

HUMBUG:

//

OR

AN EXPOSÉ

OF THE OPERATION OF

“A FACULTY HITHERTO UNKNOWN,”

BY WHICH

“THE MYSTERIOUS LADY”

IS ENABLED TO PERFORM APPARENT IMPOSSIBILITIES.

BY A YANKEE.



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TO THE PUBLIC.

THE following extracts are from an article which appeared in the last number of the "Boston Medical and Surgical Journal," which the reader is requested to peruse :

"Without further introduction, we shall briefly relate what we saw and heard at her first public exhibition, not pretending to give an opinion upon the subject. Mrs. H. having taken a chair in the centre of a spacious hall, her husband would place his finger on articles of wearing apparel of a spectator at the extremity of the room, towards which her back was turned, when she would not only designate the article instantly, but its color also. Whether a bonnet, a reticule, a ribbon, a watch guard, or a head of hair, it made no difference, as she always gave a prompt and correct answer. A gentleman asked of what metal his spectacles were made ; and, when answered, he further desired her to tell the company how many glasses the bows contained. She said, four. This was at first thought by the spectators to be incorrect ; but on examination there were found to be actually four distinct glasses—the two upper ones being for distant objects, and the lower ones for nearer views—giving an appearance, on close inspection, of a horizontal seam through the centre of each eye. When any particular figure on a watch dial was designated, she told the number—and moreover gave the exact hour and minute of time, at any distance from her chair.

“ A box was handed around, into which whatever article was dropped, was quickly named. A professional gentleman very secretly placed in the bottom a small cake of liquorice paste, Mrs. Hanington said it was a cake. This was called a mistake. “ Well,” said the lady, “ it is something black ”—and after a moment’s reflection, said it was liquorice. In a similar adroit manner, the doctor put in a bit of paper, on which he had written something, and which the oracle correctly pronounced to be the word “ rhubarb.” These are only a few of the many performances, of a similar order, that might be related in illustration of the manner of conducting the exhibition.

“ Another class of mysteries consisted in divining what any one might whisper in her husband’s ear. It should be remembered, however, that the name of some animal, food, or drink must invariably be given, or she made no attempt at a solution. The names of various edible fishes, some of which are certainly peculiar to the place, and therefore wholly new to her, were unhesitatingly pronounced as readily as though she were repeating after a master. So it was in relation to the cognomen of wines and liqueurs, by no means familiar to all the company.

*“ Occasionally, as if for the express purpose of bewildering the spectators with something vastly beyond the reach of ordinarily constructed theories, a stranger was permitted to whisper in another stranger’s ear, and Mrs. Hanington repeated the words whispered instanter. This particular circumstance militates, essentially, against the supposed confederacy between herself and husband in this part, at least, of these singular performances.**

* This we conceive to be a mistake of the editor. We attended one evening, and were an observant spectator of all that passed—in no instance was one visitor allowed to whisper to another, and the question to be put to the Mysterious Lady without Mr. H. being made privy to its purport. The reader will perceive, when he shall have examined the following pages, that it *may* be done, and can only be done by having confederates among the audience; but it does not appear that Mr. H. avails himself of this method—we conceive it would be highly impolitic for him so to do. Mr. H. must, in all cases, be made acquainted with the name of the article whispered—and in all cases he must himself see the article exhibited to be named by the lady—(except in such cases as I may name in the following pages)—but he may request any lady or gentleman to inquire of the Mysterious Lady the name of the article, which he not unfrequently does.

“ Mr. Hanington has called upon us, since the performance, to inquire what views we entertained of the manner of seeing and hearing in this anomalous mode. *He assures us that it is but a short time since he made the discovery that Mrs. H. possessed this rare tact, and that it is as unaccountable to himself as to all others.* He further informs us that very frequently, after retiring from an exhibition, in which she has been considerably excited, as soon as her eyes are closed in sleep she fatigues herself exceedingly by rehearsing chapters from the Bible, and other readings, of which she had no recollection when awake. Many other curious and perplexing anecdotes were related *to convince us that no deception had been practised.*”

R E M A R K S .

