

**BARNUM
PHINEAS
TAYLOR**

THE HUMBUGS OF THE
WORLD

Phineas Barnum

The Humbugs of the World

«Public Domain»

Barnum P.

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The Humbugs of the World An Account of Humbugs, Delusions, Impositions, Quackeries, Deceits and Deceivers Generally, in All Ages

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

One of Mr. Barnum's secrets of success is his unique methods of advertising, and we can readily understand how he can bear to be denounced as a "Humbug," because this popular designation though undeserved in the popular acceptance of it, "brought grist to his mill." He has constantly kept himself before the public – nay, we may say that he has *been* kept before the public constantly, by the stereotyped word in question; and what right, or what desire, could he have to discard or complain of an epithet which was one of the prospering elements of his business as "a showman?" In a narrow sense of the word he is a "Humbug;" in the larger acceptance he is *not*.

He has in several chapters of this book elaborated the distinction, and we will only say in this place, what, indeed, no one who knows him will doubt, that, aside from his qualities as a caterer to popular entertainment, he is one of the most remarkable men of the age. As a business man, of far-reaching vision and singular executive force, he has for years been the life of Bridgeport, near which city he has long resided, and last winter he achieved high rank in the Legislature of Connecticut, as both an effective speaker and a patriot, having "no axe to grind," and seeking only the public welfare. We, indeed, agree with the editor of *The New York Independent*, who, in an article drawn out by the burning of the American Museum, says: "Mr. Barnum's rare talent as a speaker has always been exercised in behalf of good morals, and for patriotic objects. No man has done better service in the temperance cause by public lectures during the past ten years, both in America and Great Britain, and during the war he was most efficient in stimulating the spirit which resulted in the preservation of the Union, and the destruction of Slavery."

We cannot forbear quoting two or three additional paragraphs from that article, especially as they are so strongly expressive of the merits of the case:

"Mr. Barnum's whole career has been a very transparent one. He has never befooled the public to its injury, and, though his name has come to be looked upon as a synonym for humbuggery, there never was a public man who was less of one.

"The hearty good wishes of many good men, and the sympathies of the community in which he has lived, go with him, and the public he has so long amused, but never abused, will be ready to sustain him whenever he makes another appeal to them. Mr. Barnum is a very good sort of representative Yankee. When crowds of English traders and manufacturers in Liverpool, Manchester, and London, flocked to hear his lectures on the art of making money, they expected to hear from him some very smart recipes for knavery; but they were as much astonished as they were edified to learn that the only secret he had to tell them was to be honest, and not to expect something for nothing."

We could fill many pages with quotations of corresponding tenor from the leading and most influential men and journals in the land, but we will close this publisher's note with the following from the *N. Y. Sun*.

"One of the happiest impromptu oratorical efforts that we have heard for some time was that made by Barnum at the benefit performance given for his employés on Friday afternoon. If a stranger wanted to satisfy himself how the great showman had managed so to monopolize the ear and eye of the public during his long career he could not have had a better opportunity of doing so than by

listening to this address. Every word, though delivered with apparent carelessness, struck a key-note in the hearts of his listeners. Simple, forcible, and touching, it showed how thoroughly this extraordinary man comprehends the character of his countrymen, and how easily he can play upon their feelings.

“Those who look upon Barnum as a mere charlatan, have really no knowledge of him. It would be easy to demonstrate that the qualities that have placed him in his present position of notoriety and affluence would, in another pursuit, have raised him to far greater eminence. In his breadth of views, his profound knowledge of mankind, his courage under reverses, his indomitable perseverance, his ready eloquence, and his admirable business tact, we recognise the elements that are conducive to success in most other pursuits. More than almost any other living man, Barnum may be said to be a representative type of the American mind.”

INTRODUCTION

In the “Autobiography of P. T. Barnum,” published in 1855, I partly promised to write a book which should expose some of the chief humbugs of the world. The invitation of my friends Messrs. Cauldwell and Whitney of the “Weekly Mercury” caused me to furnish for that paper a series of articles in which I very naturally took up the subject in question. This book is a revision and re-arrangement of a portion of those articles. If I should find that I have met a popular demand, I shall in due time put forth a second volume. There is not the least danger of a dearth of materials.

I once travelled through the Southern States in company with a magician. The first day in each town, he astonished his auditors with his deceptions. He then announced that on the following day he would show how each trick was performed, and how every man might thus become his own magician. That *exposé* spoiled the legerdemain market on that particular route, for several years. So, if we could have a full exposure of “the tricks of trade” of all sorts, of humbugs and deceivers of past times, religious, political, financial, scientific, quackish and so forth, we might perhaps look for a somewhat wiser generation to follow us. I shall be well satisfied if I can do something towards so good a purpose.

P. T. BARNUM.

I. PERSONAL REMINISCENCES

CHAPTER I

GENERAL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT. – HUMBUG UNIVERSAL. – IN RELIGION. – IN POLITICS. – IN BUSINESS. – IN SCIENCE. – IN MEDICINE. – HOW IS IT TO CEASE. – THE GREATEST HUMBUG OF ALL

A little reflection will show that humbug is an astonishingly wide-spread phenomenon – in fact almost universal. And this is true, although we exclude crimes and arrant swindles from the definition of it, according to the somewhat careful explanation which is given in the beginning of the chapter succeeding this one.

