

of spirit-writing, yield a satisfactory explanation to the truth-loving enquirer. In such cases the supposed communications of the mediums are nothing but the products of their own automatic mental operations, guided by the principles of suggestion. The person for whom the enquiry is being conducted is really the one who gives the clue to the required answer. This of course is quite unintentional on the part of the latter. But the majority of persons, in such positions, cannot even by the strongest effort of the will avoid making some slight "inventions of expression." They cannot help showing what is the letter or figure they expect, when the pointer of the planchette comes to it. Accordingly, from such indications of assent or dissent, the mediums (consciously or unconsciously, as they are fraudulent or honest) take their cue, and respond or spell out the required answers.

The following is a standard case in which the methods of the craft are exemplified, tho' here the medium (Mr. Foster) was a fraud:—

Mr Foster had arrived in London only a few days previous to our meeting with him. We were not introduced to him by name, nor do we think he could have any opportunity of knowing our persons. Nevertheless he not only answered, in a variety of modes, the questions put to him respecting the time and cause of the death of several of our departed friends and relations, whose names we had written down on slips of paper, which had been folded up and crumpled into pellets before being placed in his hands; but he brought out names and dates correctly in large red letters on his bare arm, the redness being produced by the turgescence of the minute vessels of the skin, and passing away after a few minutes like a blush. We must own to have been strongly impressed at the time by this performance, but on subsequently thinking it over, we could see that Mr. Foster's divining power was probably derived from his having acquired the faculty of interpreting the movements of the top of a pen or pencil, tho' the point and what was written by it was hid from his sight, with the aid of an

observing power sharpened by practice, which enabled him to guide his own movements by the indications unconsciously given by ourselves of the answers we expected. For tho' we did our utmost to repress every sign of anticipation, we came on reflection to an assured conviction that Mr. Foster had been keen-sighted enough to detect such signs, notwithstanding our attempts to baffle him. For, having asked him the month of the death of a friend, whose name had previously appeared in red letters on his arm, and the year of whose death had been correctly indicated in another way, he desired us to take up the alphabet card and to point to the successive letters. This we did, *as we believed*, with pendulum-like regularity; nevertheless distinct raps were heard at the letters J, U. When, however, on the next repetition we came to L, M, N, Mr. Foster was obviously baffled. He directed us to "try back" two or three times, and at last confessed that he could not certainly tell whether the month was June or July. The secret of this was that *we did not ourselves recollect*. The trick by which the red letters on his arm were produced was afterwards discovered by the inquiries of our medical friends.

Cases of this kind—which seem so easily disposed of by the phrases "all humbug," "all imagination,"—are in truth neither one nor the other, but find their explanation along with the other phenomena of Expectant Attention and the Controlling Influence of a Dominant Idea. They all plainly show how in certain persons, in a certain state of mental concentration, or emotional activity, the expectation of a result is sufficient to determine the muscular movements by which it is produced. There may not be the slightest voluntary effort—indeed the will may be strongly exercised to prevent such effort. The faces of many people are as a book in which the ordinary practised eye can read the symbols of the subject's thought. Most of those who read this article are doubtless able to recall occasions on which they watched the play of some friend's features and shrewdly guessed at the passing thoughts. Indeed it is almost certain that a quick intuition,