Although we conceive that it would tend to the purification of the moral atmosphere if the whole tribe of Jugglers, Mountebanks, &c., were driven into some more useful employment, yet we confess that we did intend to reserve our knowledge of these curious devices for future private amusement. We are a bachelor; but we hope not irreclaimable: and some half formed ideas flitted across our mind, that if we should be so fortunate as to be pitied in our single state by some kind-hearted Yankee girl, we would invest her with all the attributes of the “Mysterious Lady” for the entertainment of the social circle. But since Mr. H. has presumed to take the course he has pursued, by calling upon one or more of our most intelligent citizens, and avowing, with unblushing impudence, that “*it is but a short time since he made the discovery that Mrs. H. possessed this rare tact, and that it is as unaccountable to himself as to all others,*”—moreover, relating many curious and per-

plexing anecdotes “to convince us that no deception had been practised;” and since he has succeeded by his representations, or misrepresentations, to deceive so far the able conductors of the public press, and such men as the editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, (a man who ranks high in the philosophical world, and deservedly so,) as to cause doubts in their minds, whether his tricks are performed by human or divine agency, and since he has induced them to give publicity to articles calculated to mystify the subject, and blind still more the eyes of the people—we consider him to be highly liable to censure, and conceive it to be our duty, as an American and a Yankee, to disperse the mists which encompass the “Mysterious Lady,” and expose the impositions which he is practising, and so prevent any insolent boast that may be made, after he shall have returned to his own country, that he “gulled the Yankees” most essentially from “Maine to Georgia.” If Mr. H. had been satisfied with the simple effects produced by the exhibition of his wife, and had suppressed his own very extraordinary comments upon it, this exposition would never have been made; and we *guess* that he thinks with us, that in future it will be best not to attempt to impose too much upon the kindness and credulity of the American public.

A YANKEE.

EXPOSITION.

Two individuals only are necessary to perform every impossibility as performed by the "Mysterious Lady." One to question, the other to answer.

Any lady or gentleman whispers in Mr. H.'s ear the name of the kind of wine he or she may prefer,—the "Mysterious Lady" in the mean time may be at any distance from Mr. H., provided it be within hearing of his voice,—her back may be turned to him. Mr. H. then says to the "Mysterious Lady," What wine does the gentleman *like*?—now observe, the word *like*, which terminates the sentence, may correspond in meaning with the wine,—*Sherry*,—which word is the answer the Lady gives. Another individual whispers, and Mr. H. says, What wine does the gentleman like *best*,—here the reader will perceive that the word *best* may correspond in meaning with the wine—*Madeira*,—which is the answer the Lady gives.

FURTHER EXAMPLES.

- What wine does the lady *prefer*? (corresponding with) *Champaigne*.
What wine has the gentleman *mentioned*? " " *Lisbon*.
What wine does the gentleman *choose*? " " *Port*.
What wine does the lady *say*? " " *Malaga*.
What wine does the gentleman prefer to *drink*? " *Burgundy*.
What kind of wine does the lady prefer to all *other*? *Claret*.

And so on, terminating each question with a word which shall correspond in meaning with the name of the wine whispered in the ear of Mr. H.—Now observe, the words *like*,—*best*,—*prefer*,—*mentioned*, &c., may be used to correspond in meaning with the names of the different kinds of MEATS that may be preferred, as *like*, to correspond with *lamb*,—*best*, with *beef*, &c. They may be also used to correspond with the names of FISHES,—as nearly the same phraseology in the construction of the questions is necessary in speaking of WINES, MEATS, and FISHES, and about the same number of questions will be wanted to be put in regard to each. The reader will now please consider A RULE for the use of the “Mysterious Lady,” viz.: Whenever a question begins with the word *what*, the word which *terminates* the question, is the one which corresponds in meaning with some noun or quality.—ANOTHER RULE. Whenever a question *does not begin* with the word *what*, the word which *does begin* the question, is the one which represents the name of some noun or quality.—This latter rule refers to all desultory questions, comprising all the questions referring to the various articles dropt in the box, which is passed round for the purpose,—the former rule is admirably adapted to questions referring to an unchanging species of articles, such as WINES, MEATS, FISHES, ANIMALS, BIRDS, LETTERS OF THE ALPHABET, FIGURES, &c. By another rule, the “Mysterious Lady” is required to refer to both the word *beginning* and *terminating* the question, but this rule is only followed when she is required to name separately the fifty-two cards of a pack:—(more respecting the cards hereafter.) I will now give a few examples of desultory questions. The “Mysterious Lady” finds her key in the word which begins each question.*

* We believe the reader understands that the word *what*, as beginning a question, is not necessarily confined to distinct species of articles, as wines, meats, &c., but may be used in a desultory manner, but whenever it is used *at any time*, the “Mysterious Lady” is to look to the word *terminating* the question for her key.