I apprehend that there is no sort of object which men seek to attain, whether secular, moral or religious, in which humbug is not very often an instrumentality. Religion is and has ever been a chief chapter of human life. False religions are the only ones known to two thirds of the human race, even now, after nineteen centuries of Christianity; and false religions are perhaps the most monstrous, complicated and thorough-going specimens of humbug that can be found. And even within the pale of Christianity, how unbroken has been the succession of impostors, hypocrites and pretenders, male and female, of every possible variety of age, sex, doctrine and discipline!

Politics and government are certainly among the most important of practical human interests. Now it was a diplomatist – that is, a practical manager of one kind of government matters – who invented that wonderful phrase – a whole world full of humbug in half-a-dozen words – that “Language was given to us to conceal our thoughts.” It was another diplomatist, who said “An ambassador is a gentleman sent to *lie* abroad for the good of his country.” But need I explain to my own beloved countrymen that there is humbug in politics? Does anybody go into a political campaign without it? are no exaggerations of *our* candidate’s merits to be allowed? no depreciations of the *other* candidate? Shall we no longer prove that the success of the party opposed to us will overwhelm the land in ruin? Let me see. Leaving out the two elections of General Washington, eighteen times that very fact has been proved by the party that was beaten, and immediately we have *not* been ruined, notwithstanding that the dreadful fatal fellows on the other side got their hands on the offices and their fingers into the treasury.

Business is the ordinary means of living for nearly all of us. And in what business is there not humbug? “There’s cheating in all trades but ours,” is the prompt reply from the boot-maker with his brown paper soles, the grocer with his floury sugar and chicoried coffee, the butcher with his mysterious sausages and queer veal, the dry goods man with his “damaged goods wet at the great fire” and his “selling at a ruinous loss,” the stock-broker with his brazen assurance that your company is bankrupt and your stock not worth a cent (if he wants to buy it,) the horse jockey with his black arts and spavined brutes, the milkman with his tin aquaria, the land agent with his nice new maps and beautiful descriptions of distant scenery, the newspaper man with his “immense circulation,” the publisher with his “Great American Novel,” the city auctioneer with his “Pictures by the Old Masters” – all and every one protest each his own innocence, and warn you against the deceits of the rest. My inexperienced friend, take it for granted that they all tell the truth – about each other! and then transact your business to the best of your ability on your own judgment. Never fear but that you will get experience enough, and that you will pay well for it too; and towards the time when you shall no longer need earthly goods, you will begin to know how to buy.

Literature is one of the most interesting and significant expressions of humanity. Yet books are thickly peppered with humbug. “Travellers’ stories” have been the scoff of ages, from the “True Story” of witty old Lucian the Syrian down to the gorillarities – if I may coin a word – of the Frenchman Du Chaillu. Ireland’s counterfeited Shakspeare plays, Chatterton’s forged manuscripts, George Psalmanazar’s forged Formosan language, Jo Smith’s Mormon Bible, (it should be noted that this and the Koran sounded two strings of humbug together – the literary and the religious,) the more recent counterfeits of the notorious Greek Simonides – such literary humbugs as these are equal in presumption and in ingenuity too, to any of a merely business kind, though usually destitute of that sort of impiety which makes the great religious humbugs horrible as well as impudent.

Science is another important field of human effort. Science is the pursuit of pure truth, and the systematizing of it. In such an employment as that, one might reasonably hope to find all things done in honesty and sincerity. Not at all, my ardent and inquiring friends, there is a scientific humbug just as large as any other. We have all heard of the Moon Hoax. Do none of you remember the Hydrarchos Sillimannii, that awful Alabama snake? It was only a little while ago that a grave account appeared in a newspaper of a whole new business of compressing ice. Perpetual motion has been the dream of scientific visionaries, and a pretended but cheating realization of it has been exhibited by scamp after scamp. I understand that one is at this moment being invented over in Jersey City. I have purchased more than one “perpetual motion” myself. Many persons will remember Mr. Paine – “The Great Shot-at” as he was called, from his story that people were constantly trying to kill him – and his water-gas. There have been other water gases too, which were each going to show us how to set the North River on fire, but something or other has always broken down just at the wrong moment. Nobody seems to reflect, when these water gases come up, that if water could really be made to burn, the right conditions would surely have happened at some one of the thousands of city fires, and that the very stuff with which our stout firemen were extinguishing the flames, would have itself caught and exterminated the whole brave wet crowd!

Medicine is the means by which we poor feeble creatures try to keep from dying or aching. In a world so full of pain it would seem as if people could not be so foolish, or practitioners so knavish, as to sport with men’s and women’s and children’s lives by their professional humbugs. Yet there are many grave M. D.’s who, if there is nobody to hear, and if they speak their minds, will tell you plainly that the whole practice of medicine is in one sense a humbug. One of its features is certainly a humbug, though so innocent and even useful that it seems difficult to think of any objection to it. This is the practice of giving a *placebo*; that is, a bread pill or a dose of colored water, to keep the patient’s mind easy while imagination helps nature to perfect a cure. As for the quacks, patent medicines and universal remedies, I need only mention their names. Prince Hohenlohe, Valentine Greatrakes, John St. John Long, Doctor Graham and his wonderful bed, Mesmer and his tub, Perkins’ metallic tractors – these are half a dozen. Modern history knows of hundreds of such.

