

# HOW THE THREE SVENGALLS HAVE MYSTIFIED THE PUBLICS OF TWO CONTINENTS

## THEIR ASTONISHING "MIND READING" FEATS ON A NEW YORK ROOF GARDEN EXPLAINED

**T**WO persons (lady and gentleman) are on the stage, both with their backs toward the audience. A third one goes into the auditorium, with his back toward the stage, to receive the wishes of the audience. If the name of any international celebrity is whispered to him, with lightning rapidity the thought is transmitted. The gentleman on the stage turns round immediately and appears in features, bearing and dress as the desired personage—with wondrously startling resemblance.

"One can likewise whisper to the gentleman in the auditorium the name of an international opera, operetta or international song. The thought flies like lightning, and the lady sings what is wanted, instantly, accompanying herself on the piano."

**T**HIS is what Oscar Hammerstein's imported "mind readers," the Svengalls, do nightly at the Paradise Roof Garden's performance in New York. It is the talk of the town. Were a Hindoo juggler, fresh from Calcutta, to toss the Fifth Avenue Hotel a mile high into the air and keep it dancing on the tip of an imaginary wand it would hardly seem less wonderful to the average theater-goer than this mind reading feat—a young lady on the stage, her back to the audience, instantly playing the music you have just whispered to Svengall, still at your side; he asking if it is correct, and you telling the audience, "Yes, perfectly correct—wonderful!" and you go home ready to believe in Spiritualism, Robinson Crusoe, Jonah and the whale, and all the other things you have doubted for a hundred years.

Others have the same experience. They whisper of Lincoln, Victor Hugo, Bismarck, Wagner, Grant, Kruger, Dewey and twenty other famous men, while still others name opera airs, grand marches, symphonies, and before the scent of Kentucky mint leaves their breath the whispered name is repeated on the stage and the girl at the piano begins the music mentioned to the man Svengall at your elbow.

### Everybody Surprised at the Feats.

The audience naturally applaud, and the waiters cease trying to make the right change for refreshments. It all appears marvelous, especially to men who have traveled and seen things on both sides of the Atlantic. The visiting card sharp who can hide a "ten spot" under a freckle is amazed, says it's a new one on him and declares he could break a bonanza bank with such a trick worked in the Nevada mines.

Country church members wonder if Satan isn't running the world, after all, while city people, smart bank clerks, wardmen and police captains look on with open-mouthed astonishment, as much bewildered as the hayseed chaps from Catskill or Hobokus, at the things said, done and whispered in full view of the audience, with no dark lantern seances or slate writing flummery to make one doubt that it is the real thing—genuine mind reading. "It beats table tipping to Manila and back again," an iron-faced lawyer remarked to an inned brother-in-law, who never believed in anything until he whispered, "Czar Nicholas," and saw the man on the stage, fifty feet away, whirl around in his Majesty's uniform, while the girl played the Russian hymn on the piano.

### Whispered Thoughts Instantly Read.

Theatrical managers and Chicago critics said it was "great," and Svengall, the genius of the show, wore a smile that reached around the block.

If you don't know how such feats are done they simply bewilder the imagination. If your whispered thoughts can be read by a stranger at the further end of the hall, why isn't it all true? you ask yourself—every claim made for the supernatural, communication with the absent and dead, voices in the air, whispers at midnight, voodooism and witchcraft, and the telepathy that carried the news of the Sepoy mutiny across Hindostan in a moment of time.

"There are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in your philosophy, Horatio," you murmur to yourself as the exhibition goes on, and weird possibilities thrill those hungry for a word from some dear friend beyond the grave. Even the visiting detective, who got in on his badge, with telescope nose and gimlet eyes, thinks it clairvoyance or spirits. And so the tests go on, up one aisle and down another, Spiritualists whispering, "I told you so," and country mediums believing it all a part of the spook gospel originated years ago by Ka-

the Fox and her foxy sisters in Western New York, who made knocks with their toe joints, as Katie confessed at her historic exhibition in the New York Academy of Music.

The men who don't believe it other than jugglery didn't betray the secret, for that would be unprofessional, giving away a brother in the business.

### How Tricks Are Done.

It is reserved for the Call-Herald to describe the systems by which such feats may be performed. The chief thing is a perfect performance. Art must conceal the art. Long practice is required to make the tricks so simple that every eye is deceived.

