLER’S examination and the full reports of the same in the daily papers have advertised spirit-photographers into speedy fortunes.

New York World, MAY 4, 1869, 8.

One portion of the evidence in the great “spirit” photography case reveals some fearful possibilities. It is deposed by a witness, a professional photographer, that he could “take a man with an angel over his head, or with a pair of hands on his head,” and also that the picture of a lady that was

shown him with her hand in a gentleman's hair, might with equal case have been taken to represent this complaisant feminine with her arm about the sitter. In fact, says the witness, "the process of taking them"—these miraculous pictures—"can be changed to any extent, almost." This being so, what a vista does the fact reveal! Who, henceforth, can trust the accuracy of a photograph? Heretofore, we have been led to believe that nature, the whole of nature, and nothing but nature, could be "took"; but now whither shall we turn when it is possible for Henry Ward Beecher, say, to be presented in the embraces of a festive *fleurette*, or the ghost of the late lamented be delineated with a rawhide in the hand hectoring a gang of negroes in a cotton field? What ravage will this possibility make of private reputation, and what confusion entail on the historian of future times. Photographs have been treasured in a belief that, like figures, they could not lie, but here is a revelation that they may be made to lie with a most deceiving exactness. From this day out, marriage by photograph will become obsolete, for how can Augustus, who has fallen in love with Clorinda from the beauty of her letters, be really sure that it is the counterfeit presentment of that fair one which the mail brings him in answer to his piteous request? Clorinda's nose may be nobly aquiline in the photograph, but who shall say that in nature it is not the merest proletarian snub, and that by this photographic transformation process said snub has been eliminated and somebody else's aquiline put in? And similarly of a sameness in the case of Augustus, *his* nose. Evidently the lawyers will have to furbish up their weapons in false presences if this kind of thing is to come in vogue, and see to it, also, that we have special statutes against photographic slander, representing the lieges in places where they never were; attitudes they never assumed; and companionships they abhor as the real, old, original inventor of this "process" does holy water.

Harper's Weekly: Journal of Civilization 12, NO. 645 (MAY 8, 1869), 1.

SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHY

The case of the people against WILLIAM H. MUMLER, of 630 Broadway, is one so remarkable and without precedent in the annals of criminal jurisprudence that we devote this page to illustrations bearing upon it. The charge against Mr. MUMLER is that, by means of what he terms spiritual photographs, he has swindled many credulous persons, leaving them to believe it possible to photograph the immaterial forms of their departed friends.

The case has excited the profoundest interest, and, strange as it may seem, there are thousands of people who believe that its development will justify the claims made by the spiritual photographer. We shall not attempt to give an expression to our own opinions, but simply to follow the developments of the case through the first few days of the trial.

It is through the instrumentality of Marshal JOSEPH H. TOOKER that the case has been brought before the courts. He deposes that he was ordered by Mayor HALL to investigate the case, which he did by assuming a false name, and by getting his photograph taken by Mr. MUMLER. After the taking of the picture the negative was shown him, with a dim, indistinct outline of a ghostly face staring out of one corner; and he was told that the picture represented the spirit of his father-in-law. He, however, failed to recognize the worthy old gentleman, and emphatically declared that the picture neither represented his father-in-law, nor any of his relations, nor yet any person whom he had ever seen or known. With this evidence the prosecution rested.

The counsel for the defense have brought forward a number of witnesses who testify to the genuineness of spiritual photographs taken for them by Mr. MUMLER. WILLIAM P. SLEE, a photographer of Poughkeepsie, testifies that MUMLER succeeded in producing spiritual photographs at his gallery in Poughkeepsie, and he was unable to discover how it was done. Judge EDMONDS, one of the most distinguished advocates of Spiritualism, deposed that he had two photographs taken by MUMLER: the spirit form in one of them he thought he could recognize, but not the one in the other. He said: "I believe that the camera can take a photograph of a spirit, and I believe also that spirits have materiality—not that gross materiality that mortals possess, but still they are material enough to be visible to the human eye, for I have seen them; only a few days since I was in a court in Brooklyn when a suit against a life assurance company for the amount claimed to be due on a certain policy was being heard. Looking toward that part of the court-room occupied by the jury, I saw the spirit of the man whose death was the basis of the suit. The spirit told me the circumstances connected with the death; said that the suit was groundless, that the claimant was not entitled to recover from the company, and said that he (the man whose spirit was speaking) had committed suicide under certain circumstances; I drew a diagram of the place at which his death occurred, and on showing it to the counsel, was told that it was exact in every particular."

A large number of witnesses deposed that they recognized the forms of departed friends (in some cases of those long dead) in the photographs

taken for them by MUMLER. The most striking case was that of a gentleman of Wall Street, whose deceased wife's features both he and his friends distinctly recognized in a photograph taken for him in this way.

If there is a trick in Mr. MUMLER's process it has certainly not been detected as yet. To all appearances spiritual photography rests just where the rappings and table-turnings have rested for some years. Those who believe in it at all will respect no opposing arguments, and disbelievers will reject every favorable hypothesis or explanation. Mr. MUMLER has certainly been very fortunate. He has been believed in, in the first place, by a large number of people. He has obtained, again, a good price for his photographs; for who could expect spirits to be called "from the vasty deep" for less than ten dollars per head? And, finally, he has been prosecuted, and thus extensively advertised. Beyond this, the trial, like all legal prosecutions of this nature, will amount to nothing.

In addition to our illustrations of specimens of Mr. MUMLER's spirit photographs, we give also representations of similar photographs taken by Mr. ROCKWOOD of this city. The latter were taken by natural means, but not so as to escape detection as to the trick resorted to secure the result. Mr. MUMLER has certainly the advantage of a longer experience in the business.

Banner of Light, MAY 8, 1869, 5.

SPIRIT PHOTOGRAPHY

No subject since the days of the Rochester Knockings has stirred New York into so much discussion on the subject of Spiritualism as the late arrest of Mr. Mumler for pretending to take spirit-photographs; and whatever is proved or disproved, and whatever Mr. Mumler has done or not done, is all of little consequence in comparison to the vast amount of good results that must arise from getting such testimony as that of Judge Edmonds, Edmund Kirke, Mr. Gurney, (the oldest photographer in the city,) and several others, into the daily papers, and bringing them under constant discussion. One thing is certain: Mayor Hall has learned a lesson that will be useful to him in the future, and probably will not again attempt to prosecute a subject until he knows something about it, or at least has some credible authority to back him up, as he surely lacked both in this case. Whatever turn events take of late, every movement seems to advance our cause and seems to be managed by our spirit-friends.

CHARLES W. HULL, "NEW YORK CORRESPONDENCE," *Philadelphia Photographer* 6 (1869): 199–201.

The Photographic Section of the American Institute held its regular meeting May 4th. Mr. Abraham Bogardus, Vice-President, in the chair. Mr. Hall introduced the following, which was adopted without a dissenting voice:

WHEREAS, recent investigations before Police Justice Dowling, of so-called Spirit Photography, satisfactorily disposes of such, and at once brands the whole matter as trickery; therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Photographic Section of the American Institute take the earliest opportunity to condemn all such methods of working upon the credulous and uninitiated, and that they receive with wonder and amazement the decision of the Justice; and be it further

Resolved, That to our worthy member, Mr. P. V. Hickey, of the *World*, who lodged the complaint upon which the proceedings were based, we offer our thanks, for his praiseworthy though unsuccessful efforts in the cause of truth and common sense.

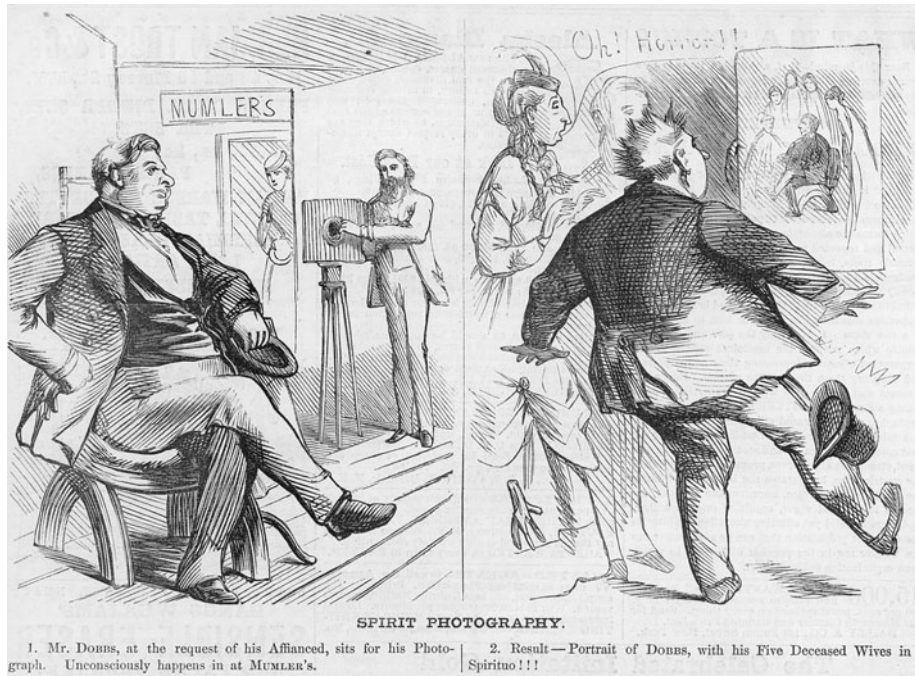


FIGURE 41. Spirit photography cartoon, *Harper's Weekly*, May 8, 1869.

CONCLUSION

SPOOKED THEORIES

DECONSTRUCTION, PSYCHOANALYSIS, AND THE
SPECTERS OF MUMLER

GHOSTS IN THE MACHINES

In *Haunted Media*, Jeffrey Sconce reviews the historical trajectory of the links that have been forged between modern communications media and the occult, from the invention of the telegraph in the mid-nineteenth century through radio (wireless telegraphy) and television in the twentieth century to contemporary cyberspace. At every step along the way, the wonders of “live” transmission (what Sconce marks as “electronic presence”) and the reproductive capabilities of these technical media have been interpreted and interpellated as ghosts in the machine and along the wires of communication. Sconce looks at the spooked media landscape at the beginning of the third millennium and takes up the rhetoric of disembodiment specifically:

The similarity between the Spiritualist occult and the current explosion of supernaturalism in cyberspace is less an example of a historical “return” than of a historical trajectory. By traversing time and space at the speed of light, electronic media have always indulged the fantasy of discorporation and the hope that the human soul, consciousness, or subject could exist independently of his or her material frame. Related to the discorporative fantasy is that of the electronic elsewhere—the media’s occult power to give form to sovereign electronic worlds. These remain the fantasies informing accounts of fantastic media, even today, be they in the form of paranormal anecdotes or postmodern prognostications.¹

It is interesting to point out that Sconce devotes very little space to the fantastic medium of spirit photography as an early participant in this historical trajectory, and he does not mention the ghostly developments undertaken by William Mumler at all. However, if we were to apply this analysis of “haunted media” to the phenomenon of spirit photography, then its fantasy would be to deploy the medium’s occult powers in order to give visual form and provide access to an “elsewhere” inhabited by unseen and departed spirits beyond the powers of the naked eye. Likewise, spirit photography taps into the so-called fantasy of discorporation by claiming that the human soul can exist independently as a shadowy trace of its material and corporeal frame and that this can be captured in these haunted photographic proofs.

Sconce’s book begins with a remarkable analysis of the birth of Spiritualism and the mediumistic phenomena of the Fox sisters in upstate New York in 1848 and frames these ghostly developments in terms of the *spiritual telegraph*. In other words, the conjuring of the ghosts of the dead through the mediumistic powers of Katie and Margaret Fox can be viewed as a popular religious response to the electronic presence of Samuel F. B. Morse’s invention of the telegraph in 1844 as a wondrous (or even magical) medium. Sconce reviews the spooked theory guiding spiritual telegraphy as an occult technology and pedagogy preaching an agenda of social reform. “Through séances conducted under gifted ‘mediums,’ they believed the material world could receive transmissions from the dead through what they called the ‘spiritual telegraph.’ More than a metaphor, the spiritual telegraph was for many an actual technology of the afterlife, one invented by scientific geniuses in the world of the dead for the explicit purpose of instructing the land of the living in the principles of utopian reform.”²² If the new communications medium of the telegraph had the power to defeat space and time, then Spiritualists believed that their own haunted medium “could defeat the seemingly unassailable temporal and spatial void of death itself.”²³ In light of this analysis, the leap is not too great from the hopes and dreams of the spiritual telegraphy of the Fox sisters to the so-called *spiritual photography* of William Mumler in the early 1860s. Since photography had been able to conquer space and time and to reveal the microscopic and the telescopic, why not consider this new extension of the medium? Here was the possibility of a visual “technology of the afterlife” that sought to bridge the living and the dead by means of photographic images to complement the aural rapping and the table turning in the séance room.