It would almost seem as if human delusions became more unreasoning and abject in proportion as their subject is of greater importance. A machine, a story, an animal skeleton, are not so very important. But the humbugs which have prevailed about that wondrous machine, the human body, its ailments and its cures, about the unspeakable mystery of human life, and still more about the far greater and more awful mysteries of the life beyond the grave, and the endless happiness and misery believed to exist there, the humbugs about these have been infinitely more absurd, more shocking, more unreasonable, more inhuman, more destructive.

I can only allude to whole sciences (falsely so called) which are unmingled humbugs from beginning to end. Such was Alchemy, such was Magic, such was and still is Astrology, and above all, Fortune-telling.

But there is a more thorough humbug than any of these enterprises or systems. The greatest humbug of all is the man who believes – or pretends to believe – that everything and everybody are humbugs. We sometimes meet a person who professes that there is no virtue; that every man has his

price, and every woman hers; that any statement from anybody is just as likely to be false as true, and that the only way to decide which, is to consider whether truth or a lie was likely to have paid best in that particular case. Religion he thinks one of the smartest business dodges extant, a first-rate investment, and by all odds the most respectable disguise that a lying or swindling business man can wear. Honor he thinks is a sham. Honesty he considers a plausible word to flourish in the eyes of the greener portion of our race, as you would hold out a cabbage leaf to coax a donkey. What people want, he thinks, or says he thinks, is something good to eat, something good to drink, fine clothes, luxury, laziness, wealth. If you can imagine a hog's mind in a man's body – sensual, greedy, selfish, cruel, cunning, sly, coarse, yet stupid, short-sighted, unreasoning, unable to comprehend anything except what concerns the flesh, you have your man. He thinks himself philosophic and practical, a man of the world; he thinks to show knowledge and wisdom, penetration, deep acquaintance with men and things. Poor fellow! he has exposed his own nakedness. Instead of showing that others are rotten inside, he has proved that he is. He claims that it is not safe to believe others – it is perfectly safe to disbelieve him. He claims that every man will get the better of you if possible – let him alone! Selfishness, he says, is the universal rule – leave nothing to depend on his generosity or honor; trust him just as far as you can sling an elephant by the tail. A bad world, he sneers, full of deceit and nastiness – it is his own foul breath that he smells; only a thoroughly corrupt heart could suggest such vile thoughts. He sees only what suits him, as a turkey-buzzard spies only carrion, though amid the loveliest landscape. I pronounce him who thus virtually slanders his father and dishonors his mother and defiles the sanctities of home and the glory of patriotism and the merchant's honor and the martyr's grave and the saint's crown – who does not even know that every sham shows that there is a reality, and that hypocrisy is the homage that vice pays to virtue – I pronounce him – no, I do not pronounce him a humbug, the word does not apply to him. He is a fool.

Looked at on one side, the history of humbug is truly humiliating to intellectual pride, yet the long silly story is less absurd during the later ages of history, and grows less and less so in proportion to the spread of real Christianity. This religion promotes good sense, actual knowledge, contentment with what we cannot help, and the exclusive use of intelligent means for increasing human happiness and decreasing human sorrow. And whenever the time shall come when men are kind and just and honest; when they only want what is fair and right, judge only on real and true evidence, and take nothing for granted, then there will be no place left for any humbugs, either harmless or hurtful.

CHAPTER II

DEFINITION OF THE WORD HUMBUG. – WARREN OF LONDON. – GENIN, THE HATTER. – GOSLING'S BLACKING

Upon a careful consideration of my undertaking to give an account of the "Humbugs of the World," I find myself somewhat puzzled in regard to the true definition of that word. To be sure, Webster says that humbug, as a noun, is an "imposition under fair pretences;" and as a verb, it is "to deceive; to impose on." With all due deference to Doctor Webster, I submit that, according to present usage, this is not the only, nor even the generally accepted definition of that term.

We will suppose, for instance, that a man with "fair pretences" applies to a wholesale merchant for credit on a large bill of goods. His "fair pretences" comprehend an assertion that he is a moral and religious man, a member of the church, a man of wealth, etc., etc. It turns out that he is not worth a dollar, but is a base, lying wretch, an impostor and a cheat. He is arrested and imprisoned "for obtaining property under false pretences" or, as Webster says, "fair pretences." He is punished for his villainy. The public do not call him a "humbug;" they very properly term him a swindler.

A man, bearing the appearance of a gentleman in dress and manners, purchases property from you, and with "fair pretences" obtains your confidence. You find, when he has left, that he paid you with counterfeit bank-notes, or a forged draft. This man is justly called a "forger," or "counterfeiter;" and if arrested, he is punished as such; but nobody thinks of calling him a "humbug."

A respectable-looking man sits by your side in an omnibus or rail-car. He converses fluently, and is evidently a man of intelligence and reading. He attracts your attention by his "fair pretences." Arriving at your journey's end, you miss your watch and your pocket-book. Your fellow passenger proves to be the thief. Everybody calls him a "pickpocket," and not withstanding his "fair pretences," not a person in the community calls him a "humbug."