When the curtain rises the master of ceremonies, well dressed, with a modest flower in his buttonhole, walks to the front of the stage with the confidence that inspires confidence and in a pleasing voice begins: "Ladies and Gentlemen: I have the pleasure of introducing to you, etc. I will call your attention to the fact that the audience must confine their whispered wishes to international celebrities, names of well-known personages, songs and operas of international fame," etc.

This limitation of choice is the key to the performance. They have lists of these "international celebrities," rulers, statesmen, diplomats, great writers and musical composers, songs of world-wide reputation, popular selections from the operas, etc. And the secret of the evening is that all these carefully selected names, titles, etc., are numbered, as in the following examples:

### STATESMEN AND RULERS.

- 1—Bismarck.
- 2—King Humbert of Italy.
- 3—Napoleon Bonaparte.
- 4—King Edward VII.
- 5—Paul Kruger.
- 120—Lincoln.

### POPULAR SONGS.

- 1—"Home, Sweet Home."
- 2—"Last Rose of Summer."
- 3—"Marsellaise."
- 4—"The Jewel Song in 'Faust'."
- 5—"Walter's Prize Song."
- 101—"Comin' Thro' the Rye."

### OPERAS.

- 1—"Faust."
- 2—"Lohengrin."
- 3—"Bohemian Girl."
- 4—"Lucia di Lammermoor."
- 5—"Carmen."
- 120—"Trovatore."

### GREAT WRITERS.

- 1—Thackeray.
- 2—Victor Hugo.
- 3—Dickens.
- 4—George Elliot.
- 5—Shakespeare.
- 101—Dante.

### How the Signals Are Concealed.

The manager reiterates that if only names of international reputation are given the responses will be correct 99 times in a thousand. Then he descends from the stage, and, smiling right and left, inclines his ear to catch the whispered wishes as he moves slowly up the aisle, generally with his back to the stage. An auditor whispers to him, "Bismarck."

Herr Svengall, gesticulating freely but naturally, pressing his eyes with his fingers for an instant as if going into a momentary trance—only a second or two just enough to impress the audience—then thrusts a hand into the air, wipes the moisture from his face with his handkerchief or leans toward a spectator, seeking his attention, when a voice from the stage says, "Bismarck."

"Right," responds the man who whispered that illustrious name. Then there is a craning of necks and crushing of programmes, all eyes fixed on the stage, where the impersonator, standing before a cabinet of costume pigeonholes, with the aid of an assistant has donned wig and uniform in his lightning change and whirls around disguised as Bismarck, while the girl at the piano plays "The Watch on the Rhine." It is all the work of a few seconds and makes a great impression upon the spectator.

The next man calls for an opera air, "Bohemian Girl," and the piano plays "I Dream That I Dwell in Marble Halls," etc. Another man suggests the magic name Sheridan. It is echoed aloud from the stage, while the audience applauds and the girl plays "The Star-Spangled Banner."

The few experts present pay little attention to the stage. Their eyes are fixed on the man Svengall in the aisle, noting every move he makes. It is observed that his numerous gestures, his frequent use of his handkerchief, the pressure of his fingers on his eyes, as if to hypnotize his assistants on the stage, are natural movements, attracting no attention, yet necessary to hide the vital signals in the cipher code of the show.

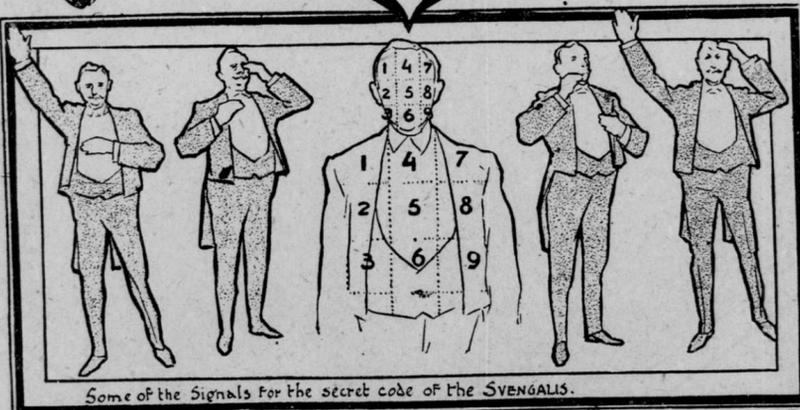
In the programme and show bills it is emphasized that the lady and gentleman on the stage have their backs to the audience, while Svengall down in the aisle has his back to the stage, making collusion apparently impossible. This makes a profound impression on the public.