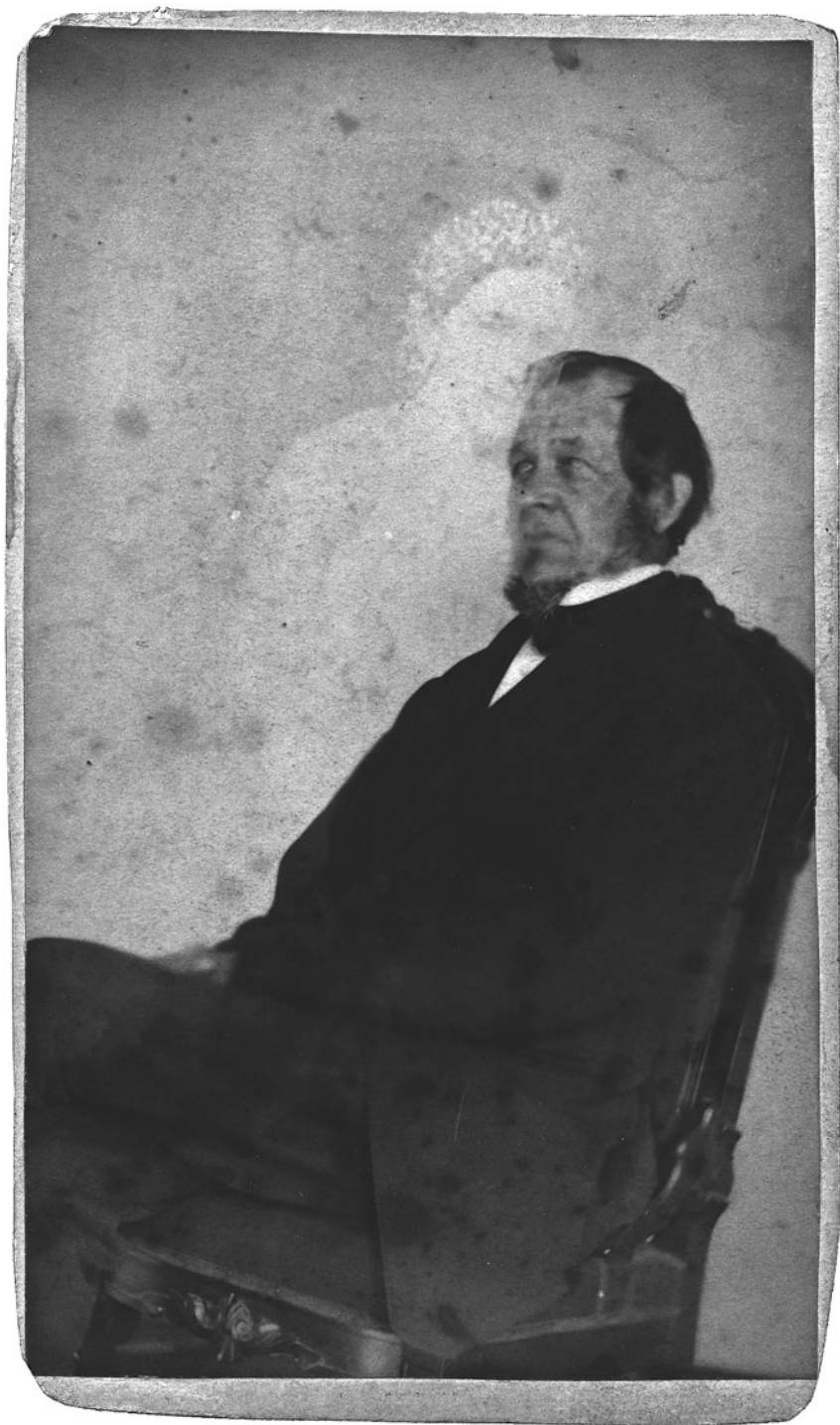


FIGURE 42. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Man with Female Spirit," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.10).

In the same way that Sconce traces the historical trajectory of “haunted media” from Spiritualism to cyberspace, the phenomena of William Mumler and the sweet dreams of spirit photography are alive and well amid the ghost stories of the Internet and the advent of photography in the digital age. In this way, current popular interest in paranormal photography comes into visibility via the haunting of our latest and most familiar technological medium, the home computer. One example of this attempt to situate the uncanny in terms of digital technology, consumer culture, and the domestic sphere is the Web site of the International Ghost Hunters Society (IGHS), under the auspices of Drs. Dave and Sharon Oester, which advertises itself as the “largest Ghost Research Society on the Internet.”⁴ Here, members show the haunting proofs of their photographic hunts, displayed as documentary evidence of supernatural forces. The Web site posts a range of “ghost photos”—whether “Malaysian Ghosts,” “Cemetery Ghosts,” or ghosts at “Jessie James’ Home”—contributed by its members. (It should be noted, however, that the commodification of the photographic ghosts has reached the point that most images are accessible only to paying members.) Replaying the controversy surrounding the specters of Mumler in the 1860s, skeptics viewing such purported ghost images today would doubt the authenticity of these digital photographs and put forward the charge of fraud and hoax. For the loss of an indexical relation to the photographic referent in the age of digital photography has sounded the death knell of any absolute faith in “eyewitness” documentary photography. Converted into a type of Photoshop painting, a digital image of this sort brings manipulation and pictorial effects into the reach of the everyday *prosumer* (producer–consumer).

In tandem with postmodern pop cultural phenomena, a keen interest and fascination with ghosts and haunting also exist in contemporary theoretical discourse. This interest is specifically allied to the thinking of Jacques Derrida, especially with and after the publication of *Specters of Marx*.⁵ The spooked theories of both deconstruction and psychoanalysis offer hospitality to the ghost and to haunting in the critique of the metaphysics of presence and the philosophy of being (ontology). In addition, Derrida advances the view that the technological media breed ghosts and phantoms and that the filmic medium is a *phantomachia*. The challenge of haunting to the metaphysics of presence is stated quite succinctly in the film *Ghost Dance*, in which Derrida appears (as himself). To recite Derrida, “To be haunted by a ghost is to remember that one has never lived in the present, to remember what, in essence, has never had the form of presence. Film is a ‘phantomachia.’ Let the ghosts come back. Film plus

psychoanalysis equals a science of ghosts. Modern technology, contrary to appearances, although it is scientific, increases tenfold the power of ghosts. The future belongs to ghosts.”⁶ Derrida focuses here on the resurrecting powers of film and photography to generate ghosts that come back to haunt us from the past.⁷ In contrast to dialectical thinking that posits binary oppositions and clear-cut distinctions, deconstruction (with its concern for *différance*) is open to fuzzy borders, paradoxical aporia, and contaminating terms that partake in logics of haunting and spectrality.⁸ As Derrida writes, “The spectral logic is *de facto* a deconstructive logic. It is in the element of haunting that deconstruction finds the place most hospitable to it, at the heart of the living present, in the quickest heartbeat of the philosophical.”⁹ Rather than the positing of any pure opposition between skeptic and believer, deconstruction and psychoanalysis investigate how the logic of haunting and spectrality raises ghosts and phantoms at the heart of philosophical reason, thereby undermining any concept of the “living present.”

Given such spectral affinities, this chapter reviews a number of specific deconstructive and psychoanalytic constructs, or “spooked theories,” in order to help us to understand the strange case of William Mumler and the discourse of spirit photography as well as to speculate about why these ghostly developments continue to fascinate us today. These theoretical links will be considered in terms of the following areas: an exploration of spirit photography (and photography in general) in light of Derrida’s construct of *hauntology*, an encounter with how Freud’s discussion of the *uncanny* (*das Unheimliche*) provides a spooked theory by which to frame Mumler’s haunted images, an exploration of how *paranoia* haunts both skeptics and believers in spirit photography, an examination of the specters of Mumler in terms of the discourse of *mourning* in psychoanalysis and deconstruction, and, finally, a concluding look at how the deconstructive logic of spectrality haunts Mumler’s supernatural sense of agency when he posits a passive relationship to these ghostly developments.

HAUNTOLOGY

HORATIO: . . . But this is wondrous strange!

HAMLET: And therefore as a stranger give it welcome. There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

—*Hamlet*, act 1, scene 4

The appearance (or the return) of Hamlet’s paternal ghost accompanies the first dedication in Andrew Jackson Davis’s *Memoranda of Persons, Places,*

*and Events: Embracing authentic facts, visions, impressions, discoveries, in magnetism, clairvoyance, spiritualism.*¹⁰ In taking up the visions and discoveries of Spiritualism, including its fervent belief in the possibility of communication with those beyond the grave, the Poughkeepsie seer and Spiritualist seeker returns to the canonical textual footing of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and to the scene that welcomes arguably the most famous ghostly visitor in Western literature. Davis identifies himself with the prince of Denmark, who marks the excess of his friend Horatio's philosophy and who recognizes the limits of traditional scholarship in the pursuit of scientific knowledge that relies on *ratio* alone and with which the scholar Horatio is identified. These scholarly premises would find no place in which to entertain the ghost. As Jacques Derrida reminds us:

There has never been a scholar who really, and as scholar, deals with ghosts. A traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts—nor in all that could be called the virtual space of spectrality. There has never been a scholar who, as such, does not believe in the sharp distinction between the real and the unreal, the actual and the inactual, the living and the non-living, being and non-being (“to be or not to be,” in the conventional reading), in the opposition between what is present and what is not, for example, in the form of objectivity.¹¹

In light of Derrida's unpacking of the formal oppositions in the conceptual toolbox of the traditional scholar, it is interesting to note that the first dedication of Davis's book is inscribed “To Proud Men in Science.”¹² It is as if Davis sought to humble those scientific “know-it-alls” who would reject or dismiss the claims of Spiritualism and its ghosts outright as something unworthy of investigation or who would ignore the virtual space of spectrality in the name of objectivity. It is as if Davis were chiding these proud men in science for not affirming the strange relations that often bring science and technological media into contact (and contamination) with the occult or Spiritualist medium. In *Echographies of Television*, Derrida explores the difficult time that science and scientificity have with the ghosts and phantoms (of photography), specifying further the manner in which hauntology exceeds the grounding of science in objectivity and the presence of the real. “There is something which, as soon as one is dealing with ghosts, exceeds, if not scientificity in general, at least what, for a very long time, has modeled scientificity on the real, the objective, which is not or should not be, precisely phantomatic. It is in the name of the scientificity of science that one conjures ghosts or condemns

obscurantism, spiritualism, in short, everything that has to do with haunting and with specters.”¹³

But the ghost in *Hamlet* and the lashing out against what exceeds a scientific philosophy that is unwilling to let itself dream of or be haunted by Spiritualism will not rest or be laid to rest with Davis’s dedication. One year later, the same Shakespearean words return to serve as the rhetorical figure that organizes a report in the *New York Times* about the trial of William Mumler and his controversial “spiritual photographs.” Rather than attacking Mumler as a cheat and a fraud as in the *New York World* or passionately defending him as in some articles in the *Banner of Light*, the *Times* plays the “happy medium” in taking up the middle ground of mediation. The article “Spiritual Photographs” references Hamlet’s extra-philosophical advice to Horatio as the means by which to encourage its readership to keep an open mind regarding the strange case of William Mumler. According to this report, the question as to whether we are dealing with the hand of God and supernatural intervention or the hand of Man and photographic manipulation is not something that can be settled “off-hand.” In order to keep matters unsettled, it is important to leave open the borders between the possible and the impossible or, in a more deconstructive light, to acknowledge the possibility of the impossible itself. Unlike Derrida’s critique of the scholar who makes the sharp distinction between the real and the unreal or being and nonbeing, the Mumler spirit photography case insists that the ghost and the virtual space of spectrality be given a hearing. Only in this way will what is known (“the constant advances in knowledge”) not be allowed automatically to swallow up the unknown but rather give way to the “vastly more” or what is beyond philosophy’s (but clearly not photography’s) wildest dreams.

The photographic case of MUMLER which has been exciting such interest during the past week, is likely to bother every one who attempts to settle it off-hand upon preconceived notions of what is, and what is not possible. The “things in Heaven and Earth” that are yet beyond our philosophy are many—and from the constant advances in knowledge, and the scientific classification of them, (which, it must be remembered, proceeds very much more slowly than the mere accumulation of facts) we may well believe that the *unknown* and *unknowable* are vastly more than the *known*.¹⁴

Amid the appearance of the ghost and Hamlet’s philosophical doubts, ontology (that which belongs to a thinking of being) gives way to hauntology

(that which insists on being as being-haunted and which offers hospitality to the stranger in the house, to the stranger always already in the house and haunting the philosophical house of being). Hauntology evades the metaphysics of presence and introduces haunting into every concept to the extent that ontology becomes the forever failing attempt to exorcise the ghosts from the concept. “To haunt does not mean to be present, and it is necessary to introduce haunting into the very construction of a concept. Of every concept, beginning with the concept of being and time. That is what we would be calling here a hauntology. Ontology opposes it only as a movement of exorcism.”¹⁵ This point would also serve as a model for the relations between photography and spirit photography. Photography opposes spirit photography only as a movement that attempts to exorcise the spirits that haunt it. In this way, the (haunted) photographic image challenges the distinction between what is present and what is not, between what is living and what is not. For Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, this failure illustrates that “the Enlightenment [and let us not forget photography as a product of the *Enlightenment*] never succeeds entirely in exorcising its own ghosts. Instead of saying that there is an outside of reason which has been neglected, perhaps we need to inspect the inside of reason and see how it too is haunted by what it excludes.”¹⁶

Interestingly enough, Derrida introduces hauntology, or the “logic of haunting” that guides our thinking about photography, as a ghostly enterprise in his book *Specters of Marx* amid his discussion of the paternal specter in *Hamlet* haunting Marx’s *The German Ideology* and *The Communist Manifesto* (which begins with the specter of communism haunting mid-nineteenth-century Europe). One should recall that Marx’s writings are contemporaneous with the rise of Spiritualism and that they can be viewed as historical materialist attempts to exorcise this craze. But Derrida insists that hauntology is not something that can be comprehended so easily, if at all. Instead, he approaches it in a manner that marks its relation to the limits of the comprehensible and that resonates with the previous citation from the *New York Times* article with the insistence on an epistemological inability to comprehend the ghosts of photography with any finality within the realm of knowledge. Derrida writes of the spectral return that deconstructs any philosophy of ends (whether eschatology or teleology). “This logic of haunting would not be merely larger and more powerful than ontology or a thinking of Being. . . . It would harbor within itself, but like circumscribed places or particular effects, eschatology and teleology themselves. It would *comprehend* them, but incomprehensibly.”¹⁷

From the perspective of hauntology, the strange case of William Mumler and the conjuring of his ghosts represents spirit photography's haunting of the house of being that is "wondrous strange." Spirit photography functions as a technological practice that offers the ghosts a place to haunt us, whether on film or on the glass-plate negative, and, on the flip side, it offers to the skeptics the place from which to chase the ghosts and to hunt them down. Therefore, hauntology acknowledges that more things are dreamed of in heaven and on earth than in the philosophy of either the skeptics seeking to debunk Spiritualism and the specters conjured by the spirit photography of William Mumler *or* the believers who would seek to turn Spiritualism and "spiritual photography" into something more substantial and substantive, thereby removing this photography's strangeness and its relationship to the uncanny (or that which haunts). This latter point is something that Mumler himself can be accused of doing throughout *The Personal Experiences*. Again and again, the defensive defendant seeks to assert spirit photographs as a "positive proof," as "spiritual truths," or as a "correct likeness" to establish his practice on the firm ground of empiricism and as a discourse of photographic truth (see pages 82, 70, and 117).¹⁸ In seeking to identify these haunting subjects (what would evade identification by definition), he seeks in effect to exorcise his own spirit photography.¹⁹ But this venture is doomed to self-destruct, because in playing into the hands of the scholars and the natural scientists and making his appeal to empirical reason, Mumler overlooks the resources and the powers of the "invisible host" on which his photo practice necessarily rests (see page 69).²⁰ It is these hauntological forces that manage to return no matter how hard Mumler may try to repress them. In this way, the "virtual space of spectrality" is summoned as the necessary condition of both materialist *and* spiritual photography. In taking on some hypothetical "ignoramus" and his objections to the spirit photographer's darkroom operations, Mumler admits that he has been hiding in the closet in performing his secret and delicate art but that such a relationship to the realm of the invisible (and impossible) serves as the necessary condition for any type of photographic development. The darkroom becomes the secret tomb where the photographic conjurer, who avoids the light of day and lurks in the shadows, reanimates these phantom doubles. While concluding yet again with an insistence on a regime of spiritual truth instead of Derrida's more ambivalent and hauntological "specter of the truth,"²¹ the following passage engages the logic of being-haunted that permeates Mumler's ghostly developments and manifestations and that thwarts the

photographer's ability (let alone the spirit photographer's ability) to ever fully rise above suspicion.