<i>Describe</i> the color of this article.	-	-	-	-	Pink, is the answer.
<i>This</i> article! is it a knife?	-	-	-	-	a Watch “ “
<i>Name</i> this article.	-	-	-	-	a Stick “ “
<i>Mention</i> what the gentleman holds.	-	-	-	-	a Pencil “ “
What color is this <i>article</i> ?	-	-	-	-	Black “ “
What is the <i>name</i> ?	-	-	-	-	a Veil “ “
What color did you <i>say</i> ?	-	-	-	-	White “ “

In this last example Mr. H. affecting to make himself a party with the audience, seizes another veil of another color, in order to cheat the “Mysterious Lady,” but the reader perceives that she is not easily humbugged.

<i>Can</i> you name this article?	-	-	-	-	a Bag.
What do I <i>hold</i> ?	-	-	-	-	a Ring.
<i>Tell</i> me the name of this article.	-	-	-	-	a Shawl.
<i>Communicate</i> what this is.	-	-	-	-	a Chain.
<i>Here</i> is something curious! name it.	-	-	-	-	a Boa.
What is this which I <i>touch</i> ?	-	-	-	-	a Bonnet.
What article has been placed in the <i>box</i> ?	-	-	-	-	a Knife.
<i>Has</i> it one blade?	-	-	-	-	It has four.
What have we <i>here</i> ?	-	-	-	-	a Coin.
What is the <i>value</i> ?	-	-	-	-	Half Dollar.

Here a lady or gentleman shows an article, and Mr. H. says to the gentleman, but in a voice sufficiently loud for the Mysterious Lady to hear,

Ask the lady the name of the article. - - a Wallet.

Or he may say,

<i>Inquire</i> of the lady.	-	-	-	-	a Handkerchief.
<i>Speak</i> to the lady.	-	-	-	-	a Parasol.
<i>Please</i> inquire of the lady.	-	-	-	-	a Book.
<i>She</i> will tell you, ask her.	-	-	-	-	a Hat.

Here the questions being put by the spectator, he is apt to imagine that the communication (if there ever existed any) ceases between Mr. H. and his wife; but the voice of Mr. H. is the only one the "Mysterious Lady" deigns to listen to, all other observations are dead to her, and so long as her ear catches the sound of the first or the last words of his curious sentences, she cares but little about the sound or construction of the intermediate parts.* The truth is, Mr. H.'s part is more laborious to perform than that of his wife. She has committed to memory very many words, which correspond in meaning to as many nouns or qualities of nouns. She undoubtedly refreshes her memory by study, and frequent rehearsals, occasionally adding a few signs. Mr. H. has committed to memory precisely the same amount of matter that she has, and he has the additional trouble of constructing the questions so as to bring the words which represent the nouns, at the right ends. The spectator may occasionally see the anxious man stand, the muscles of his countenance varying considerably in latitude and longitude when something unusual has been presented to be named, cudgelling his brain for the identical word to express to her his meaning,—she is not unfrequently in the same predicament. We suspect, however, that from much exercise, their memories are very good; not better, perhaps, than this faculty is in the minds of many of our Sunday School scholars, who commit chapters, and even whole books to memory.

* Ever fearful of detection, Mr. H. gives but few exhibitions in the same town, and he contrives little artifices to hide from the spectator the fixed principles by which the exhibition is managed;—one is the following.—When Mr. H. commences his exhibition, he would be apt to confound for a moment, even those who understand his general principles, by asking the Mysterious Lady five or six questions, using precisely the same words for each,—but he himself selects and touches the objects, which are some of the most common, and such as he is sure always to find, such as a shawl, bonnet, handkerchief, &c. The reader perceives how easy it is for Mrs. H. to commit in regular rotation, the names of the articles to memory which Mr. H. previously signifies to her he shall touch. This little extra artifice was performed on the night we attended.