### A Confederate Behind a Screen.

But not a word is said of that curious



SVENGALL signaling the whispered messages to his Assistants on the stage



Some of the Signals for the secret code of the SVENGALLS.

looking screen panel bearing a double-headed eagle—the Austrian coat of arms—surmounting the large cabinet of costumes occupying so much space on the stage. The programme does not explain that this screen panel is transparent from behind, and that an accomplice with a strong magnifying lens reads every move made by Svengall; and not a word is said of the other man in the gallery, who faces Svengall and repeats his signals to the man behind the transparent coat of arms bearing the imperial eagle of Austria, who directs the pretty girl at the piano and the impersonator at the cabinet.

There are twenty variations of the trick. In case one is exposed there are nineteen others to fall back on. There are wireless telegraphy; the hidden camera, that commands the house; a little silken thread, running from the man in the gallery to the little spring trigger under the perforated shoe of the girl at the piano, held high above the audience by the big chandelier or a pendant from the ceiling. This invisible silk thread is worked by the man in the gallery repeating the signals by a tick-tack code, giving the numbers to the pianist on the stage. Then there is the telegraph wire, laid down along the aisle or to the gallery, the signal being given

with the foot so deftly that the man at the operator's elbow, his eyes glued to the stage, knows nothing of it, all of which may be verified by visiting Martin's Palace of Magic, in Sixth avenue, where other equally wonderful tricks are exploited and explained to visiting magicians, from Kellar to Herrmann.

In the present performance by the Svengalls the key signals, so few and simple as to be unobserved by a majority of the spectators, tell the chief operator, concealed behind a transparent screen on the stage, what has been whispered as clearly as if the word were shouted through a megaphone.

### The Systems Explained.

Here is an illustration of how the figure system can be worked. As explained above, the famous personages, popular songs and operas are on numbered lists, Svengall in the aisle, with his code of signals, has all these numbers committed to memory.

When a spectator whispers "Dickens" Svengall knows it is No. 4, and he signals accordingly.

But how? By touching his head, chin or breast, or that particular part of his body designated in the signal code of the Svengall Company. The diagram given herewith illus-

trates the system of communication by numbers, nine figures and a cipher (0), by which all the wealth of the world may be measured, and any number of words may be communicated without a word of speech. One has but to map out a square on his face, breast or body and number it with these nine figures, with an extra space for the cipher, to be ready for the Svengall business. That is, when he has memorized the names and the numbers representing them.

Say the human head is used for this purpose. Imagine the top of the head, right hand side, as No. 1, the right ear as No. 2, the jaw as No. 3 and the neck as the cipher; the forehead No. 4, the nose No. 5, the chin No. 6, the top of the head on the left side as No. 7, the left ear No. 8 and the left side of the jaw No. 9.

Thus you have the code system by which operators can communicate volumes by using a codified list of numbered words or sentences.

If you label the Lord's prayer No. 4 and the Declaration of Independence No. 5 you may instantly telegraph the mighty literature through wireless space—enough literature to save all Europe from anarchy—by two natural movements of the hand. You can label your eyes, your movements or even your glances, making them

take the places of the nine omnipotent numbers. Again: Glance upward to No. 2 and upward to the left for No. 3. Repeating, glancing horizontally for Nos. 4, 5 and 6. Repeating the same again, by glancing downward for Nos. 7, 8 and 9, and stroking your chin for the cipher (0).

With your back to the audience you can telegraph in a similar way, using your arm and elbow to make the necessary signals. Let the right arm, hanging down, represent No. 1; the elbow, projecting from the side, No. 2; elbow raised, No. 3. Repeat with the left arm for Nos. 4, 5 and 6; with either hand placed naturally behind you, on the small of the back, above the belt and over your shoulder for Nos. 7, 8 and 9, and on the back of your head or neck for the cipher (0).

### Any One Can Do It.

This a conversational code may be improvised and with such a list once committed a lot of noiseless conversation may be carried on by magnets or strike officials at critical moments, as, for example:—Scene, corner of Broad and Wall streets—Mr. Morgan touches his chin, saying by his private code to Mr. Schwab, "Make terms with the strikers or I'll smash the combination."