Suppose for a moment that some ignoramus should say to the photographer, "I don't believe it necessary for you to go into that dark closet to prepare your plate. I believe you are preparing some deceptive arrangement! Come out here in daylight, under the broad canopy of heaven, where you will be above suspicion, and perform your work! Then I will believe it!" The photographer would necessarily reply: "That is an impossibility; the closet is the necessary condition in taking a picture." Then if material things require conditions for their successful accomplishment, how much more delicate must necessarily be the conditions in order to obtain true spiritual manifestations. [See page 138.]²²

Hauntology represents the spooky theory (and the spooking of theory) that guides any speculations on spirit photography, and it illustrates how spirit photography serves as an emblem for all photography as a generator of ghosts. One recalls Roland Barthes's formulation of photographic exposure—of being posed in exteriority and becoming a specter when sitting for a photograph. "I then experience a micro-version of death (of parenthesis). I am truly becoming specter."²³ From this particular vantage point, it becomes less important whether the ghostly developments attributed to William Mumler were true or false, whether they were a spiritual revelation or a trickster's hoax. Spirit photography's very being in the world—which can be formulated only as a being-haunted—reminds us that a ghostly production marks all photographic reproduction. Dead or alive, photography gives up the ghost.

UNCANNY

A crucial way in which psychoanalytic thinking comes to bear on spirit photography and the specters of Mumler is through the concept of the uncanny—that incomplete translation of the German term *unheimlich*. Sigmund Freud first published his essay on this haunting subject in 1919, or exactly fifty years after Mumler's trial. Freud's essay and the theoretical literature that it has stimulated in recent years (with key texts by Jacques Derrida and Tom Gunning) attest to the relevance of the concept of the uncanny for understanding what is at theoretical issue in the case of William Mumler and the phenomenon of spirit photography. The concept of the uncanny is the "un-homely" site where psychoanalysis and



FIGURE 43. William H. Mumler, "Five Spirits with Photograph on Table," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.13).

deconstruction converge to open up a space for the ghosts in the guise of the discourse of spirit photography that haunts and disturbs the sleep of empirical reason.²⁴

Freud believed that the uncanny was associated with a terrible feeling of anxiety and dread—one that was caused by putting oneself in confrontation with death or its return, with something that would make one feel as if he or she had seen a ghost or as if he or she were being haunted. If such is the case, then spirit-photography practice offers the living (dead) proofs that engage this psychoanalytic concept. The morbid passage in which Freud outlines this set of connections and this “hanging together” of the uncanny with death and the haunting of the creatures of the night deserves to be quoted in both the original German and my own English translation.

Im allerhöchsten Grade unheimlich erscheint vielen Menschen, was mit dem Tod, mit Leichen und mit der Wiederkehr der Toten, mit Geistern und Gespenstern, zusammenhängt. Wir haben ja gehört, dass manche moderne Sprachen unseren Ausdruck: ein unheimliches Haus gar nicht anders wiedergeben können als durch die Umschreibung; ein Haus, in dem es spukt. Wir hätten eigentlich unsere Untersuchung mit diesem, vielleicht stärksten Beispiel von Unheimlichkeit beginnen können, aber wir taten es nicht, weil hier das Unheimliche zu sehr mit dem Grauenhaften vermengt und zum Teil von ihm gedeckt ist.²⁵

(The uncanny [*unheimlich*] appears to many people in the highest degree as that which hangs together with death, with corpses, with the return of the dead, with spirits and ghosts. We have indeed heard that many modern languages cannot translate our expression “*ein unheimliches Haus*” (“a haunted house”) other than through the reinscription—a house, in which “it spooks.” We might have properly begun our investigation with this perhaps strongest example of uncanniness [*Unheimlichkeit*], but we did not do it because in this case the uncanny [*Unheimliche*] is too much mingled with the gruesome and partly covered over by it.)

This is an intriguing passage because it links the uncanny with the horrible, the terrifying, and the gruesome. It suggests that people find in the gruesome and the terrifying that which takes them outside their comfort zones and safety nets in the house of being and renders them “not at home” with themselves. From the Freudian perspective, the commercial practice of spirit photography dealing with the return of the dead, with

spirits and ghosts, is not just the making of a pretty picture. (One recalls how Mumler resorts to beautiful terms to describe spirit photography in this aesthetic manner.) It is, rather, engaged in the gruesome task of summoning the dead to return and to haunt us. Spirit photographs are *unheimlich* because they expose familial photography to the estranging and defamiliarizing forces that haunt the house of being. If the uncanny is un-homely for psychoanalysis, this is because it reminds the subject that this strange return represses something mortally close that will not go away and that shatters domestic order and tranquility.²⁶ From a psychoanalytic perspective, Mumler's ghostly developments are viewed as comforting and as reuniting families that have been ripped apart and asunder by "disseminating this beautiful truth of spirit-communion" (see page 69).²⁷ This also means that a contemporary theoretical reading no longer guided by Spiritualist beliefs situates the uncanny spirit photograph as that which enables consumers to forget their losses by restoring the domestic scene, familiarity, and community in the face of the gruesome fact of mortality always lurking just beneath the surface of Mumler's spooked images.

Meanwhile, the film historian and theorist Tom Gunning also takes up the Freudian concept of the uncanny as a means to understand spirit photography, in the essay "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny." Gunning's analysis returns to another aspect of Sigmund Freud's (and Otto Rank's) thinking about what makes something appear uncanny: repetition and doubling. While psychoanalysis does not single out photography, its relation to the following Freudian list of what one might dub "double troublemakers" is quite obvious. In "The Uncanny" Freud writes: "The theme of the 'double' has been very thoroughly treated by Otto Rank. He has gone into the connections the 'double' has with reflections in mirrors, with shadows, guardian spirits, with the belief in the soul and the fear of death."²⁸ Gunning summarizes his own position as follows: "In spirit photography, we find an extraordinary conjunction of uncanny themes, the visual double, the 'constant recurrence of the same thing,' and the fascination with death and its overcoming through the technical device of mechanical reproduction."²⁹

While Freud views "the invention of doubling as a preservation against extinction" and "an insurance against the destruction of the ego" in a former age of animism and magical thinking, he believes that the function of the double has been altered since the age of Enlightenment. "From having

been an assurance of immortality, he becomes the ghastly harbinger of death.”³⁰ The uncanny aspect of spirit photography, therefore, no longer merely marks the appearance of the visual double or affirms the belief in immortality but rather serves as a reminder of this more ghastly aspect. Freud continues, “The quality of uncanniness can only come from the circumstance of the ‘double’ being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since left behind, and one, no doubt, in which it wore a more friendly aspect. The ‘double’ has become a vision of terror, just as after the fall of their religion the gods took on daemonic shapes.”³¹

Playing at being a rationalist and evolutionary scientist, Freud also argues that we get a feeling of the uncanny when something happens in the world that would appear to support those animistic beliefs that should have been discarded as superstitions. Spirit photography would signal one such animistic return of the repressed. Freud offers the following statement that has a Spiritualist ring to it and sounds as if it could have been uttered by one of William Mumler’s satisfied spirit-photography customers. “Then the dead do continue to live and appear before our eyes on the scene of their former activities!”³² In this way, the ambivalent rhetoric of spirit photography offers the promise of a future life and the overcoming of death to those who invest in it at the same time that it serves for nonbelievers as a “ghastly harbinger” and a reminder of the death of the physical body and of the spectral image that remains. (Indeed, this is a variation on Roland Barthes’s conception of photography in general as a microversion of death.) Lurking beneath its more benevolent aspect, the vision of the spirit-photography double confronts the self with and as another that spooks the beholder with what Freud calls “morbid anxiety.”³³

Freud also believed that the uncanny is revealed in the breakdown of the distinction between reality and imagination or in the realization of the imaginary. “This is that an uncanny effect is often and easily produced by effacing the distinction between imagination and reality, such as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us in reality.”³⁴ This passage speaks directly to the testimony of one of the key witnesses for the defense in the trial of William Mumler. The question was raised as to whether Judge John Edmonds’s statement to the court should be regarded as uncanny strange (such that something that was hitherto regarded as imaginary appeared before him in reality) or as mad and delusional. Let us recall that Judge Edmonds (Figure 44) testified at the trial that he had received a spirit photograph made by William Mumler, which he positively identified, and that he had had close encounters with a ghost

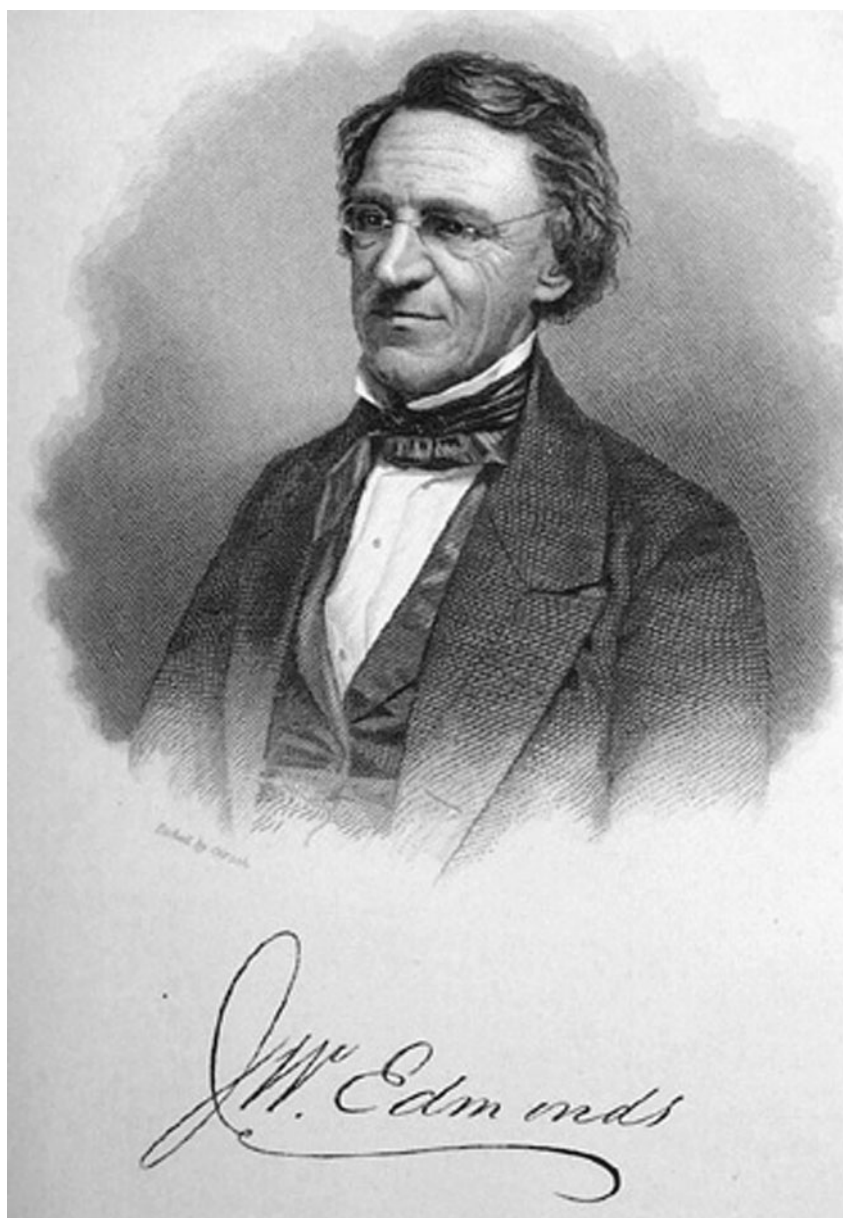


FIGURE 44. Anonymous engraver, "Judge John Edmonds," before 1869. Engraving from Emma Hardinge Britten, *Modern American Spiritualism* (New York: W. Britten, 1869).

in the courtroom, which helped him solve a case at hand. On April 22, 1869, the *New York Daily Tribune* reported his remarkable testimony:

I believe that the camera can take a photograph of a spirit, and I believe also that spirits have materiality—not that gross materiality that mortals possess, but still they are material enough to be visible to the human eye, for I have seen them; only a few days since I was in a court in Brooklyn when a suit against a life assurance company for the amount claimed to be due on a certain policy was being heard. Looking toward that part of the court-room occupied by the jury, I saw the spirit of the man whose death was the basis of the suit. The spirit told me the circumstances connected with the death; said that the suit was groundless, that the claimant was not entitled to recover from the Company, and said that he (the man whose spirit was speaking) had committed suicide under certain circumstances; I drew a diagram of the place at which his death occurred, and on showing it to the counsel, was told that it was exact in every particular. [See page 208.]³⁵