Two actors appear as stars at two rival theatres. They are equally talented, equally pleasing. One advertises himself simply as a tragedian, under his proper name – the other boasts that he is a prince, and wears decorations presented by all the potentates of the world, including the "King of the Cannibal Islands." He is correctly set down as a "humbug," while this term is never applied to the other actor. But if the man who boasts of having received a foreign title is a miserable actor, and he gets up gift-enterprises and bogus entertainments, or pretends to devote the proceeds of his tragic efforts to some charitable object, without, in fact, doing so – he is then a humbug in Dr. Webster's sense of that word, for he is an "impostor under fair pretences."

Two physicians reside in one of our fashionable avenues. They were both educated in the best medical colleges; each has passed an examination, received his diploma, and been dubbed an M. D. They are equally skilled in the healing art. One rides quietly about the city in his gig or brougham, visiting his patients without noise or clamor – the other sallies out in his coach and four, preceded by a band of music, and his carriage and horses are covered with handbills and placards, announcing his "wonderful cures." This man is properly called a quack and a humbug. Why? Not because he cheats or imposes upon the public, for he does not, but because, as generally understood, "humbug" consists in putting on glittering appearances – outside show – novel expedients, by which to suddenly arrest public attention, and attract the public eye and ear.

Clergymen, lawyers, or physicians, who should resort to such methods of attracting the public, would not, for obvious reasons, be apt to succeed. Bankers, insurance-agents, and others, who aspire to become the custodians of the money of their fellow-men, would require a different species of advertising from this; but there are various trades and occupations which need only notoriety to insure success, always provided that when customers are once attracted, they never fail to get their money's

worth. An honest man who thus arrests public attention will be called a “humbug,” but he is not a swindler or an impostor. If, however, after attracting crowds of customers by his unique displays, a man foolishly fails to give them a full equivalent for their money, they never patronize him a second time, but they very properly denounce him as a swindler, a cheat, an impostor; they do not, however, call him a “humbug.” He fails, not because he advertises his wares in an *outré* manner, but because, after attracting crowds of patrons, he stupidly and wickedly cheats them.

When the great blacking-maker of London dispatched his agent to Egypt to write on the pyramids of Ghiza, in huge letters, “Buy Warren’s Blacking, 30 Strand, London,” he was not “cheating” travelers upon the Nile. His blacking was really a superior article, and well worth the price charged for it, but he was “humbugging” the public by this queer way of arresting attention. It turned out just as he anticipated, that English travelers in that part of Egypt were indignant at this desecration, and they wrote back to the London Times (every Englishman writes or threatens to “write to the Times,” if anything goes wrong,) denouncing the “Goth” who had thus disfigured these ancient pyramids by writing on them in monstrous letters: “Buy Warren’s Blacking, 30 Strand, London.” The Times published these letters, and backed them up by several of those awful, grand and dictatorial editorials peculiar to the great “Thunderer,” in which the blacking-maker, “Warren, 30 Strand,” was stigmatized as a man who had no respect for the ancient patriarchs, and it was hinted that he would probably not hesitate to sell his blacking on the sarcophagus of Pharaoh, “or any other” – mummy, if he could only make money by it. In fact, to cap the climax, Warren was denounced as a “humbug.” These indignant articles were copied into all the Provincial journals, and very soon, in this manner, the columns of every newspaper in Great Britain were teeming with this advice: “Try Warren’s Blacking, 30 Strand, London.” The curiosity of the public was thus aroused, and they did “try” it, and finding it a superior article, they continued to purchase it and recommend it to their friends, and Warren made a fortune by it. He always attributed his success to his having “humbugged” the public by this unique method of advertising his blacking in Egypt! But Warren did not cheat his customers, nor practice “an imposition under fair pretences.” He was a humbug, but he was an honest upright man, and no one called him an impostor or a cheat.

When the tickets for Jenny Lind’s first concert in America were sold at auction, several businessmen, aspiring to notoriety, “bid high” for the first ticket. It was finally knocked down to “Genin, the hatter,” for \$225. The journals in Portland (Maine) and Houston (Texas,) and all other journals throughout the United States, between these two cities, which were connected with the telegraph, announced the fact in their columns the next morning. Probably two millions of readers read the announcement, and asked, “Who is Genin, the hatter?” Genin became famous in a day. Every man involuntarily examined his hat, to see if it was made by Genin; and an Iowa editor declared that one of his neighbors discovered the name of Genin in his old hat and immediately announced the fact to his neighbors in front of the Post Office. It was suggested that the old hat should be sold at auction. It was done then and there, and the Genin hat sold for fourteen dollars! Gentlemen from city and country rushed to Genin’s store to buy their hats, many of them willing to pay even an extra dollar, if necessary, provided they could get a glimpse of Genin himself. This singular freak put thousands of dollars into the pocket of “Genin, the hatter,” and yet I never heard it charged that he made poor hats, or that he would be guilty of an “imposition under fair pretences.” On the contrary, he is a gentleman of probity, and of the first respectability.

When the laying of the Atlantic Telegraph was nearly completed, I was in Liverpool. I offered the company one thousand pounds sterling (\$5,000) for the privilege of sending the first twenty words over the cable to my Museum in New York – not that there was any intrinsic merit in the words, but that I fancied there was more than \$5,000 worth of notoriety in the operation. But Queen Victoria and “Old Buck” were ahead of me. Their messages had the preference, and I was compelled to “take a back seat.”