Mr. Shaffer, having a little code of his own on behalf of the strikers, puts his palm against his ear, saying, "Strike 'em for more than we want, and take what you can get, or I'll skip the works and jump the job."

Not a word had been uttered aloud, yet to-morrow the continent may tremble and stocks go waltzing up and down the list. And Mr. Carnegie, three thousand miles away across the damp sea, puts his thumb to his nose and says without words:

"Let them fight it out. I'm out of it. Glad I'm happy, though rich."

Wonderful is the power of numbers—all the great libraries of statistics and tabulated statements are the magic manipulation of nine little figures and a lonely cipher.

But it may be asked, How does Svengall, or his confederates, rather, know which list the names are to be found in? That is easy to answer. A separate signal designates it. When the Svengall shot his hand into the air two fingers were displayed, meaning list No. 2—the list containing the operas. Each signal tells its story, tells the confederates on the stage exactly what to do, and so the performance proceeds, as wonderful to the spectators as if the spirits of the other world were in control of the show and could produce Caesar or Cleopatra in flesh, bones and blood.

In all these spooky exhibitions the particularly wise man in the audience who was the wonder of fond parents in his boyhood sees everything but how the trick is performed.

Even experts are now and then deceived by some new feat of legerdemain by a new magician. Look at the wonders performed by Kellar and Herrmann. Last week two professors of the art were discussing new tricks in a friendly way, when one of them said: "Have you seen the latest? Here is a poker deck. Select any card you please."

The friend drew the queen of hearts. "Now write a line to my wife at the Waldorf, asking her what card you have drawn." The friend wrote the note, handed it to the magician, sealed, and asked if the address was correct. The wizard barely took the envelope in his hand, handed it back, and a messenger boy carried it to the lady at the Waldorf, immediately returning with the answer:

"You drew the queen of hearts from my husband's pack."

The friend was astounded. Then the trick was explained. When the magician took the envelope to glance at the superscription he pinched the lower right-hand corner, leaving the impress of his thumb nail on the envelope. It told the lady that the card was the queen of hearts, in accordance with a code of signals which they had worked on for a month, with a view to performing just such feats.

With a pencil divide an envelope into as many squares as there are cards in a pack, and number each square accordingly. By practice the operator will become perfect, able to tell at a glance on any blank envelope just what card may be designated by the slightest mark of identification.

Another way is to give your friend the number of the room, say 22, which is incorrect, it being the number of the card drawn. "I made a mistake," he said; "the number should be 42." It is erased, the right number (42) substituted. The lady, seeing the number canceled by a stroke of the pen, knows it is the number of the card.

Still another method is to let the false room number stand, as the hotel clerk will send the note to the lady regardless of the error, and by this false number on the envelope, supposed to represent the room, the lady will know what card the friend has drawn. How simple are the tricks that mystify the wise and coin money for the hard working magician!

"The moral of all this," said an expert, "is that the really honest men are the professional magicians. They make no pretense that their feats are of a supernatural character, but the state writers and bogus clairvoyants claim supernatural power and demand money for communicating with the dead, which is imposition and fraud."

"The tricks of Kellar and Herrmann far surpass the most expert of the mediums, and no claim is made that they are of spiritual agency."

"A situation was tersely summed up yesterday by a distinguished 'magician,' who said: 'The age of miracles is past. Only one man performed miraculous feats, and he was crucified.'"

## THE ECONOMY OF ICE.

**T**HERE are many people who from a false idea of economy fail to get the best results from the use of ice and refrigerators. A common mistake is getting a small piece of ice every day or every other day instead of filling the ice chamber two or three times a week. The small piece of ice cannot reduce the temperature sufficiently, and the result is that each new piece melts rapidly and the food cannot be kept long. It will be found at the end of the season that the cost of ice and waste of food have been much greater than if the ice chamber had been kept filled. Another mode of economizing is to wrap the ice in woolen cloths or paper. This would be all right if the ice were to preserve the ice, but thus wrapped it cannot cool the refrigerator, and so fails in doing its legitimate work. There are, on the other hand, people who are perfectly reckless in the way they waste ice and lower the temperature of the refrigerator. Such people place warm food in the refrigerator, and even on the ice, hoping to cool it more quickly, thus raising the temperature and producing a vapor which is bad for both the food and the refrigerator. People should learn that food cools, to a certain point, more quickly in the open air than in a closed refrigerator.—Ladies' Home Journal.