The remarkable return of the suicide victim as a witness at his own case to testify that he did not die a life-assuring death, as the claimant had argued, illustrates yet again the gruesome appearance of the specter in the realm of the uncanny. Armed with this “insider information,” Edmonds proceeds to solve the mystery. Edmonds also argues that Mumler’s camera could photograph spirits because they possess a spectral form of materiality still visible to the human eye. Edmonds’s insistence on a more ethereal body for spirits is a fascinating verdict and one that recalls Jacques Derrida’s spectrographic analysis regarding the paradoxical invisible visibility of the specter. “The specter is first and foremost something visible. It is of the visible, but of the invisible visible, it is the visibility of a body which is not present in flesh and blood.”³⁶ But Edmonds also speaks as a positivistic eyewitness who seeks to ground his spectrographic explanation and vision in the realm of perception. On the other hand, the prosecuting attorney Elbridge T. Gerry will have none of this Spiritualist supernaturalism as he tries to move this testimony away from the uncanny perception to the cracked hallucination and mental delusion. He refers to the testimony of both Paul Bremond and Judge Edmonds in his closing argument: “Their extraordinary testimony, as to what they saw and heard, can be accounted for only as statements of hallucinations; in other words, that what each described was ‘a false creation, proceeding from the heat oppressed brain.’ Let me not be misunderstood. I do not assert that they

are insane. They are not the only men of intelligence who have been afflicted in this way with mental delusions” (see page 162).³⁷

But according to Derrida’s writings on the uncanny, the debate staged between Gerry (the scoffing skeptic) and Edmonds (the visionary believer) will never be decided or resolved on account of the elusive properties of *es spukt* at the heart of the uncanny and the inability of the “it spooks” to be determined or fixed. Both the photographic specters of Mumler and the courtroom specters of Edmonds have the terrifying look and feel of the “living dead” when “one cannot decide between hallucination and perception.” The following passage from Derrida’s *Specters of Marx*, on the difficulty of translating *es spukt* into any other language, bears repeating:

Everything is concentrated then in the German expression *es spukt*, which translations are obliged to circumvent. One would have to say: it haunts, it ghosts, it specters, there is some phantom there, it has the feel of the living-dead—manor house, spiritualism, occult science, gothic novel, obscurantism, atmosphere of anonymous threat, of imminence. The subject that haunts is not identifiable, one cannot see, localize, fix any form, one cannot decide between hallucination and perception.³⁸

MOURNING

What would spirit photography be without mourning and loss, without the ritual practices and coping strategies that accompany bereavement? The question is framed both historically and theoretically. The socio-cultural circumstances in which spirit photography arose in the 1860s and thrived were a culture of mourning and bereavement permeated by the doctrines of Spiritualism set against the backdrop of the Civil War and high infant mortality rates in the United States. In “Spiritual Photography,” P. T. Barnum’s discussion of Colorado Jewett’s attempt to employ Mumler to summon the ghosts of dead presidents and elder statesmen in order to give sage counsel and to heal the breach in the war-torn state of the nation points to how the specters of Mumler thrived in the context of such a grieving and mourning American body politic (see the chapter “P. T. Barnum, Spiritual Photography,” in this volume).³⁹ But rather than reviewing the sociocultural frameworks of these practices of mourning and bereavement, here I focus on how the work of mourning provides a theoretical basis for understanding what was at stake in Mumler’s spirit photography. In this context, one should remember that Sigmund Freud once wrote that “man’s first theoretical achievement” was “the creation of

spirits.”⁴⁰ This means that Freud believed that theory itself begins in the animistic era with the positing and projecting of spirits (i.e., of that which spooks). If such is the case, then spirit photography is linked to mankind’s primal and primordial theoretical activity in its fixing of the spirits of the dead onto film. According to psychoanalysis, this “projective creation of souls and spirits” is prompted by the work of mourning when survivors seek to find a way to deal with the loss of their ancestors.⁴¹

In his creative revamping of Freud’s thinking via what he refers to as “aberrations of mourning,” Larry Rickels recalls the importance of projection for a psychoanalytic theory of ghostly developments. “In *Totem and Taboo* Freud saw the origin of phantoms and ghosts as lying in projection; he thus also expressed satisfaction that psychoanalysis had seen through those ghosts and demons flickering on the defensive ‘screens.’ The very first projection of ghosts was conceived, then, as disposal of the dead without proper burial.”⁴² Rickels underlines this last point elsewhere: “Photography and film project and animate those phantoms which, in *Totem and Taboo*, haunt those who are unable to grant the dead proper burial.”⁴³ This idea has major implications for spirit photography and its relationship to the work of mourning. Rather than signaling a final laying to rest of the dead and thereby marking an end to the work of mourning, these haunting images may be viewed paradoxically as symptomatic signs of the *improper* burial of the dead who cannot yet be laid to rest. Of course, the transcendently inclined Spiritualist would not see things this way at all. The believer would translate Rickels’s reading of the disposal of the dead onto film without proper burial into a clear indicator of immortality in the “heavenly home,” where the “undying” spirit has been reborn. The satisfied customer Mr. Hambleton suggests as much to Mumler: “Thus is added another of those incontrovertible evidences that our friends *can* return from the ‘other shore,’ bringing us the knowledge of their heavenly home and of their undying sympathy for the children of mortality” (see page 122).⁴⁴ As indicated in our discussion of the uncanny, the otherworldly Spiritualist who achieves knowledge of their heavenly home through spirit photographs concludes that such images are the very antithesis of the “un-homely.”

Only one passage in Rickels’s sophisticated analysis of psychoanalytic projection and transference refers to spirit photography directly. He calls it “transcendental photography” and therefore a direct corollary to transcendental philosophy. Rickels points out how psychoanalysis engages in its own type of transference when dealing with the conjuring of phantom



FIGURE 45. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Woman with Three Spirits," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.19).

images on film. In other words, Freud limits the relationship between technology and the occult to the techniques of transference and projection rather than taking the plunge into a full-blown belief in spirit photography. “While ‘transcendental photography’ offered testimony that the camera could conceive images of the otherwise indiscernible phantoms conjured in séances, Freud responded by linking and limiting the occult effects and analogues of the technical media to the workings of transference.”⁴⁵ Such transference would occur, for instance, when the survivor projects evil thoughts about the dead ancestor onto the conjured spirit itself, who then comes back to haunt him as a demon. (This also relates to the paranoid effects generated by spirit photography, discussed in the next section.) But one gets the sense that the atheist Freud (who saw religion as the “future of an illusion”) would not have been very generous to those who believed that they were in the presence of their dead ancestors when they beheld Mumler’s photographs. Instead, Freud would interpret this investment as a clear-cut aberration of mourning. In “Mourning and Melancholia,” Freud writes how “this struggle [to wean oneself away from the loved object] may be so intense that a turning away from reality ensues, the object being clung to through the medium of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis.”⁴⁶ In other words, communication with the dead at the séance table or the visualization of the dead in spirit photographs provides survivors with ways of clinging to the object of loss, but in ways that function according to Freud as the mediated staging of a hallucinatory wish-psychosis.

Rickels argues for the media technological framing of the mourning rituals and death cults of any given society. He writes the following pithy sentence, reminiscent of Marshall McLuhan’s classic text at the crossroads of technology and cultural studies, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*: “A death cult is always coextensive with the media extensions of the senses current in a given culture.”⁴⁷ As we have seen, Freud often uses the concept of projection in the context of mourning. Rickels points out how figures derived either from the technical media (photography and film) or from archaeology guide Freud’s psychoanalytic speculations and that a concept like projection illustrates the interrelationship between psychic and technological drives. “Freud’s analogies to unconscious processes and psychoanalytic technique always shift between the technical media and the domain of archaeology.”⁴⁸ Rickels goes further in his psychotheorization of the technologies of mourning in a way that touches on the practice of spirit photography and its being (haunted) in the world. “Between the

living and the mourned dead, we find an amalgam of telecommunications and canned and manufactured goods conserving itself as living dead.⁴⁹ According to this analysis, spirit photography serves as the telecommunications medium that operates between the living and the mourned dead, preserving and conserving itself as “living dead” through these visual traces of lost love objects.

Rickels also sees doubling as that characteristic that gives the photographic medium its occult and haunting quality. “The implicit and explicit serial proliferation of the photographic copy along an axis of inversion—both inside and outside the frame, for example—confers on photography its phantasmic, occult, and dreamlike aspect.”⁵⁰ In revising Gunning’s interpretation of doubling as intimately linked to the concept of the uncanny, Rickels does not want to forget how spirit-photography doubling is also tied to the work of mourning. In the aptly named chapter “Necro-filiation,” which resonates with spirit photography’s focus on connecting with dead relatives, Rickels insists, “Doubling, a mode at once of projection and of introjection or identification, moves back and forth between a theory of ghosts and that of the work of mourning.”⁵¹ If, as Derrida claims, “mourning produces spectrality,” then it accomplishes this feat through the generation of the photographic doubles that are captured by the spectrographic technology known as spirit photography.⁵²

Meanwhile, Sigmund Freud believed that “mourning has a quite specific psychical task to perform: its function is to detach the survivor’s memories and hopes from the dead.”⁵³ In this light, the resultant specters of Mumler may be viewed as “transitional objects” that detach the survivor’s memories and hopes from the dead in order to displace them onto these photographic keepsakes. As just one instance, Mumler relates the satisfaction expressed by one Herr Hugo Leibing, whose transatlantic voyage from Berlin to Boston was made for a sitting with the renowned spirit-artist after the tragic loss of his son a short time previously. Leibing’s loss of his son on earth is recompensed by his becoming connected to his son in the spirit world through Mumler’s tele-technology. Mumler recounts: “Who can describe the joy that filled this father’s heart when he discovered that his son was not dead? that in passing through the change he had become more closely allied! He felt that the gloom that surrounded him had been dissipated, and looked forward with pleasure to the time when they should meet on ‘the evergreen shore’” (see page 134.)⁵⁴ The reader empathizes with the therapeutic consolation that this image affords to the grieving father as part and parcel of his work of mourning. Mumler’s

phrasing “that the gloom that surrounded him had been dissipated” resonates with the Freudian view that the survivor seeks in the work of mourning a psychic detachment from the dead and from death.

A review of the testimony of the spiritual photographic consumers cited in Mumler’s memoirs makes it very clear that these images helped them to cope with the loss of their loved ones and assisted them in the mourning and bereavement process. This again points to the therapeutic and healing function of spirit photography and helps us to understand why Hannah Mumler, a faith healer and sympathetic medium, worked hand in hand with her husband on the job. This was certainly the case at the session that yielded Mumler’s most celebrated photograph of Mary Todd Lincoln with the spirit of her beloved husband, Abraham Lincoln, and their son Thaddeus in 1872 (Plate 1). Mumler’s account indicates that Mrs. Mumler communicated with the dead spirits after Mr. Mumler secured this ghostly development. Even though it was seven years after the assassination of the president, Mrs. Lincoln appeared clad in a black veil and other garb of mourning. One notes the emotional catharsis that Mrs. Lincoln experienced through this verbal and visual communication with her loved ones in the spirit land. Mumler recalls, “When my wife resumed her normal condition, she found Mrs. L. weeping tears of joy that she had again found her loved ones, and apparently anxious to learn, if possible, how long before she could join them in their spirit home. But this information of course could not be given” (see page 93).⁵⁵ The last comment by Mumler suggests that even though the spirit-photography medium could open up the channels of communication with the dead ancestors and offer proofs of the immortality of the soul, neither he nor Mrs. Mumler could solve the mystery of mortality as to when Mary Todd Lincoln (Figure 46) would pass over to the other shore.

From another perspective, it is possible to argue that spirit photographs and Spiritualist philosophy offered a way of disavowing the painful work of mourning by detaching it or displacing it onto the promise of a future life and immortality. This disavowal would be supported by Jacques Lacan’s interpretation of *Hamlet*, that ghosts are bound to arise when the mourning ritual has been unsatisfactory in mediating these mortal matters. “This explains the belief we find in folklore in the very close association of the lack, skipping, or refusal of something in the satisfaction of the dead, with the appearance of ghosts and specters in the gap left by the omission of the significant rite.”⁵⁶ In this way, mourning’s psychic economy of loss is compensated by the surplus of survival after death. One recalls Mumler’s



FIGURE 46. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. Lincoln," 1865. Courtesy of George Eastman House. This image provides the photographic proof that the Spiritualist-inclined Mary Todd Lincoln sat for William Mumler for a portrait in Boston during the time that she was the first lady and therefore seven years before Mumler's most famous spirit photograph: "Mrs. Lincoln with the Spirit of Her Husband President Abraham Lincoln and Son Thaddeus."

claim that his photographic images offered “evidences of a future existence” (see page 69).⁵⁷ The transcendental wonders of spirit photography and the specters of Mumler offered Spiritualist believers a glimpse of a future life that nullified the concept of death. This is clearly the rhetoric of the spirit of Mabel Warren in communication with Moses Dow, the editor of the *Waverly Magazine*, at the séance before the photo shoot that would produce another famous Mumler photograph (Plate 2). “Promise me that you will not use the word *death* when you speak of me, for I am *not* dead, but alive, and am always with you. It is so beautiful to pass away from earth; I do not wish to come back, unless it were to die again, it is so beautiful” (see page 102).⁵⁸

Mabel’s therapeutic words not only provide solace and consolation to the mourning and grieving Moses Dow but also help him to deal better with his own fears regarding death and mortality. In her book *Radical Spirits*, Ann Braude confirms this general pattern. “Spiritualism’s denial of death offered a unique kind of consolation to the bereaved. Messages frequently focused on the spirit’s happiness after death and continued concern for surviving family members.”⁵⁹ While Braude does not include a discussion of the place of spirit photography in Spiritualism, she quotes from the writings of Mumler’s supporter Andrew Jackson Davis regarding the desire to replace mourning rituals with the celebration of the soul and its passage to a higher life: “If, as Davis claimed, ‘*Death* is but a *Birth* of the Spirit from a lower into a higher state,’ then it did not justify mourning.”⁶⁰ Regarding Moses Dow’s beautiful vision of Mabel Warren, he has no choice but to conclude that Mumler’s spirit photography offers the living proof of immortality. Dow proclaims: “It also proves the immortality of the soul of man, and that that immortality is a blissful one. Freed from that body, it is a spirit-form, and is free to act itself; and that it will advance in brightness and glory during the endless ages of eternity” (see page 107).⁶¹ All in all, the power invested in the photographic medium by Dow’s spooked theory is extraordinary, when Mumler’s image of Mabel Warren was said to hold the key to the mystery of the immortality of the soul and eternal life.