By thus illustrating what I believe the public will concede to be the sense in which the word “humbug” is generally used and understood at the present time, in this country as well as in England, I do not propose that my letters on this subject shall be narrowed down to that definition of the word. On the contrary, I expect to treat of various fallacies, delusions, and deceptions in ancient and modern times, which, according to Webster’s definition, may be called “humbugs,” inasmuch as they were “impositions under fair pretences.”

In writing of modern humbugs, however, I shall sometimes have occasion to give the names of honest and respectable parties now living, and I felt it but just that the public should fully comprehend my doctrine, that a man may, by common usage, be termed a “humbug,” without by any means impeaching his integrity.

Speaking of “blacking-makers,” reminds me that one of the first sensationists in advertising whom I remember to have seen, was Mr. Leonard Gosling, known as “Monsieur Gosling, the great French blacking-maker.” He appeared in New York in 1830. He flashed like a meteor across the horizon; and before he had been in the city three months, nearly everybody had heard of “Gosling’s Blacking.” I well remember his magnificent “four in hand.” A splendid team of blood bays, with long black tails, was managed with such dexterity by Gosling himself, who was a great “whip,” that they almost seemed to fly. The carriage was emblazoned with the words “Gosling’s Blacking,” in large gold letters, and the whole turnout was so elaborately ornamented and bedizened that everybody stopped and gazed with wondering admiration. A bugle-player or a band of music always accompanied the great Gosling, and, of course, helped to attract the public attention to his establishment. At the turning of every street-corner your eyes rested upon “Gosling’s Blacking.” From every show-window gilded placards discoursed eloquently of the merits of “Gosling’s Blacking.” The newspapers teemed with poems written in its praise, and showers of pictorial handbills, illustrated almanacs, and tiseled souvenirs, all lauding the virtues of “Gosling’s Blacking,” smothered you at every point.

The celebrated originator of delineations, “Jim Crow Rice,” made his first appearance at Hamblin’s Bowery Theatre at about this time. The crowds which thronged there were so great that hundreds from the audience were frequently admitted upon the stage. In one of his scenes, Rice introduced a negro boot-blackening establishment. Gosling was too “wide awake” to let such an opportunity pass unimproved, and Rice was paid for singing an original black Gosling ditty, while a score of placards bearing the inscription, “Use Gosling’s Blacking,” were suspended at different points in this negro boot polishing hall. Everybody tried “Gosling’s Blacking;” and as it was a really good article, his sales in city and country soon became immense; Gosling made a fortune in seven years, and retired but, as with thousands before him, it was “easy come easy go.” He engaged in a lead-mining speculation, and it was generally understood that his fortune was, in a great measure, lost as rapidly as it was made.

Here let me digress, in order to observe that one of the most difficult things in life is for men to bear discreetly sudden prosperity. Unless considerable time and labor are devoted to earning money, it is not appreciated by its possessor; and, having no practical knowledge of the value of money, he generally gets rid of it with the same ease that marked its accumulation. Mr. Astor gave the experience of thousands when he said that he found more difficulty in earning and saving his first thousand dollars than in accumulating all the subsequent millions which finally made up his fortune. The very economy, perseverance, and discipline which he was obliged to practice, as he gained his money dollar by dollar, gave him a just appreciation of its value, and thus led him into those habits of industry, prudence, temperance, and untiring diligence so conducive and necessary to his future success.

Mr. Gosling, however, was not a man to be put down by a single financial reverse. He opened a store in Canajoharie, N. Y., which was burned, and on which there was no insurance. He came again to New York in 1839, and established a restaurant, where, by devoting the services of himself and several members of his family assiduously to the business, he soon reveled in his former prosperity, and snapped his fingers in glee at what unreflecting persons term “the freaks of Dame Fortune.”

He is still living in New York, hale and hearty at the age of seventy. Although called a “French” blacking-maker, Mr. Gosling is in reality a Dutchman, having been born in the city of Amsterdam, Holland. He is the father of twenty-four children, twelve of whom are still living, to cheer him in his declining years, and to repay him in grateful attentions for the valuable lessons of prudence, integrity, and industry through the adoption of which they are honored as respectable and worthy members of society.

I cannot however permit this chapter to close without recording a protest in principle against that method of advertising of which Warren’s on the Pyramid is an instance. Not that it is a crime or even an immorality in the usual sense of the words; but it is a violent offence against good taste, and a selfish and inexcusable destruction of other people’s enjoyments. No man ought to advertise in the midst of landscapes or scenery, in such a way as to destroy or injure their beauty by introducing totally incongruous and relatively vulgar associations. Too many transactions of the sort have been perpetrated in our own country. The principle on which the thing is done is, to seek out the most attractive spot possible – the wildest, the most lovely, and there, in the most staring and brazen manner to paint up advertisements of quack medicines, rum, or as the case may be, in letters of monstrous size, in the most obtrusive colors, in such a prominent place, and in such a lasting way as to destroy the beauty of the scene both thoroughly and permanently.

Any man with a beautiful wife or daughter would probably feel disagreeably, if he should find branded indelibly across her smooth white forehead, or on her snowy shoulder in blue and red letters such a phrase as this: “Try the Jigamaree Bitters!” Very much like this is the sort of advertising I am speaking of. It is not likely that I shall be charged with squeamishness on this question. I can readily enough see the selfishness and vulgarity of this particular sort of advertising, however.