The learned editor of the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal, in the communication before alluded to, says, "Her faculty of memory, we are informed by Mr. H. is quite as remarkable as anything hereafter to be related, enabling her to repeat long poems, biblical readings, &c., without the slightest effort, after having once read them. *We noticed, however, no phrenological indications of such a memory,*—her eyes by no means being more prominent than they should be, to harmonize with the rest of her fair features." We do not think that the science of Phrenology is falsified in this case, notwithstanding the astonishing exhibition of the power of memory, without the enlarged size of the organ which indicates it, because we conceive that it requires no uncommon power of memory to commit easily all that the "Mysterious Lady" shows that she has committed.

The "Mysterious Lady" is enabled by the following easy method, to designate what card is drawn from the pack. The reader will perceive that the word *beginning* and the word *terminating* the question, must be noted by her.

EXAMPLE.

The words, *can, will, inform,* and *what,* beginning a phrase, may represent the different suits,—for instance, *can,* may represent *Hearts,*—*will, Diamonds,*—*inform, Clubs,* and *what, Spades.*

EXAMPLE.

Can you tell what card the gentleman has *drawn*? Ace of Hearts.
Will you tell us what card the lady has *drawn*? Ace of Diamonds.
Inform us what card the gentleman has *drawn.* Ace of Clubs.
 What card has the lady *drawn*? Ace of Spades.

Here you perceive that the word *drawn* may be used to represent the aces of the four suits, and the suits denoted by the word *beginning* the question.

FURTHER EXAMPLES.

Inform us what card the lady *holds.* - - Deuce of Clubs.
What card is it the gentleman *holds*? - Deuce of Spades.

Can you mention what card has been selected? 3 spot of Hearts.

Will you inform us what card has been selected? 3 spot of diamonds.

And so on, through the thirteen cards of the suit. We can furnish a key, by which any Miss or Master may name the fifty-two cards in the pack, in one half hour's time. We are not sure that this method is not an improvement upon Mr. H.'s, as it only requires that seventeen words should be committed to memory, to denote every card in the pack. We are confident that his method cannot be more easy, or less liable to be detected, as nearly the same phraseology, in the construction of the questions, may be used to denote each card in the pack. Many words that we have used to represent nouns, or qualities, in the foregoing pages, we recollect to have been used by Mr. H.; we do not mean to convey the idea that he uses them to represent the *same* nouns that we have used them for,—it was not material that we should, as any one may adopt what words as signs that he pleases, in making out his lists. Most of the representatives that we have used, were put down hastily, as they occurred to us,—in truth, all the materials which constitute the foregoing pages, have been hastily thrown together, as we were anxious to issue a few copies before Mr. H. left the city. Should Mr. H. express much dissatisfaction with the “getting up” of this, we promise him, that when we have more leisure, we will add to, classify, and arrange the signs, enlarge the work, and make it as a whole, more fit to meet his epicurean eye. We trust that at present it will be deemed sufficient that we have laid down distinctly, as we think, the wonderful principles by which the “Mysterious Lady” performs, by a faculty hitherto unknown, “apparent impossibilities.”

November 4th.

HANINGTON'S United Attractions

Just arrived from London, and Last from *New-York.*

Extraordinary Exhibition of the MYSTERIOUS

LADY

Interesting performance of the Canine Philosopher

DON CARLO.

And other Amusements
EQUALLY SURPRISING.

TO BE EXHIBITED AT

Census Assembly Rooms

FOR *2 Night* DAYS ONLY.

(owing to other Engagements.)



This surprising and distinguished Foreigner, by the exertion of a faculty, hitherto unknown, is enabled to perform apparent impossibilities, to describe minutely, objects which are placed in such a situation as to render it utterly out of her power to see the whole or any portion of them, to repeat sentences which have been uttered in her absence, to divine the very thoughts of individuals, and to perform many other PARADOXICAL feats of mind. It is impossible by words to convey any adequate idea of this very curious performance, if only half was written in its favor that it deserves the air of improbability it would wear, might deter many from visiting the exhibition who otherwise wou'd, the Proprietors therefore prefer the public judging for themselves and refer the reader to the London and New York Editorial remarks (ON THE OTHER SIDE,) as to the general character of the Exhibition,---suffice to say, it is the first exhibition of the kind ever seen in America and independent of its novelty, is at once interesting, surprising & instructive.