PARANOIA

Opening up a world of “being watched” and “being watched over,” spirit photography conjures a state of paranoia and paranoid knowledge for both skeptics *and* believers in these photo apparitions. As Jacques Derrida remarked, “Ghosts . . . are everywhere where there is watching.”⁶² Spirit

photography is light writing haunted by specters—read suspiciously, comically, or seriously but always under the sign of paranoia. The following speculations play out the ways in which both skeptics and believers in paranormal phenomena become haunted by paranoia (and by one another). The discourse of spirit photography revolves around such paranoid questions as, Are we seeing the truth? or, more complexly, Can such a truth be seen at all? The believer asserts that paranormal photography provides access to a “spiritual truth” beyond the normal powers of perception. That is why Mumler begins his memoirs: “In these days of earnest inquiry for *spiritual truths*, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to contribute what evidences of a future existence I may have obtained in my fourteen years’ experience with Spirit-Photography” (my emphasis) (see page 69).⁶³ The specters of Mumler confront the viewer with this paranoid question: Am I really seeing a spiritual truth? The cantankerous debate over spirit photography in the nineteenth century staged between skeptics and believers revolved around giving either a positive or a negative response to this inquiry. For Spiritualists, the belief in the afterlife and the possibility of communication with the dead was visibly confirmed by the proofs of spirit photography. But the hermeneutics of suspicion and demystification practices would not allow the Spiritualists an uncontested space for these ghostly revelations. Whether derided as the outgrowth of foolhardy religious beliefs or double-exposure frauds, their faith in exposure produced rationalist and rationalizing accounts for these paranormal-photography phenomena.

In “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading,” Eve Sedgwick discusses the paranoid as a prevalent contemporary mode of critique. She writes, “The methodological centrality of suspicion to current critical practice has involved a concomitant privileging of the concept of paranoia.”⁶⁴ This paranoid critical mode of reading claims to “offer unique access to true knowledge,”⁶⁵ and it is compulsively driven to unmask any suspicious characters that pose obstacles to its line of inquiry. One might ask, What is the paranoia that drives the hermeneutics of suspicion? Perhaps it is the skeptic’s fear of not being as scientific and rational as possible, fear that there may still be some murky occultism at large in the world. Or perhaps it is the fear that the believer in spirit photography might not be such a fraud after all and the compelling need to extinguish that paranormal possibility. Among the attributes of paranoid knowing that Sedgwick lists, the final one, “paranoia places its faith in exposure,”⁶⁶ is most relevant to those who were out to get Mumler and spirit photography. Clearly, Elbridge T. Gerry wanted to expose Mumler’s machinations and sleights of hand, and

he thereby compiled the nine different techniques by which a spirit could be made to appear in a photograph by mechanical means. Gerry wanted to challenge the Spiritualist belief in the photographic exposure of the invisible and to unmask these so-called supernatural images as frauds. As a suspicious skeptic challenging the premise that the phenomena of spirit photography reveal spiritual truths, Gerry operated from the assumption that material or natural causes could account for Mumler's images. He therefore viewed his mission as one that would expose the shady practice of spirit photography to the light of the law. "And this case, when viewed in the light thrown on it by the evidence for the People in rebuttal, not only explodes the whole theory of the defence, but fully sustains the charges against the prisoner" (see page 163).⁶⁷ The Mumler trial therefore illustrates how the skeptics chased after the ghosts raised by both the production and the reception of spirit photography and how they were paranoid lest agency reside with the spirits depicted within the image rather than with the human maker or receiver of the image.

Meanwhile, Sigmund Freud's analysis of spirits and demons in *Totem and Taboo* provides an alternative resource for extrapolating psychoanalytic speculation onto Mumler's spirit photography and its relation to paranoia. As discussed already, Freud argues that spirits and demons are nothing more than the projection of dead ancestors. "Spirits and demons are only projections of man's own emotional impulses. He turns his emotional cathexes into persons, he peoples the world with them and meets his own internal mental processes again outside himself."⁶⁸ Freud turns to the mechanism of projection to explain the (para)existence of spirits as an exteriorization of internal mental processes. Translating (or tracing) this formulation onto a glass plate negative, we may view a spirit photograph of a dead ancestor as a projection of the survivors' need "to people the world" with such ghostly phenomena and to maintain a connection with ancestors after their departure from earth. But these projected spirits always turn against us and induce paranoia because we feel both love *and* hostility for them. The projection of such ambivalence boomerangs into a persecution complex, or what Freud calls "the pathological process in paranoia."⁶⁹ In this demystifying account, the believer in spirit photography invests in the pathological process of paranoia by forgetting that the ghost image is his or her own projection of the dead ancestor or loved one and by becoming subject to its incriminating gaze.

Jacques Lacan's analysis of the gaze in *Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* also reeks of paranoia. While you may feel that you are subject

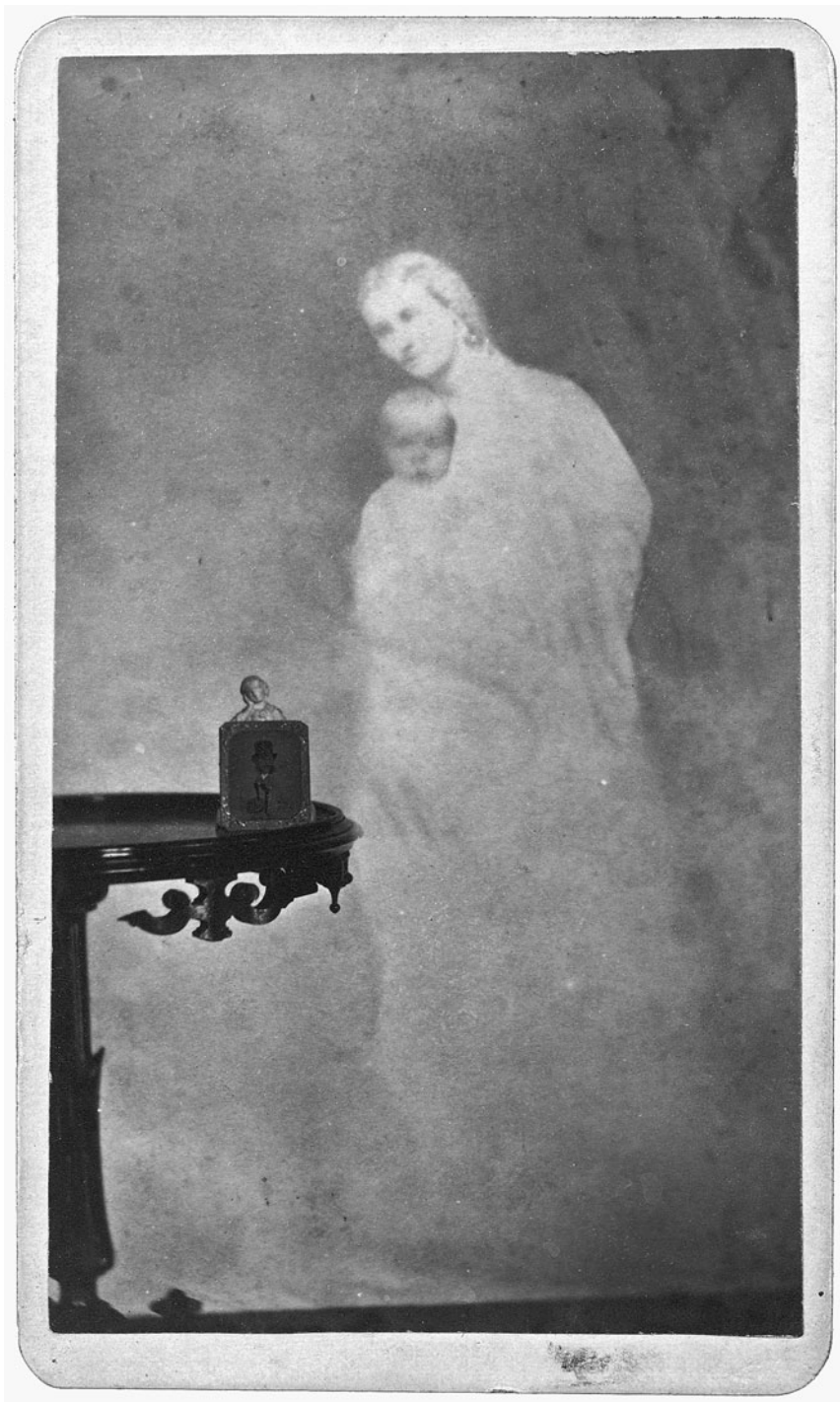


FIGURE 47. William H. Mumler, "Photograph of Mr. Chapin (Oil Merchant) with the Spirit of His Wife and Baby Recognized," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.3).

to the gaze of the other, that somebody is watching you, or, even worse, that someone is taking your picture (in line with Lacan's statement, "The gaze is the instrument through which . . . I am photo-graphed"),⁷⁰ you can never actually locate the source or sight lines of that gaze. To recite Lacan, "The gaze I encounter is not a seen gaze, but a gaze imagined by me in the field of the other."⁷¹ The effect is just maddening. Moreover, Lacan insists that the gaze will vanish if and when you do locate an eye that is watching you. The gaze that is imagined by the believer in Mumler's spirit photography functions in a similar manner. After all, one could never see the spirit in Mumler's studio or locate its gaze, but one felt as if somebody was watching over him or her, and this was confirmed when, after the fact, the sitter confronted the spirit photograph as proof. Thus, the satisfied consumer who invests in spirit photography acknowledges the paranoid impulse in becoming subject to the gaze of the dead relative or friend who watches (and watches over) from beyond the grave. Clearly, something of Big Brother is evoked in affirming this ancestral act of surveillance. The gaze of spirit photography establishes a communal scene of misrecognition so that you watch yourself, and yourself—and some suspicious-looking character who is lurking over your shoulder and claiming to be your ancestor and whom you just cannot see for the life of you—watches you.

Yet, a strange feeling of comfort and hope is also expressed in such ghostly surveillance. This sentiment enters into the testimony of Moses A. Dow, who (as discussed) attended many séances after the sudden passing of his former literary assistant (and possibly one-time lover) Mabel Warren. At one such séance, Dow was directed by Mabel (speaking through a human medium) to visit Mumler's studio, where she promised to appear to him in the medium of photography. The spirit photograph shows a somber-looking and dematerialized Mabel with her cheek resting on the forehead of Dow and her body draped over him. The visual evidence of this close encounter strengthened Dow's spiritual faith and resolve. Such a reassuring sublimation of the fear of death represents yet again the flip side (and the attempted repression) of the spirit photograph's paranoid haunting. To recite Dow, "The picture also assures me that we have our friends about us, watching over us at all times; and the influence of such thoughts is . . . to reconcile us to the trials of life" (see page 107).⁷² The affirmation of the paranoid impulse is never cast as delusion or psychopathology for the believer. These are the skeptic's labels for Spiritualist revelations. From the perspective of the believer, the paranoiac aspect of

the spirit photograph—in the sense that it illustrates being watched and watched over—offers the proof of Spiritualism. This speculation (bewitched by the specter) is embedded in Mumler's spirited defense of his life's work. For Mumler speaks on behalf of his clientele and all those extras conjured by means of his photographic mediumship to promulgate the knowledge of the afterlife and the truth of spirit communion. "As I look back upon my past experience, I feel that I have been the gainer, personally, for all the sacrifices I have made, and all the troubles I may have endured in the knowledge I have gained of a future existence, and in the soul-satisfaction of being an humble instrument in the hands of the invisible host that surrounds us for disseminating this beautiful truth of spirit-communion" (see page 69).⁷³ In this passage, the notion of agency shifts from the skeptic's paranoid critical need to make the photographer the *sole* agent and prime mover of this spiritual hoax to the believer's claim that he is just a medium and a humble instrument in the hands of the invisible host acting as the *soul* agent of these paranoid manifestations.

While Mumler insists on spirit photography as "this beautiful truth of spirit-communion" in which a sympathetic connection and relation is established between the sitter and the spirit, Jacques Derrida recalls that such a harmonious and communal vision also represses the dissymmetry involved in dealing with these haunting specters watching over us. "But wherever there are these specters, we are being watched, we sense or think we are being watched. This dissymmetry complicates everything."⁷⁴ For Derrida, this dissymmetry is related to the figure of the law and its infinite demand. The dead ancestor or the relative who watches over me in the spirit photograph without "my being able to exchange a glance with him or her" is also a stern taskmaster with an uncontestable right of inspection. Like the psychoanalytic superego, the ghost returns in the image not merely to be seen but rather to lay down the ancestral law. It is no wonder that these ambivalent images can produce feelings of guilt and paranoia as well as comfort and hope for the viewer. Derrida expounds, "The specter is not simply someone we see coming back, it is someone by whom we feel ourselves watched, observed, surveyed, as if by the law: we are 'before the law,' without any possible symmetry, without reciprocity, insofar as the other is watching only us, concerns only us, we who are observing it (in the same way that one observes and respects the law) without even being able to meet its gaze. Hence the dissymmetry and, consequently, the heteronomic figure of the law."⁷⁵ One should not forget about this aspect that allies spirit photography with ancestor worship. Spirit

photography, therefore, opens up an (ethical) relationship with the dead (spirit)—a connection with this spectral and inspecting other watching and observing. From this perspective, the strange case of William Mumler would appear to be less about the laws instituted against fraud and larceny and more about Derrida's heteronomic figure of the law.