It is outrageously selfish to destroy the pleasure of thousands, for the sake of a chance of additional gain. And it is an atrocious piece of vulgarity to flaunt the names of quack nostrums, and of the coarse stimulants of sots, among the beautiful scenes of nature. The pleasure of such places depends upon their freedom from the associations of every day concerns and troubles and weaknesses. A lovely nook of forest scenery, or a grand rock, like a beautiful woman, depends for much of its attractiveness upon the attendant sense of freedom from whatever is low; upon a sense of purity and of romance. And it is about as nauseous to find “Bitters” or “Worm Syrup” daubed upon the landscape, as it would be upon the lady’s brow.

Since writing this I observe that two legislatures – those of New Hampshire and New York – have passed laws to prevent this dirty misdemeanor. It is greatly to their credit, and it is in good season. For it is matter of wonder that some more colossal vulgarian has not stuck up a sign a mile long on the Palisades. But it is matter of thankfulness too. At the White Mountains, many grand and beautiful views have been spoiled by these nostrum and bedbug souled fellows.

It is worth noticing that the chief haunts of the city of New York, the Central Park, has thus far remained unviolated by the dirty hands of these vulgar advertisers. Without knowing anything about it, I have no doubt whatever that the commissioners have been approached often by parties desiring the privilege of advertising within its limits. Among the advertising fraternity it would be thought a gigantic opportunity to be able to flaunt the name of some bug-poison, fly-killer, bowel-rectifier, or disguised rum, along the walls of the Reservoir; upon the delicate stone-work of the Terrace, or the graceful lines of the Bow Bridge; to nail up a tin sign on every other tree, to stick one up right in front of every seat; to keep a gang of young wretches thrusting pamphlet or handbill into every person’s palm that enters the gate, to paint a vulgar sign across every gray rock; to cut quack words in ditch-work in the smooth green turf of the mall or ball-ground. I have no doubt that it is the peremptory decision and clear good taste of the Commissioners alone, which have kept this last retreat of nature within our crowded city from being long ago plastered and daubed with placards, handbills, sign-boards and paint, from side to side and from end to end, over turf, tree, rock, wall, bridge, archway, building and all.

CHAPTER III

MONSIEUR MANGIN, THE FRENCH HUMBUGH

One of the most original, unique, and successful humbugs of the present day was the late Monsieur Mangin, the blacklead pencil maker of Paris. Few persons who have visited the French capital within the last ten or twelve years can have failed to have seen him, and once seen he was not to be forgotten. While passing through the public streets, there was nothing in his personal appearance to distinguish him from any ordinary gentlemen. He drove a pair of bay horses, attached to an open carriage with two seats, the back one always occupied by his valet. Sometimes he would take up his stand in the Champs Elysées; at other times, near the column in the Place Vendôme; but usually he was seen in the afternoon in the Place de la Bastille, or the Place de la Madeleine. On Sundays, his favorite locality was the Place de la Bourse. Mangin was a well-formed, stately-looking individual, with a most self-satisfied countenance, which seemed to say: "I am master here; and all that my auditors have to do is, to listen and obey." Arriving at his destined stopping-place, his carriage halted. His servant handed him a case from which he took several large portraits of himself, which he hung prominently upon the sides of his carriage, and also placed in front of him a vase filled with medals bearing his likeness on one side and a description of his pencils on the other. He then leisurely commenced a change of costume. His round hat was displaced by a magnificent burnished helmet, mounted with rich plumes of various brilliant colors. His overcoat was laid aside, and he donned in its stead a costly velvet tunic with gold fringes. He then drew a pair of polished steel gauntlets upon his hands, covered his breast with a brilliant cuirass, and placed a richly-mounted sword at his side. His servant watched him closely, and upon receiving a sign from his master, he too put on his official costume, which consisted of a velvet robe and a helmet. The servant then struck up a tune on the richly-toned organ which always formed a part of Mangin's outfit. The grotesque appearance of these individuals, and the music, soon drew together an admiring crowd.

Then the great charlatan stood upon his feet. His manner was calm, dignified, imposing, indeed almost solemn, for his face was as serious as that of the chief mourner at a funeral. His sharp, intelligent eye scrutinized the throng which was pressing around his carriage, until it rested apparently upon some particular individual, when he gave a start; then, with a dark, angry expression, as if the sight was repulsive, he abruptly dropped the visor of his helmet and thus covered his face from the gaze of the anxious crowd. This bit of coquetry produced the desired effect in whetting the appetite of the multitude, who were impatiently waiting to hear him speak. When he had carried this kind of by-play as far as he thought the audience would bear it, he raised his hand, and his servant understanding the sign, stopped the organ. Mangin then rang a small bell, stepped forward to the front of the carriage, gave a slight cough indicative of a preparation to speak, opened his mouth, but instantly giving a more fearful start and assuming a more sudden frown than before, he took his seat as if quite overcome by some unpleasant object which his eyes had rested upon. Thus far he had not spoken a word. At last the prelude ended, and the comedy commenced. Stepping forward again to the front of his carriage where all the gaping crowd could catch every word, he exclaimed:

"Gentlemen, you look astonished! You seem to wonder and ask yourselves who is this modern Quixote. What mean this costume of by-gone centuries – this golden chariot – these richly caparisoned steeds? What is the name and purpose of this curious knight-errant? Gentlemen, I will condescend to answer your queries. I am Monsieur Mangin, the great charlatan of France! Yes, gentlemen, I am a charlatan – a mountebank; it is my profession, not from choice, but from necessity. You, gentlemen, created that necessity! You would not patronize true, unpretending, honest merit, but you are attracted by my glittering casque, my sweeping crest, my waving plumes. You are captivated

by din and glitter, and therein lies my strength. Years ago, I hired a modest shop in the Rue Rivoli, but I could not sell pencils enough to pay my rent, whereas, by assuming this disguise – it is nothing else – I have succeeded in attracting general attention, and in selling literally millions of my pencils; and I assure you there is at this moment scarcely an artist in France or in Great Britain who don't know that I manufacture by far the best blacklead pencils ever seen.”

And this assertion was indeed true. His pencils were everywhere acknowledged to be superior to any other.

While he was thus addressing his audience, he would take a blank card, and with one of his pencils would pretend to be drawing the portrait of some man standing near him; then showing his picture to the crowd, it proved to be the head of a donkey, which, of course, produced roars of laughter.

“There, do you see what wonderful pencils these are? Did you ever behold a more striking likeness?”

A hearty laugh would be sure to follow, and then he would exclaim: “Now who will have the first pencil – only five sous.” One would buy, and then another; a third and a fourth would follow; and with the delivery of each pencil he would rattle off a string of witticisms which kept his patrons in capital good-humor; and frequently he would sell from two hundred to five hundred pencils in immediate succession. Then he would drop down in his carriage for a few minutes and wipe the perspiration from his face, while his servant played another overture on the organ. This gave his purchasers a chance to withdraw, and afforded a good opportunity for a fresh audience to congregate. Then would follow a repetition of his previous sales, and in this way he would continue for hours. To those disposed to have a *souvenir* of the great humbug he would sell six pencils, a medal and a photograph of himself for a franc (twenty cents.) After taking a rest he would commence a new speech.

“When I was modestly dressed, like any of my hearers, I was half starved. Punch and his bells would attract crowds, but my good pencils attracted nobody. I imitated Punch and his bells, and now I have two hundred depots in Paris. I dine at the best cafés, drink the best wine, live on the best of everything, while my defamers get poor and lank, as they deserve to be. Who are my defamers? Envious swindlers! Men who try to ape me, but are too stupid and too dishonest to succeed. They endeavor to attract notice as mountebanks, and then foist upon the public worthless trash, and hope thus to succeed. Ah! defamers of mine, you are fools as well as knaves. Fools, to think that any man can succeed by systematically and persistently cheating the public. Knaves, for desiring the public's money without giving them an equivalent. I am an honest man. I have no bad habits; and I now declare, if any trader, inventor, manufacturer, or philanthropist will show me better pencils than mine, I will give him 1,000f. – no, not to him, for I abhor betting – but to the poor of the Thirty-first Arrondissement, where I live.”

Mangin's harangues were always accompanied by a peculiar play of feature and of voice, and with unique and original gestures, which seemed to excite and captivate his audience.

About seven years ago, I met him in one of the principal restaurants in the Palais Royale. A mutual friend introduced me.

“Ah!” said he, “Monsieur Barnum, I am delighted to see you. I have read your book with infinite satisfaction. It has been published here in numerous editions. I see you have the right idea of things. Your motto is a good one – ‘we study to please.’ I have much wanted to visit America; but I cannot speak English, so I must remain in my dear belle France.”

I remarked that I had often seen him in public, and bought his pencils.

“Aha! you never saw better pencils. You know I could never maintain my reputation if I sold poor pencils. But *sacre bleu*, my miserable would-be imitators do not know our grand secret. First, attract the public by din and tinsel, by brilliant sky-rockets and Bengola lights, then give them as much as possible for their money.”

“You are very happy,” I replied, “in your manner of attracting the public. Your costume is elegant, your chariot is superb, and your valet and music are sure to draw.”

“Thank you for your compliment, Mr. B., but I have not forgotten your Buffalo-hunt, your Mermaid, nor your Woolly Horse. They were a good offset to my rich helmet and sword, my burnished gauntlets and gaudy cuirass. Both are intended as advertisements of something genuine, and both answer the purpose.”

After comparing notes in this way for an hour, we parted, and his last words were:

“Mr. B., I have got a grand humbug in my head, which I shall put in practice within a year, and it shall double the sale of my pencils. Don’t ask me what it is, but within one year you shall see it for yourself, and you shall acknowledge Monsieur Mangin knows something of human nature. My idea is magnifique, but it is one grand secret.”

I confess my curiosity was somewhat excited, and I hoped that Monsieur Mangin would “add another wrinkle to my horns.” But, poor fellow! within four months after I bade him adieu, the Paris newspapers announced his sudden death. They added that he had left two hundred thousand francs, which he had given in his will to charitable objects. The announcement was copied into nearly all the papers on the Continent and in Great Britain, for almost everybody had seen or heard of the eccentric pencil maker.

His death caused many an honest sigh, and his absence seemed to cast a gloom over several of his favorite halting-places. The Parisians really loved him, and were proud of his genius.

