

# Made a FRUMP out of HERSELF to EXPOSE the FAKE MEDIUMS



Several newspapermen went along with Miss Mackenberg to the next seance. When the mutterings of Chief White Cloud were heard, a cameraman's flashlight bulb went off in the dark and the medium was caught with a trumpet to her mouth—the trumpet was needed to produce the guttural Indian sounds.

question and put the name of the spirit on paper. The medium answers your question. Miss Mackenberg found that she could sign any name and that was the name by which the spirit always addressed her. No medium ever was farsighted enough to see through her disguise.

"Then there is 'ectoplasm,'" she continues, "where the mediums say that body cells, coming from their mouths, produce the visible spirit of the dead person. It is really only a piece of cloth which the medium conceals on her person, I have discovered. It is dipped in luminous paint."

Slate writing, spirit photography, and blindfold reading have been exposed by Miss Mackenberg. In blindfold reading, she discovered, two discs, supposed to cover the eyes more completely, really hold the bandage off so the medium can read. By rubbing a sponge dipped in a certain form of alcoholic mixture over a sealed envelope, its contents become visible. All of these things she has used many times in her sensational revelations.

IN the course of her work, Miss Mackenberg has attended as many as 20 seances a day, and all of them have told her conflicting things. The mediums have advertised one price and she has talked them into varying lowered rates.

"I was instrumental in involving Houdini in a million dollars' worth of law suits," she remembers. "Not one ever was won against him. At the slightest provocation the medium would sue for \$50,000 or \$100,000. Houdini usually engaged two stenographers and took down everything that was said."

Take a typical seance, and follow Miss Mackenberg. The one at an outstanding trumpet medium's, in Chicago, will do. Here the medium adjusted powder puffs over her eyes, which, to the uninitiated, appeared to shut out, not let in, light. Then everyone sang a hymn and the medium answered questions they had written on slips of paper.

Later, Big Chief White Cloud came through. So when the meeting finally ended Miss Mackenberg spoke to Houdini on long distance. Preparations for exposure were made. At the next seance several newspaper men were present. When Chief White Cloud appeared, a cameraman's flashlight went off in the dark and the medium was caught with the trumpet to her mouth—the trumpet was needed to produce the guttural Indian sounds.

Then there was a Mr. Parker in Chicago.

"When I called upon him the spirits told him that I was a widow with \$3000 cash in hand," she narrates. "He then resorted to automatic writing, which is a spasmodic movement of the wrist, writing words which are legible only to the medium. After the usual heaving and sighing, he told me to place out my arm because my husband's spirit was standing at my shoulder. The spirit directed him to write the name Wilcox Transportation Company and wanted me to invest \$1000 in this stock."

"In reporting to Houdini over long distance that night, he suggested that I open a bank account and give the medium a check for \$100. In order to offset the usual cry of the medium that it was a frame-up, I told Mr. Parker that I could not write very well, and he filled out the check for the stock he wanted to sell me. He later showed me blue prints and a pretty stock certificate that I could buy for only \$1000."

"When Houdini was playing at the Princess Theater in Chicago he related this story from the stage, and a representative of the Better Business Men's Bureau who was present came backstage to ask if he would let me testify for them as a witness if they brought the man to court. After two days on the stand when the attorneys for the defendant tried to prove that I never had been to see Mr. Parker, Mr. Parker was fined and Mr. Wilcox received a suspended sentence."



Before Miss Mackenberg starts out to debunk a seance, she first must be sure that the medium will not recognize her. This very tricky get-up served as one of her recent disguises.

WHEN Rose Mackenberg, the ace detective among those who campaign against fraudulent mediums, enters the spirit world she goes as a bewildered, frumpishly dressed housewife who is after nothing more than a message from dear Uncle Ned or poor Cousin Olive. The disguise works. Miss Mackenberg has taken part in more than 1500 investigations and not once has she been questioned.

She can't appear in her own smart wardrobe. Her description is wired on from town to town and she would be recognized at once.

Miss Mackenberg, who has made a most profitable business out of exposing the fakery of crooked mediums, used to believe in such things as trumpet messages, dancing tables, and blindfolded messages. Now, after an association of several years as advance agent for the late Houdini in his sensational exposes of fraudulent mediums, and her later investigations for newspapers, banks, and lawyers, she says it is all the bunk.

Why? Well, first of all, she never has been married, but the mediums have given her 1500 husbands and 3000 children, all of them dead, who have sent her messages from the spirit land.

"All they ever can say is that they are well and happy," the detective comments. "I am not a skeptic and I would be the first to acknowledge a message from the Great Beyond, one that I could recognize as genuine. However, during the course of my investigations, whether the mediums lived in luxurious hotels or in hovels, their messages have followed the same line of bunk."

"I have been ordained six times as a spiritualistic minister and now have the right to marry, bury and baptize."

IN order to test the psychic powers of the medium, Miss Mackenberg uses the most ridiculous names she can make up when she wants to be ordained. Once she called herself Alicia Bunk. "All is a bunk," it read. The medium accepted it and ordained her.

An "ordination" takes from 20 minutes to three days, she says, and costs anywhere from \$5 to \$25.

Miss Mackenberg's work usually consists of preparing the way for the taking of flashlight pictures of the astonished mediums in the dark, or of acquiring information which later is used against them. She has testified in courts on stock swindles where a spirit made the suggestion and the medium profited, on

wills made under a medium's influence, and other forms of faked spiritualistic work.

An expose is planned for a certain city. Miss Mackenberg takes a train there. Then her disguise begins.

"I enter a town," she says. "Then I visit the local department stores, observe the manner of dress of the typical housewife, and purchase an outfit similar to that, with heavy flat-heeled shoes, cotton stockings, an ill-fitting coat, and a hat of 1898 vintage."

"After that I go to the hotel, remove the powder from my face, plaster my hair down in the most unbecoming fashion, place my hat at the most unbecoming angle, probably put on glasses, and sally forth."

Sometimes it takes a week of standing around department stores and

studying people until Miss Mackenberg is familiar enough with her type to risk an imitation. Now, fully clothed, she begins her detective work. From directories, telephone books, and newspapers, and any other way, she gets the names of mediums and spiritualistic centers.

THERE are specialty branches in the trade, Miss Mackenberg has learned. There is the "inspirational," where the medium puts her hand to her forehead, and says, "Aunt Mary is here. She is happy and doesn't want you to worry." Boston likes this method.

The "trumpet," Philadelphia's favorite, consists of a circle in which a tin horn is supposed to be lifted from the floor by divine power.

Detroit likes "pellet switching," where you write your name and address and