FINAL DEVELOPMENTS

In an advertising pamphlet on spirit photography, Mumler boasts to the public, "All grades of society can bear testimony to the truthful likeness of their spirit friends they have received through my mediumistic power" (see page 155).⁷⁶ This quotation suggests the possibility that Mumler as a photographic and spiritual medium is as much an active agent with special powers as someone acted on by unknown forces. But this is one of the rare occasions when Mumler speaks this way, and it is more often the case that he presents his ghostly developments steeped in a language that disavows personal responsibility. This fits with the legal strategy that Mumler and his defense team used at the trial to avoid the accusation of his being a conscious liar or cheat by insisting that he did not know how these photographic effects were achieved. Whether playing dumb or honestly humbled by powers greater than him, Mumler thereby could evade the charges that Elbridge T. Gerry and the prosecution had leveled against him. Indeed, Gerry cites Mumler as stating as part of his defense at the trial "that the accused does not know and never has pretended to know by what power or process, other than that of producing an ordinary photograph, these spirit pictures are produced" (see page 147).⁷⁷

In recapping the haunted narrative of spirit photography, the last paragraph of William Mumler's *Personal Experiences* ends with and adds an invisible touch that has a devastating effect on the biographical subject as an active agent. Even though William Mumler has been narrating "his own" experience, it now appears that he has not been acting under his own volition or free will at any point. Indeed, he does not appear to have had any human agency or to have been in control of these phenomena at all. In other words, the *Personal Experiences* cannot be deemed a phenomenology of experience, because something supernatural has been at work, programming and automating the Mumlerian subject to play a part in a larger Spiritualist scheme. The following lines present the strange case of William Mumler in technologically deterministic terms as a matter of his being controlled and guided by the "hands of the dwellers in the invisible world":

I have, in the course of the narrative which now reaches its conclusion, endeavored to state as succinctly as possible the salient points of my experience as an instrument in the hands of the dwellers in the invisible world, and have also reverted briefly to such light as Science throws upon the particular phase of phenomena for whose presentation I have been developed. [See page 139.]⁷⁸

Like a good Spiritualist and with this capital gesture, William Mumler, it seems, does not want to throw Science out with the spirit-photography bathwater but rather protects the light that this photography throws on these ghostly phenomena. Conjuring a new spooked scientific theory, he has just devoted some space to explaining how spirit photography might be the result of the camera picking up ultraviolet rays whose visibility falls outside the normal capacities of the human eye. But the above passage is most peculiar in its incorporation of language indicating that spirit photography has converted William Mumler into an apparatus or an instrument manipulated and acted on by invisible powers. These invisible powers have made him into a technological agent that doubles the camera, transforming him into both a spiritual *and* a photographic medium. The instrumentality of the relationship between Mumler and the invisible dwellers who are using him even reaches the point that he compares his life and his destiny to a photographic development. This is a striking metaphor, for it suggests not only that William Mumler has been developed for spirit photography but also that he has been developed like a spirit photograph. In the end (and this is the most uncanny and haunting thing), William Mumler as a medium and as an instrument hints to us that he himself is to be likened to a spiritual photograph, a ghostly development, a spectral and spectrographic subject, or even a specter of Mumler.

Nevertheless Mumler's extreme passivity in most of his published texts and at his trial will be viewed as a cop-out or a con job from a spooked theoretical perspective. For the true medium has not merely an active or a passive agency, because the spectral and haunting logic that spirit photography brings in its wake and that renders the philosophy of being or presence problematic is neither active nor passive. In a word, it spooks. The medium plays between the borders and mixes up the middle. Therefore, the issue is not just Mumler's becoming a passive apparatus. Indeed, this claim, rather than the potentiality of his committing fraud, is what constitutes Mumler's real ethical failure from a deconstructive perspective. According to Derrida, hauntology brings "the absolute proximity of a stranger whose power is singular and anonymous (*es spukt*), an unnameable

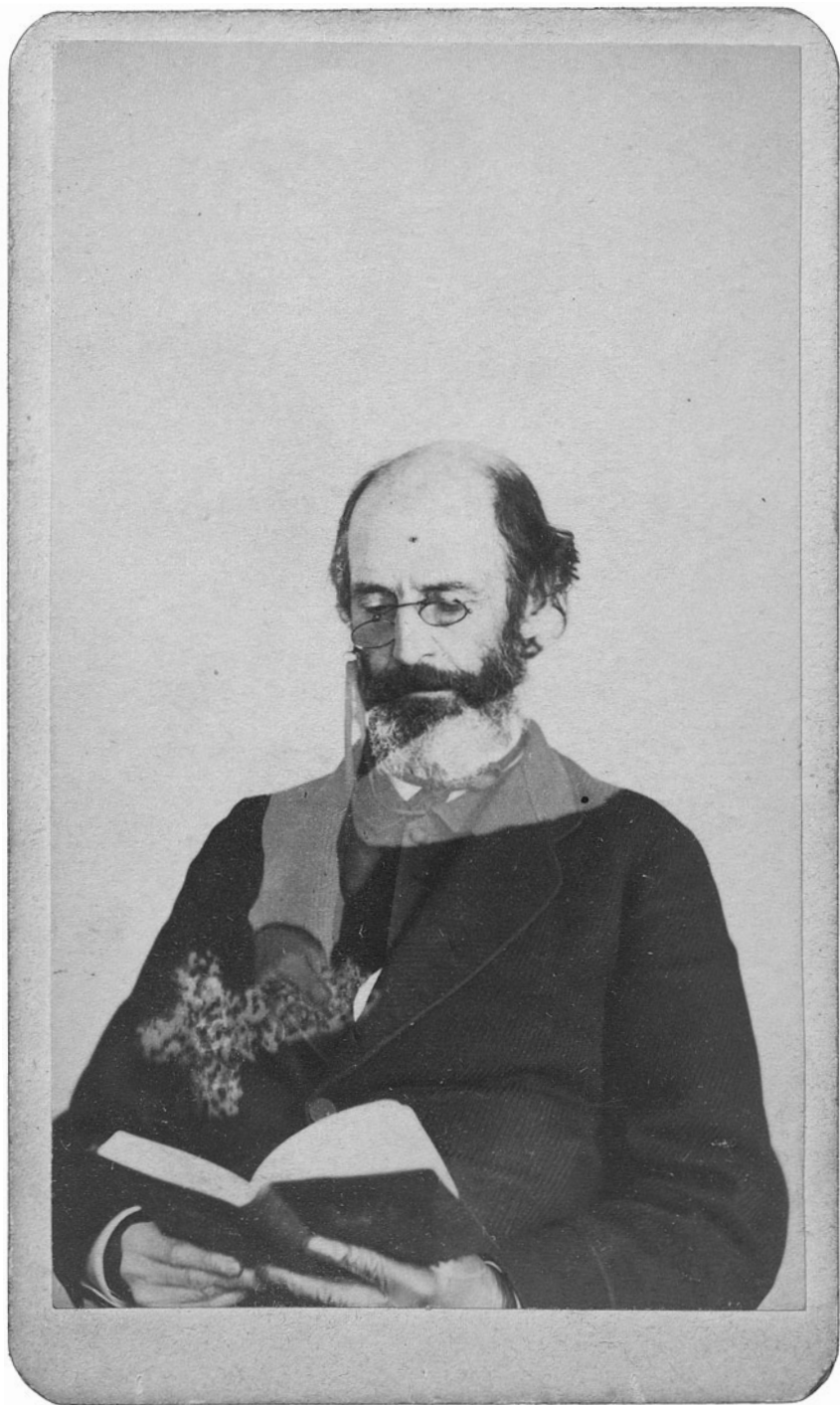


FIGURE 48. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Man Reading Book While Embraced by Spirit," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.32).

and neutral power, that is, undecidable, neither active nor passive, an an-identity that, without doing anything, invisibly occupies places belonging finally neither to us nor to it.”⁷⁹ At this unstable and undecidable point, it is important to take issue with a spirit-photography medium who refuses to put himself in or to be put in the middle without reservations or reserves.

In addition to this, Mumler’s positivistic memoirs too often serve as the systematic attempt to locate the spirits in defined and delimited places, to identify and domesticate the ghosts and to put them where they belong. But the questions to be asked of the specters of Mumler are: Why would one want to make an “an-identity” or hauntology serve the discourse of ontology in this way? Why would one want to capture the ghosts and the spirits in the knowledge-producing machine and make them function according to the very rules of binary logic and self-identity that they ought to resist? This is where the reading of William Mumler and his specters demands to be recast (and spirited away) in relation to the singular and anonymous photographic stranger that haunts the house of being—in the name of this unnameable and neutral power that resists a certain or any order of knowledge. Following the deconstructive and uncanny logic of spooked theories, the specters of Mumler would then be given the opportunity to refuse what is “logically determinable,”⁸⁰ reminding both the Spiritualist and the skeptic alike in their photographic haunting and doubling that where the (spirit) photograph develops, it spooks.

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NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Pierre Apraxine and Sophie Schmit, "Photography and the Occult," in Clément Chéroux, Andreas Fischer, Pierre Apraxine, Denis Canguilhem, and Sophie Schmit, *The Perfect Medium: Photography and the Occult* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005), 12. This essay of Apraxine and Schmit's is followed by Crista Cloutier's short essay on William Mumler, "Mumler's Ghosts," 20–23. *The Perfect Medium* also includes reproductions from the J. Paul Getty Museum and the College of Psychic Studies in London. Cloutier's unpublished master's thesis on Mumler is also a valuable resource for historical information. See Crista Cloutier, "Mumler's Ghosts: The Trial and Tribulations of Spirit Photography," Arizona State University, May 1998. For other recent analytical studies of the history of spirit photography that begin with the strange case of William Mumler, see Martyn Jolly, *Faces of the Living Dead: The Belief in Spirit Photography* (West New York, N.J.: Mark Batty Publisher, 2006); and John Harvey, *Photography and Spirit* (London: Reaktion Books, 2007).

2. Douglas Crimp takes up the subject of the reclassification of documentary photographs for aesthetic ends as a symptom of postmodernism in his essay "The Museum's Old/the Library's New Subject" (1981). See Douglas Crimp, *On the Museum's Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1993), 65–83. Howard Saul Becker's *Art Worlds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), with its focus on the valuation of art objects, is also still relevant for thinking about such issues of reframing and reclassification from a sociological perspective.

3. Robert Hirsch, *Seizing the Light: A History of Photography* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2000), 130. See also Beaumont Newhall, *The History of Photography*

(New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1982); and Naomi Rosenblum, *A World History of Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984).

4. Michael Leja, *Looking Askance: Skepticism and American Art from Eakins to Duchamp* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), 21–58. This skeptical view is reflected in an anonymous article published in the *New York World* on May 4, 1869, which is reproduced in the primary sources related to the trial in the chapter “Mumler in the Press: The Trial.”

5. Jennifer Tucker, *Nature Exposed: Photography as Eyewitness in Victorian Science* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 124.

6. Bruno Latour, “What Is Iconoclasm? Or Is There a World beyond the Image Wars?” in Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, eds., *Iconoclasm: Beyond the Image Wars in Science, Religion, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2002), 18.

7. William H. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences of William H. Mumler in Spirit-Photography* (Boston: Colby and Rich, 1875), 3.

8. I only touch on the cultural discourse of mourning and bereavement here because I devote a major theoretical section to this subject in the Conclusion.

9. See Ann Braude, *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women’s Rights in Nineteenth Century America*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001). For other recent historical studies of Spiritualism, see Todd Jay Leonard, *Talking to the Other Side: A History of Modern Spiritualism and Mediumship: A Study of the Religion, Science, Philosophy and Mediums That Encompass This American-Made Religion* (Lincoln, Neb.: iUniverse, Inc., 2005); John D. Buescher, *The Other Side of Salvation: Spiritualism and the Nineteenth Century Religious Experience* (Boston: Skinner House Books, 2004); and Bret Carroll, *Spiritualism in Antebellum America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997).

10. New England Spiritualists’ Association, *Constitution and By-Laws, List of Officers and Address to the Public* (Boston: George K. Snow, 1854), 14. This passage is cited in Robert S. Cox, *Body and Soul: A Sympathetic History of American Spiritualism* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2003), 19.

11. For a recent essay on the conjunction of Spiritualism and telegraphy under the sign of the globalization of technology and religion, see Jeremy Stolow, “Techno-Religious Imaginaries: On the Spiritual Telegraph and the Circum-Atlantic World of the Nineteenth Century,” http://anscombe.mcmaster.ca/global/servlet/Xml2pdf?fn=RA_Stolow_Imaginaries (accessed July 15, 2007).

12. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 12. Forty years later, the *World* published Margaret’s confession in which she exposed the trick. “My sister Kate was the first one to discover that by swishing her fingers she could produce a certain noise with the knuckles and joints, and that the same effect could be made with the toes. Finding that we could make raps with our feet—first with one foot, then with both—we practiced until we could do this easily when the room was dark. No one suspected us of any trick because we were such young children.” See “Spiritualism Exposed: Margaret Fox Kane Confesses Fraud,” *New York World*, October 21, 1888, <http://psychicinvestigator.com/demo/Foxtxt.htm> (accessed July 12, 2007).

13. This phraseology was the title of one of Andrew Jackson Davis's many volumes expounding Spiritualist philosophy: *Philosophy of Spiritual Intercourse: Being an Explanation of Modern Mysteries* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1857).

14. Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia* (New York: J. S. Redfield, Fowler and Wells, 1853). This particular Davis volume went through forty editions.

15. Andrew Jackson Davis, "What Do I Believe?" in *Beyond the Valley: A Sequel to "The Magic Staff"* (Boston: Colby and Rich, 1885), 133–34.

16. Elbridge T. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case* (New York: Baker, Voorhis and Law Publishers, 1869), 22.

17. *Ibid.*, 24.

18. Andrew Jackson Davis, *Death and the After-Life: Eight Evening Lectures on the Summer-Land* (1865), 68. Here Davis wavers between tenses, pronouncing the achievement and speculating on the future success of spirit photography. On the one hand, "Art has made the nearest approach to painting unsubstantial shadows, so that the human eye can, with admiring satisfaction, look upon them." Even though Davis speaks of painting unsubstantial shadows, it is assumed that this Art is the indexical achievement of spirit photography. On the other hand, the passage projects Davis hopes for the imminent success of "photographic developments" to "*take the spirit form.*" An electronic version of the book is available online at www.spiritwritings.com/DeathAfterlifeDavis.pdf (accessed July 25, 2007).

19. This letter was published in the *New York Daily Tribune*, April 19, 1869, 8.

20. Steven Connor, "The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the 'Direct Voice,'" in Peter Buse and Andrew Stott, eds., *Ghosts: Deconstruction, Psychoanalysis, History* (London: Macmillan, 1999), 204.