For the amusement of the Juvenile branches of families, will be added the curious performances of the Canine Philosopher,

DON CARLO

Taught by the original owner of the Grecian Dog Apollo, This is perhaps one of the greatest instances of Canine Sagacity ever presented to the notice of the public, and shows to what extraordinary perfection even a dog may be educated by perseverance and gentleness.

Several amusing Experiments will be taught, for a moderate compensation, by applying to Mr. Hanington.

Admission to the whole 50 Cents.
Children half price.

Front Seats reserved for the Ladies.

Tickets can be had during the day.

Performances to commence at 7 o'clock, evening

 **Turn Over.**

Editorial Notices.

From the *New York Star*, Jan. 24.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY.—This second "Delphic Oracle" is likely to become quite a Lion, or rather a Licenser, amongst us. She had her head quarters lately at Masonic Hall, where many ladies of distinction paid a visit to the Sybil, probably to consult about the future; to learn the destiny of a lost ring or the steps of a devious husband. She has, however, with the view of becoming more generally known, taken up her abode at the American Museum, corner of Ann street, and last evening feeling in a kind of Paul Pry humour, we determined to pay her a visit. We found the saloon so very crowded, that, preferring to wait for a second representation, we amused ourselves with looking at the Cosmorama, Mummies, Glass Blowing, and other attractions, until the audience had retired and a new one had assembled. We invariably, that is *we* and the *public*, associate the idea of witches, warlocks, seers, bogles and fortune-tellers, with something horribly ugly and terrific; we always think of the witches in Macbeth—

"What are these—so withered and so wild
In their attire—that look not like
The inhabitants of earth, and yet are on it."

So we expected to see the "hag" with wrinkled brow and "skinny fingers," but was most agreeably disappointed when a pretty little English woman, with rosy cheeks, a soft blue sleepy eye, entered the arena, curtsying gracefully to the audience, and seating herself on a chair in the middle of the room. "Ah ha, says I, she is a handsome witch at any rate, and I have no objections to show her the lines in the palm of my hand." I observed among the audience several old ladies, who had a kind of Connecticut look, and who no doubt had come up to town to discover something new in the art and mysteries of divination. The manner of developing her powers is by answering certain queries, as thus—The master of ceremonies, her back being towards him, and at some distance from each other, touches certain articles rapidly on different persons in attendance, which she instantly names—such as hats, gloves, seals, broaches, feathers, muffs, &c. &c. This, however, may be the result of a settled plan of arrangement; but he asks a person to name to him in a whisper any particular favorite article of food, which she instantly repeats aloud. In this there can be no understanding between the parties; and so he goes round the company, asking a variety of questions from each, which she immediately repeats, though with her back turned and at a considerable distance from the parties. How this is done, or where the art is concealed, we know not; and it would be improper if we did know to state it; because, although it is surprising and extraordinary, still we must not believe there is any thing supernatural in it. Yet as it is amusing and innocent, we advise the folks to spend half an hour in witnessing the exhibition. They will not be disappointed.

From the *Dublin Times and Morning Post*, March 25th, 1833.

EXTRAORDINARY EXHIBITION AT THE ASSEMBLY ROOMS.

"Dogs are honest creatures, and ne'er betray their masters."

