



The Voice Box

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From the History Books:

A Painting Séance with David Duguid



David Duguid, a psychic artist under the control of Jan Steen his spirit guide. (Jan 1895)

David brought his paints with him in a long tin box that had seen long service; it was untidy and unclean inside as if it belonged to a professional artist. There was also a piece of cardboard of thirty or forty square inches, which was dirty to start with, and very dirty before the painting began. I wanted to examine this but was solemnly warned by one of the party who had undergone this experience, to let alone. "If you touch it, Jan will be at you for certain; and if his brushes are meddled with, I won't answer for the consequences."

In the meantime, as our Scottish friend himself would have put it, Jan Steen has taken possession, and was opening the box and arranging the brushes and tubes, but never a word was spoken. Duguid's eyes were closed fast, but his right hand readily found each article as wanted.

Presently he withdrew his fingers from the box and looked at them with closely sealed eyes, but, nevertheless, looked at them. The tips were decorated with daubs of dark paint. He took his rag and wiped them. The rag was full of paint too, and made matters worse. Both hands were now covered. He gazed at them with comical consternation, rubbed them well together to distribute the mixture, and let them go as they were.

Then he took up the card, examined it critically, transferred a good deal of paint to it from his fingers, mad a few rapid strokes with a pencil stump, and prepared for execution. The white lead he laid on with a

knife, just as you might spread bread and butter, and, as he did it, smiled amiably on the lady at his left, as if he would say, "you think that funny? It is." And all the while too, with closed lids.

Next he dipped his brush in the oil and applied it to the white on the card. I don't know if that is the way of artists in oil, but Jan mixed his colours so, on the card. It was as if he was adding Jam to the Butter.

In a very few moments half the white part became sky, with flecks of blue and rosy tipped clouds, and half, the surface of a lake, with lights and shadows, ripples and reflections. A few more rapid touches, and there grew under the brush, grey and Blue Mountains, with dark woods and a somber ruined castle to the fore. The painting was done, and very well done for one who was working with shut eyes during the whole of the thirty minutes or so that the operation covered. "Loch Katrine," said those who knew, as the picture passed around the admiring circle.

The medium now brought forth from a little pocket-case two cards of the size used for carte-de-vista portrait's, and tore a small corner from each, which he presented respectively to the lady at his side and to a gentleman selected for special favour, care being taken to observe that the pieces so given were really the pieces that had been torn from the cards which were retained by the medium. He took up a wet brush by the business end, held up to view the painted fingers with a humorously mournful expression, had recourse to the rag and made them worse again, and then mixed all the paint on his palate well together into one unlovely mess, placed the slab on the top of the box, with a single brush by the side, and two cards close at hand.

By dumb show he indicated a wish to have his hands tied together; and much amusement was occasioned by the demonstration of how knot to do it afforded by the sitter who essayed the operation. At length Jan tired of showing how easily the mediums hands could be withdrawn from the knotted handkerchief. For the first time Jan broke his silence, mumbling, "Let me show you", and in a few moments the tying was satisfactorily effected. The gas was then turned out.

A minute or two passed in silence, and Jan was heard to mutter that he feared the experiment would result in failure. Happily, however, the apprehension proved unfounded. And after *less than five minutes* of darkness we lighted up, and found every article exactly as left, but a pretty little picture, *glistening with wet paint*, on each of the two cards. Jan after obtaining release from the handkerchief, handed the cards to

the respective holders of the torn corners, who fitted these to the cards, and announced them to be the same. One of the pictures represented Loch Lomond, and the other was a replica in miniature of the larger picture of Loch Katrine.

A few questions to Steen elicited the information that a hand was materialized for this work, that one brush only was used, and that the messy mixture was all the colouring it employed, the paint flowing from the point of the brush and separating when it touched the paper. All this, he said, could be easily observed by a clairvoyant, and often has been. Having no clairvoyant among ourselves, we, of course, had no confirmation of this statement, but what we were able to observe was, in the first place, a very plausible picture produced by his hand while the medium's eyes were to appearance, closed fast all the while, and in the second place, a couple of very passable little pictures produced in the dark in three or four minutes whilst the mediums hands were tied.

The curious fact was noticeable during the painting of the earlier picture that, although his eyes were closed, the medium followed with his face every movement that was made in the operation, even holding up a tube and seeming to closely observe the quantity of colour squeezed out, and every now and again stopping, as artist usually do, to examine and consider the progress of his work. He always readily found what was wanted, and never made a mistake with the colours, but contrived once to pick up a brush by the wrong end, just as one with eyes open might absently do.

The moral of all which is, I suppose, that eyes are not always necessary to sight.

Credits:

"The Light" A journal of Physical, Occult and Mystical Research dated 12th January 1895.