21. Albert Morton, "Spirit Portraits by W. H. Mumler," *Carrier Dove* (February 1886): 43.

22. *New York Sun*, April 27, 1869, 1.

23. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 65. Similarly, in the *Banner of Light* one finds the published letter titled "Spirit Photography Scientifically Considered," of Dr. C. D. Griswold of Cleveland, Ohio, who argues that spirits "reflect the chemical rays, which alone are instrumental in the production of a photographic picture." See *Banner of Light*, November 29, 1862, 5.

24. "Science and Spiritual Photographs," *New York Times*, May 4, 1869, 5.

25. Jennifer Porter refers to the supernatural scientific position as "paradoxical positivism" in "The Spirit(s) of Science: Paradoxical Positivism as Religious Discourse among Spiritualists," *Science as Culture* 14, no. 1 (2005): 1–21.

26. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 53.

27. Barbara Goldsmith, *Other Powers: The Age of Suffrage, Spiritualism, and the Scandalous Victoria Woodhull* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 1998), 49.

28. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, xix.

29. See *ibid.*, 64, for the quoted phrase. *Modern American Spiritualism* was originally self-published in New York in 1870 but was reprinted in a centenary edition by University Books in New Hyde Park, New York, in 1970.

30. Emma Hardinge Britten, *Nineteenth Century Miracles* (New York: W. Britten, 1884), 480–81. This incident is also related in James Coates, *Photographing the Invisible: Practical Studies in Supernormal Photography, Script, and Other Allied Phenomena* (London: L. N. Fowler, 1911), 15.

31. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 41. It should be noted that debate persists regarding Mrs. Mumler's date of birth and first name. While I am following Cloutier's attribution of her name as Hannah, other accounts show her name as Elizabeth and her place and year of birth as Chelsea, Massachusetts, in 1837.

32. *Ibid.*

33. For quote, see *ibid.*, 43.

34. This is mentioned in *Banner of Light*, November 8, 1862, 4. Mumler worked as the chief engraver for the Boston jewelry firm of Bigelow Brothers and Kennard before his foray into spirit photography. His obituary states that he "attained considerable prominence" as an engraver. From this account, we can surmise that his socioeconomic status before spirit photography was decently middle-class. See *Photographic Times and American Photographer* 14, no. 162 (June 1884): 304.

35. The ongoing coverage of *New York Daily Tribune* from April 22 to May 4, 1869, was referred to as "Spiritualism in Court."

36. "A Wonderful Mystery," *New York Sun*, February 26, 1869, 2.

37. *New York World*, April 13, 1869, 1.

38. "The American Institute, Meeting of the Photographic Section," *New York World*, March 3, 1869, 5.

39. This *New York Herald* article was reprinted in "New York Correspondence," *Philadelphia Photographer* 6 (1869): 200.

40. *New York Daily Tribune*, May 4, 1869, 2.

41. "A Stupendous Fraud," *New York Times*, April 13, 1869, 5.

42. "Spiritual Photographs," *New York Times*, April 25, 1869, 4.

43. *Banner of Light*, November 1, 1862, 4.

44. Guay is quoted in Coates, *Photographing the Invisible*, 2.

45. *Banner of Light*, February 20, 1863, 4.

46. "About Some Photographic Ghost Stories," *British Journal of Photography* 10 (January 1863): 15.

47. *Ibid.*, 14.

48. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 55. The *New York Times* reported this part of Gerry's argument with an extra nod to the mayor, who remains absent from the transcript. It reads, "And it behooved courts of justice to bring the arm of the law to sustain the Mayor in his good work of protecting the credulous from being robbed by adroit and cunning knaves." See "Spiritual Photographs," May 4, 1869, 1.

49. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 5.

50. *Ibid.*, 7.

51. In this regard, Gerry echoes the thinking of Oliver Wendell Holmes in his essay "Doings of the Sunbeam" when he writes that friends and relatives in their

time of loss desperately need these spirit pictures and see in them what they want to see in them. "But it is enough for the poor mother, whose eyes are blinded with tears, that she sees a print of drapery like an infant's dress, and a rounded something, like a foggy dumpling, which will stand for a face: she accepts the spirit-portrait as a revelation from the world of shadows." This essay was published in *Atlantic Monthly* 12 (July 1863): 14.

52. "Spirit Photography," *New York Times*, April 29, 1869, 5.

53. James Appleton Morgan, *The Law of Literature* (New York: James Crockett and Co., 1875), vol. 1, 47.

54. "Spiritual Photography," *New York Times*, May 4, 1869, 1.

55. *Ibid.*

56. "Spirit Photography," *New York Times*, April 29, 1869, 5.

57. This section of Mnookin's essay "The Image of Truth: Photographic Evidence and the Power of Analogy" is titled "Photographic Spirits and the Problem of Photographic Evidence," in *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities* 10, no. 1 (1998): 30.

58. *Ibid.*, 34.

59. *Ibid.*, 40.

60. "Spiritual Photographs," *New York Times*, May 4, 1869, 1.

61. Richard Bolton, ed., *The Contest of Meaning: Critical Histories of Photography* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1989).

62. Mnookin, "The Image of Truth," 41.

63. David Brewster, *The Stereoscope: Its History, Theory, and Construction, With Its Application to the Fine and Useful Arts and to Education* (London: J. Murray, 1856), 205.

64. Affirming the solidity of vision, one recalls the Greek etymology for the first half of this scopic invention as *stereos* (solid).

65. *Ibid.*

66. *Banner of Light*, November 29, 1862, 4. The relation of Brewster's ghosts to Mumler's photographs was also taken up in the *Spiritual Magazine*: "Those who are so carefully making their investigations are not ignorant of the manner in which the well-known stereoscopic ghosts are produced, of which the invention, like that of the stereoscope itself, is claimed, and we hope more honestly than the latter, by Sir David Brewster. These ghost imitations are produced by having a figure dressed to represent the unearthly visitor, and standing in position during just half the time required for the full operation, then moving away, giving the objects behind it the other half, to impress their image faintly on the negative plate. The result is 'the ghost in the stereoscope,' and they are wonderful and truthful representations of spiritual appearances, more to the very life than any previous art efforts of that character. The ghost is sufficiently distinct to be clearly seen, but transparent, so that the figures of the clock dial are easily read through the head of his ghostship." *Spiritual Magazine* 4, no. 1 (January 1863): 40-41.

67. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 32.

68. Ibid.
69. D. Davie, "Formula for Raising Ghosts," *Photographic News* (August 20, 1869): 408; quoted in Tucker, *Nature Exposed*, 73.
70. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 5.
71. Ibid.
72. The article is reproduced in *Spiritual Magazine* 3, no. 12 (December 1862): 562.
73. *New York World*, April 29, 1869, 2.
74. Leja, *Looking Askance*, 57. Here, Leja states the logical conclusion: "That if truth was the issue, Mumler was no different than Barnum. If Mumler must be sent to jail for profiting from lying, so must Barnum."
75. Newhall, *The History of Photography*, 75.
76. Henry Peach Robinson, *Pictorial Effect in Photography: Being Hints on Composition and Chiaroscuro for Photographers* (London: Piper and Carter, 1869).
77. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 55.
78. *Photographic Times and American Photographer* 14, no. 162 (June 1884): 304.

ELBRIDGE T. GERRY, THE MUMLER "SPIRIT" PHOTOGRAPH CASE

1. Honorable A. Oakey Hall.
2. 3 Revised Statutes (5th ed.), 956, § 55. [Editor's note: I have relied on Mary Miles Prince, *Bieber's Dictionary of Legal Abbreviations* (Buffalo: William S. Hein and Co., 2001), for expanding the abbreviations used for Elbridge Gerry's legal citations in his closing argument.]
3. Laws of 1853, ch. 138, § 2.
4. 3 Revised Statutes (5th ed.), 971, § 1.
5. *Merrit v. Earle*, 29 New York Court of Appeals Reports (N.Y.R.), 115, 117–20.
6. 22 Wendell's Reports, 526.
7. 1 Parker's Criminal Reports (N.Y.), 649, affirmed in 2 Id., 235.
8. 1 City Hall Recorder, 185.
9. 16 New York Court of Appeals Reports, 58.
10. 35 New York Court of Appeals Reports, 125.
11. 32 New York Court of Appeals Reports, 147.
12. Wharton & Stillé's *Medical Jurisprudence*, §§ 47 to 60; 151 to 158. See John Ordronaux, *On Hallucinations Consistent with Reason*, 20–21. [Editor's note: Gerry cites this source, published in *American Journal of Insanity* 17, no. 4 (April 1861): 353–75.]
13. 8 Johnson's Reports, 291.
14. 33 Barbour's Supreme Court Reports, 561.
15. New York State Convention of 1821, 462, 574.
16. *Spiritual Mysteries Unveiled*, 24. [Editor's note: Throughout the text, Gerry refers to Davis's *The Present Age and Inner Life; Ancient and Modern Spiritual*

Mysteries classified and explained (New York: Partridge and Brittan, 1853) as *Spiritual Mysteries Unveiled*.]

17. 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verse 18.

18. See *Spiritual Mysteries Unveiled*, 413–14.

19. 3 Revised Statutes (5 ed.), 1077.

20. *People v. Ruggles*, 8 Johnson's Reports 291; 2 Revised Statutes (5 ed.), 933, 937.

21. *Spiritual Mysteries*, 40.

22. *Spiritual Mysteries*, note on 25.

23. Saint Matthew, chapter 17, verse 3.

24. A. Briere De Boismont, *On Hallucinations: A History and Explanation of Apparitions, Visions, Dreams, Ecstasy, Magnetism, and Somnambulism*, trans. by Robert T. Hulme (Columbus, Ohio: Joseph H. Riley & Co., 1860), 59.

25. Forbes Winslow, *Anatomy of Suicide* (London: H. Renshaw, 1840), 242; De Boismont, 66.

26. Winslow, 123.

27. De Boismont, 69.

28. John Charles Bucknill and Daniel H. Tuke, *Types of Insanity* (Philadelphia: Blanchford and Lea, 1858), 144.

29. Forbes Winslow, *On Obscure Diseases of the Brain and Disorders of the Mind* (London: Churchill, 1860), 463, note.

30. *Spiritual Mysteries*, 373.

31. William Shakespeare, *Henry IV*, Part 1, Act 3, Scene 2.

32. 1 Hawkins' Pleas of the Crown, ch. 71, § 2; 1 Bishop on Criminal Law § 1016, and cases cited in note; 2 East Pleas of the Crown, 818; *Rex v. Jones*, 2 Lord Raymond's Reports, 1013.

33. Statutes 33 Henry VIII. cap. 1; 2 Bishop on Criminal Law § 142.

34. Statutes 30 George II. cap. 24; *Regina v. Wickham*, 10 Adolphus & Ellis, English King's Bench Reports, 34, per Denman, Chief Judge.

35. *McGahay v. Williams*, 12 Johnson's Reports, 292–93, per Thompson, Chief Judge; *People v. Haynes*, 11 Wendell's Reports, 557; Superior Court 14 Id., 546.

36. 3 Revised Statutes (5 ed.), 956, § 55.

37. *People v. Tomkins*, 1 Parker's Criminal Reports, 224.

38. *People v. Crissie*, 4 Denio's New York Supreme Court Reports (1845–48), 527, per Jewett, Justice.

39. *Adams v. The People*, 1 Comstock's Report's, 173, overruling S.C., 3 Denio's New York Supreme Court Reports, 190.

40. *Regina v. Moreland*, 2 Moody's Crown Cases, 276; *Commonwealth v. Hardy*, 7 Metcalf's Reports (Massachusetts), 462; *Cowen v. The People*, 14 Illinois Reports, 348; 2 Wharton's American Criminal Law § 2114.

41. *Regina v. Ady*, 7 Carrington & Payne's English Nisi Prius Reports, 140, in point.

42. *Regina v. Bates*, 3 Cox's Criminal Cases, 201.

43. Leigh & Cave Criminal Cases, 502, 509, 510; Superior Court 10 Cox's Criminal Cases, 44.
44. Kerrigan's Case, Leigh & Cave Crown Cases, 383.
45. West's Case, Dearsley & Bell's English Crown Cases (1856–58), 575.
46. Fry's Case, *Idem*, 449; S.C. 7 Cox Crown Cases, 394; Supreme Court 4 Jurist New Series Jurist Reports, 266; S.C. 27 Law Journal Magistrate's Cases, 68; Supreme Court Dearsley & Bell's English Crown Cases (1856–1858), 449. See also Young's Case, 3 Term Reports, 98, which compares with *Commonwealth v. Drew*, 19 Pickering's Reports, 179.
47. Leigh & Cave Crown Cases, 157; S.C. 9 Cox Crown Cases, 158.
48. 3 Term Reports, 98.
49. 9 Cox Crown Cases, 445.
50. *Commonwealth v. Van Tuyl*, 1 Metcalf's Reports (Kentucky), 1.
51. *Commonweath v. Harley*, 7 Metcalf's Reports (Massachusetts), 642.
52. *Rex v. Wheatly*, 2 Burrow's Reports, 1127, per Lord Mansfield, cited and approved in *People v. Babcock*, 7 Johnson's Reports, 204; *People v. Sully*, 5 Parker's Criminal Reports, 165; 2 East's Pleas of the Crown, 818; 1 Bishop on Criminal Law § 1007; 2 *Ibid.* § 142.
53. 14 Howell's English State Trials, 640.
54. *Ibid.*, 654.
55. *King v. Bonny*, Tremaine's Pleas of the Crown (England), 106.
56. *King v. Chamberlain*, *Ibid.*, 105.
57. *Reg v. Closs*, 27 Law Journal Reports Magistrates' Cases, 54; *Reg v. Sharman*, 23 *Ibid.* 51; Supreme Court 1 Dearsly's Crown Cases, 285.
58. Laws of 1853, ch. 138, 219; 2 Revised Statutes (5th ed.), 467, § 59.
59. Honorable Nathaniel Blunt.
60. 22 New York Court of Appeals Reports, 413.
61. 2 U.S. Internal Revenue Record, 70.
62. Law Reports, 6 Equity Cases, 655.
63. 1 Archbold's Criminal Pleading, 43–7; *Quinlan v. The People*, 1 Parker's Criminal Reports, 9.
64. 1. Colby Criminal Law and Practice (New York), 623.
65. *Regina v. Bunce*, 1 Foster & Finlason's English Nisi Prius Reports, 528.