We have paid a visit to the Assembly Rooms, and were much surprised at the wonderful sagacity displayed by Don Carlo, he is a beautiful Spaniel, and exhibits power beyond mere instinct approximating in fact to the reasoning of a rational being. We always had a high opinion of the canine race, but really Don Carlo's acquirements far exceed our expectations, and seems to be a freak of nature far beyond our comprehension. The double sighted mysterious Lady, too, (we beg pardon for mentioning the lady last,) gives proof of intelligence perfectly unaccountable; our most secret actions, nay our very thoughts and unexpressed wishes were known to her, and such answers given by her to questions, as made us almost believe in the repudiated idea of supernatural agency. The beautiful experiments of the French Lilliputian Figures, who without any apparent mechanism, move correctly to music; the changeable pictures and the vanishing paper are managed so adroitly, that of themselves are well worth the price of admission. Want of space prevents us from going farther into detail, and we must refer our readers to the exhibition itself. It is with regret we observe that the proprietor is on the point of leaving for the United States—our good wishes attend him—and we strongly advise all who have the least spark of curiosity in their composition, to avail themselves of the present opportunity of gratifying it.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY. The novelty of this lady's pretensions, induced me to pay her a visit at the Masonic Hall; I had formed an opinion that it was the *Invisible Lady*, under a new name; but on entering the Saloon was agreeably disappointed; at a distance from the company sat the "Mysterious"—young, beautiful and interesting. I found the place thronged with the most respectable and fashionable company. The exhibition on the whole, was of so extraordinary a character, that, had I been told only one half of what I there saw and heard, I should have treated it as fabulous. Among other feats, she readily told (although at a distance of at least thirty feet, with her back towards the company, and blind folded) the name of any article produced by me, or any of the company; the wine last drank, or partial to; favorite fish; game or meat, &c. In order to try if there was any pre-arrangement, I whispered to a friend my partiality to *whale*; I was requested to ask the lady my choice; I did so, when she smilingly told me, that it was a "great curiosity," but presumed I was a *WHALER*: this quite satisfied me. In fact the famed oracle of Delphos, one of the *has beens*, sinks in obscurity before this living oracle of the present day. The performance is conducted in a very creditable manner, and well deserves the encouragement it is daily receiving. *New York Star*.

From the *New-York Courier and Enquirer*, January 17th, 1834.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY. A few evenings since I was induced to drop in at the Masonic Hall, for the purpose of having an interview with this extraordinary foreigner; and although predisposed against the title *mysterious*, must confess I never was so astonished or gratified. The lady, sitting with her back towards the company, at about thirty feet distance, with a handkerchief tied over her eyes, told correctly the color and quality of my dress, ornamental appendages, even to the cypher on my seal. She speaks without the least hesitation. During the exhibition, I was asked to name any particular fish, joint of meat, game or wine I was most partial to. Having done so, in a whisper scarcely audible to myself, I walked up to her, enquired of her my choice, when, much to my surprise, she repeated my own words. As there was not the slightest possibility of any communication being made to her, she possess a power far beyond my comprehension. Among other things, one of the company privately selected a card from a full pack, asked her its name, which she immediately declared. I am not a believer in the *supernatural*; but am willing to give credit where credit is due. The whole exhibition is very ingeniously managed, and in a manner perfectly respectable. If she is a witch, she has the advantage of being young and beautiful. By what means she has acquire her surprising powers, is indeed a mystery. At all events, she appeared to be reaping a rich harvest, being crowded with company, who cannot but speak highly of the exhibition.

From the *London Times*.

SINGULAR EXHIBITION AT SAVILLE PALACE.

Although limited for room, we cannot refrain from devoting a few lines to her Mysterious Ladyship, who like the Delphic oracle of old, clouded in mystery, nightly surprises and delights her visitors at Saville Palace. Among the host of public exhibitions in London at the present time, for extreme interest and novelty, this should most certainly take the precedence.

We were ushered into the splendid saloon, in the midst of which, sat this singularly talented lady: there is nothing remarkable in her appearance, save that she is young and interesting; at a considerable distance from the company and completely out of hearing, sitting with her back towards us, she told the color of the dresses of the spectators, named the various articles produced by them—repeated the lowest whisper with unerring precision and in fact performed so many extraordinary feats, that we feel ourselves incapable of doing her justice in the description. The exhibition was very fashionably attended. To all who have not been, we strongly recommend an early visit. At a private performance before their Majesties last week, the utmost satisfaction was given.

From the *New York Evening Star*, Jan. 27.

THE MYSTERIOUS LADY will, as we learn, leave for the South in a few days; those who have not yet paid her a visit at the Museum, corner of Ann street and Broadway, should embrace the present opportunity, as she is anxious to reach Washington, and her presence there at this particular crisis may excite as much curiosity as the celebrated Madame Krudner did at the Court of Alexander, of Russia. Every member of Congress will doubtless pay her a visit, and if she could give us a touch of her art on the deposite question, she would be applauded to the very echo.