CONCLUSION

1. Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2000), 202. The relationship between modern technological communications and the occult along the telephone wires has been taken up most famously in Avital Ronell, *The Telephone Book: Technology, Schizophrenia, Electric Speech* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989). See also Steven Connor's essay "The Machine in the Ghost: Spiritualism, Technology, and the 'Direct Voice'" for a "deeper relationship between the evolution of ghost

phenomena and the developing logic of technological communications" (212), in the excellent volume Buse and Stott, eds., *Ghosts*, 203–25. To quote the editors, "As Steven Connor's essay points out, if we want to find today's ghosts, we should look to the workings of telecommunications, the activities of the media, that omniscient absence–presence, in which our 'contemporary' spectrality is to be found." See Buse and Stott, "Introduction: The Future of Haunting," in *Ghosts*, 17. For another astute essay that brings deconstruction to bear on the spirit photography of the nineteenth century and that includes references to Mumler's images of Mary Todd Lincoln and Emma Hardinge Britten, see Paola Cortés-Rocca, "Ghost in the Machine: Photographs of Specters in the Nineteenth Century," *Mosaic: A Journal for the Interdisciplinary Studies of Literature* 38, no. 1 (March 2005): 151–68.

2. Sconce, *Haunted Media*, 12.

3. *Ibid.*

4. The on-line address is www.ghostweb.org.

5. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994).

6. Jacques Derrida is quoted in Ken McMullen's film *Ghost Dance* (1983).

7. Derrida's analysis would suggest that the ghosts of photography do not require the mediumistic powers of a William Mumler in order to set off this logic of haunting (*hauntology*).

8. For a collection of essays reviewing the concepts of haunting and spectrality at the crossroads of deconstruction and psychoanalysis, see Buse and Stott, eds., *Ghosts*. In their "Introduction: A Future for Haunting," the editors position themselves in a way that is quite similar to my own approach to the subject: "While proving or disproving the existence of ghosts is a fruitless exercise, it is more rewarding to diagnose the persistence of the *trope* of spectrality in culture. Spectrality and haunting continue to enjoy a powerful currency in language and in thinking, even if they have been left behind by belief" (3).

9. Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler, *Echographies of Television: Filmed Interviews*, trans. Jennifer Bajorek (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2002), 117.

10. Andrew Jackson Davis, *Memoranda of Persons, Places, and Events: Embracing authentic facts, visions, impressions, discoveries, in magnetism, clairvoyance, spiritualism* (Boston: William White and Company, 1868), 3.

11. Jacques Derrida, "Injunctions of Marx," in *Specters of Marx*, 11. Buse and Stott situate spectrality as the blindspot of Derrida's straw-man scholar this way: "By not 'dealing' with ghosts, Derrida argues that traditional scholarship asks questions of the ghost only with the intention of ontologizing it, or interpellating it from the necessary distance of scholarly 'objectivity.' This, he believes, constitutes an avoidance of spectrality, since to figure the ghost in terms of fact or fiction, real or not-real is to attribute to it a foundational ground, either a positive or negative facticity that the notion of ghostliness continually eludes." This same deconstructive point can be directed toward Mumler as well. See Buse and Stott, "Introduction," *Ghosts*, 10.

12. Davis, *Memoranda of Persons, Places, and Events*, 3.
13. Derrida, in Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, 118.
14. "Spiritual Photographs," *New York Times*, April 25, 1869, 4. The ghost of Hamlet's father also appears in an early *Banner of Light* story as a precedent to the specters of Mumler. "Another is the closet scene in Hamlet, where the disembodied spirit of his late Danish Majesty appears to his son. The ghost is a large sized figure in armor, but so vapory that the pattern of a tapestried screen is visible through it, while the figures of Hamlet, the Queen, and all material objects, are quite distinct." See "The Spirit Photographs," *Banner of Light*, November 29, 1862, 4.
15. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 161.
16. Buse and Stott, "Introduction," *Ghosts*, 5.
17. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 10.
18. These three quoted terms are found in Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, on pages 19, 4, and 50, respectively.
19. Derrida remarks on the idea that "the subject that haunts is not identifiable" in his discussion of Karl Marx and Max Stirner. See Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 136.
20. The quoted term is from Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 4.
21. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 134.
22. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 67–68.
23. Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1981), 14.
24. For a review of how the uncanny and the supernatural have entered into recent literary discourse with the help of psychoanalysis and deconstruction, see Nicholas Royle, *The Uncanny* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003). Royle has also published an essay discussing the place of ghosts in deconstruction; see his "Phantom Review," *Textual Practice* 11, no. 2 (Summer 1997): 386–98.
25. Sigmund Freud, "Das Unheimliche" (1919), in *Gesammelte Werke* (London: Imago Publishing Co., 1947), vol. 12, 254–55. The other translations cited here come from "The Uncanny," in Sigmund Freud, *The Collected Papers of Sigmund Freud*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Basic Books, 1959), vol. 4, 368–407.
26. Buse and Stott note, "It is entirely appropriate, then, that Freud likened the repressed idea to an unwelcome house-guest." See Buse and Stott, "Introduction," *Ghosts*, 9.
27. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 3.
28. Freud, "The Uncanny," 387.
29. Tom Gunning, "Phantom Images and Modern Manifestations: Spirit Photography, Magic Theater, Trick Films, and Photography's Uncanny," in Patrice Petro, ed., *Fugitive Images: From Photography to Video* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 68.
30. Freud, "The Uncanny," 387.
31. *Ibid.*, 389.
32. *Ibid.*, 402.

33. *Ibid.*, 394.
34. *Ibid.*, 398.
35. The article was reprinted in *Spiritual Magazine*, n.s. 4, no. 7 (July 1869): 244–45.
36. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 115.
37. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 30.
38. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 135–36.
39. This incident is recounted in P. T. Barnum, "Spiritualist Photography," in *Humbugs of the World* (New York: Carleton Publishers, 1866), 114–19.
40. Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton, 1950), 93.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Laurence A. Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning: Writing on German Crypts* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1988), 147.
43. *Ibid.*, 297.
44. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 53.
45. Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning*, 358.
46. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" (1917), in Freud, *The Collected Papers*, vol. 4, 154.
47. Rickels, *Aberrations of Mourning*, 362.
48. *Ibid.*, 18.
49. *Ibid.*, 21.
50. *Ibid.*, 191.
51. *Ibid.*, 145.
52. Derrida and Stiegler, *Echographies of Television*, 117.
53. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 65.
54. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 63.
55. *Ibid.*, 30.
56. Jacques Lacan, "Desire and Interpretation of Desire in *Hamlet*," *Yale French Studies* 55/56 (1977): 39.
57. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 3.
58. *Ibid.*, 37. We will return to the dynamics of the spirit communication between Moses Dow and Mabel Warren in the section on paranoia.
59. Braude, *Radical Spirits*, 52.
60. *Ibid.*, 54. Braude cites Andrew Jackson Davis, *The Great Harmonia: Being a philosophical revelation of the natural, spiritual, and celestial universe* (Boston: B. B. Mussey, 1850), vol. 1, 171.
61. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 40.
62. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 175.
63. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 3.
64. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading: Or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Introduction Is about You," in *Novel Gazing* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997), 5.

65. *Ibid.*, 8.

66. *Ibid.*, 9.

67. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 31.

68. Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 92. The section is titled "Animism, Magic, and the Omnipotence of Thoughts."

69. *Ibid.*

70. Jacques Lacan, "What Is a Picture?" in *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan and ed. Jacques-Alain Miller (New York: Norton, 1981), 106.

71. *Ibid.*, 84.

72. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 40.

73. *Ibid.*, 4.

74. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 152.

75. *Ibid.*, 120–21.

76. Gerry, *The Mumler "Spirit" Photograph Case*, 19.

77. *Ibid.*, 11.

78. Mumler, *The Personal Experiences*, 68. For an analysis of how photography of the invisible entered into nineteenth-century medical and scientific debates, see Michael S. Roth, "Hysterical Remembering," *Modernism/Modernity* 3, no. 3 (April 1996): 1–30.

79. Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, 172.

80. *Ibid.* Derrida also has this to say about *es spukt*: "this about which we have failed to say anything whatsoever that is logically determinable."

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PLATE 1. William H. Mumler, "Mary Todd Lincoln with the Spirit of Her Husband President Abraham Lincoln and Son Thaddeus," 1872. Reproduced by kind permission of the College of Psychic Studies, London.



PLATE 2. William H. Mumler, "Moses A. Dow and the Spirit of Mabel Warren," 1871. Reproduced by kind permission of the College of Psychic Studies, London.



PLATE 3. William H. Mumler, "Fanny Conant with Spirit Arms and Hands Showering Her with Flowers," 1870-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.17).



PLATE 4. William H. Mumler, "John J. Glover with the Spirit of His Mother," c. 1871.
The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.6).



PLATE 5. William H. Mumler, "Bronson Murray in a Trance with the Spirit of Ella Bonner," 1872. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.11).



PLATE 6. William H. Mumler, "Photograph of Mr. Tinkham with the Spirit of His Wife and Child," c. 1872. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.15).



PLATE 7. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Woman with Spirit Pointing Upward," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.4).



PLATE 8. William H. Mumler, "Child Spirit with Photograph on Table," 1862-75.
The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.12).



PLATE 9. William H. Mumler, "Three Spirits with Photograph on Table," 1862-75.
The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.16).

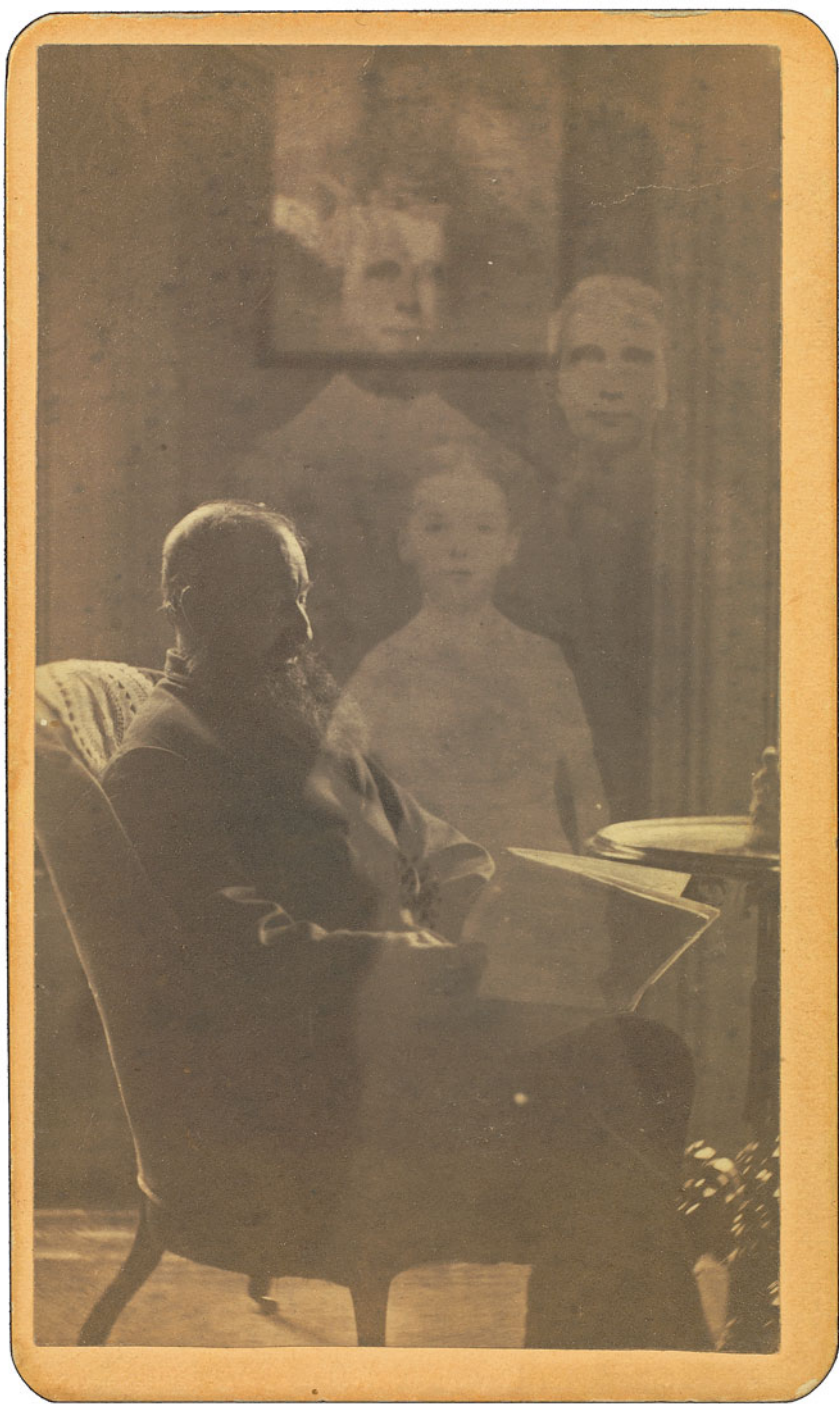


PLATE 10. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Man Seated with Three Spirits," 1862–75.
The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.24).



PLATE 11. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Woman Seated with a Female Spirit," 1862–75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.25).



PLATE 12. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. S. A. Floyd with Native American Spirit," 1862-75.
The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.31).



PLATE 13. William H. Mumler, "Mrs. Swan with Male Spirit and with Female Spirit Presenting Her with a Laurel," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.34).



PLATE 14. Attributed to William H. Mumler, "Three Male Spirits and One Female Spirit with Photograph on Table," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.37).



PLATE 15. William H. Mumler, "Unidentified Man with a Female Spirit Wearing a Veil," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.38).



PLATE 16. William H. Mumler, "Harry Gordon with the Spirit of a Man Handing Him a Cross," 1862-75. The J. Paul Getty Museum (84.XD.760.1.39).