“Well,” people in Paris would remark, “Mangin was a clever fellow. He was shrewd, and possessed a thorough knowledge of the world. He was a gentleman and a man of intelligence, extremely agreeable and witty. His habits were good; he was charitable. He never cheated anybody. He always sold a good article, and no person who purchased from him had cause to complain.”

I confess I felt somewhat chagrined that the Monsieur had thus suddenly taken “French leave” without imparting to me the “grand secret” by which he was to double the sales of his pencils. But I had not long to mourn on that account; for after Monsieur Mangin had been for six months – as they say of John Brown – “mouldering in his grave” judge of the astonishment and delight of all Paris at his reappearance in his native city in precisely the same costume and carriage as formerly, and heralded by the same servant and organ that had always attended him. It now turned out that Monsieur Mangin had lived in the most rigid seclusion for half a year, and that the extensively-circulated announcements of his sudden death had been made by himself, merely as an “advertising dodge” to bring him still more into notice, and give the public something to talk about. I met Mangin in Paris soon after this event.

“Aha, Monsieur Barnum!” he exclaimed, “did I not tell you I had a new humbug that would double the sales of my pencils? I assure you my sales are more than quadrupled, and it is sometimes impossible to have them manufactured fast enough to supply the demand. You Yankees are very clever, but by gar, none of you have discovered you should live all the better if you would die for six months. It took Mangin to teach you that.”

The patronizing air with which he made this speech, slapping me at the same time familiarly upon the back, showed him in his true character of egotist. Although good-natured and social to a degree, he was really one of the most self-conceited men I ever met.

Monsieur Mangin died the present year, and it is said that his heirs received more than half a million of francs as the fruit of his eccentric labors.

CHAPTER IV

OLD GRIZZLY ADAMS.¹

James C. Adams, or “Grizzly Adams,” as he was generally termed, from the fact of his having captured so many grizzly bears, and encountered such fearful perils by his unexampled daring, was an extraordinary character. For many years a hunter and trapper in the Rocky and Sierra Nevada Mountains, he acquired a recklessness which, added to his natural invincible courage, rendered him truly one of the most striking men of the age. He was emphatically what the English call a man of “pluck.” In 1860, he arrived in New York with his famous collection of California animals, captured by himself, consisting of twenty or thirty immense grizzly bears, at the head of which stood “Old Sampson” – now in the American Museum – wolves, half a dozen other species of bear, California lions, tigers, buffalo, elk, etc., and Old Neptune, the great sea-lion, from the Pacific.

Old Adams had trained all these monsters so that with him they were as docile as kittens, while many of the most ferocious among them would attack a stranger without hesitation, if he came within their grasp. In fact, the training of these animals was no fool’s play, as Old Adams learned to his cost; for the terrific blows which he received from time to time, while teaching them “docility,” finally cost him his life.

When Adams and his other wild beasts (for he was nearly as wild as any of them) arrived in New York, he called immediately at the Museum. He was dressed in his hunter’s suit of buckskin, trimmed with the skins and bordered with the hanging tails of small Rocky Mountain animals; his cap consisting of the skin of a wolf’s head and shoulders, from which depended several tails as natural as life, and under which appeared his stiff bushy gray hair and his long white grizzly beard. In fact, Old Adams was quite as much of a show as his bears. They had come around Cape Horn on the clipper-ship Golden Fleece, and a sea-voyage of three and a half months had probably not added much to the beauty or neat appearance of the old bear-hunter.

During our conversation, Grizzly Adams took off his cap, and showed me the top of his head. His skull was literally broken in. It had on various occasions been struck by the fearful paws of his grizzly students; and the last blow, from the bear called “General Fremont,” had laid open his brain, so that its workings were plainly visible. I remarked that I thought that was a dangerous wound, and might possibly prove fatal.

“Yes,” replied Adams, “that will fix me out. It had nearly healed; but old Fremont opened it for me, for the third or fourth time, before I left California, and he did his business so thoroughly, I’m a used-up man. However, I reckon I may live six months or a year yet.”

This was spoken as coolly as if he had been talking about the life of a dog.

The immediate object of “Old Adams” in calling upon me was this. I had purchased one-half interest in his California menagerie from a man who had come by way of the Isthmus from California, and who claimed to own an equal interest with Adams in the show. Adams declared that the man had only advanced him some money, and did not possess the right to sell half of the concern. However, the man held a bill of sale for one-half of the “California Menagerie,” and Old Adams finally consented to accept me as an equal partner in the speculation, saying that he guessed I could do the managing part, and he would show up the animals. I obtained a canvas tent, and erecting it on the present site of Wallack’s Theatre, Adams there opened his novel California Menagerie. On the morning of opening, a band of music preceded a procession of animal-cages, down Broadway and up the Bowery; Old

¹ Although the subject of the following sketch can hardly be classed under the head of “Humbugs,” he was an original genius, and a knowledge of some of his prominent traits seems appropriate in connection with one or two other passages of this book.

Adams dressed in his hunting costume, heading the line, with a platform-wagon on which were placed three immense grizzly bears, two of which he held by chains, while he was mounted on the back of the largest grizzly, which stood in the centre, and was not secured in any manner whatever. This was the bear known as “General Fremont;” and so docile had he become that Adams said he had used him as a packbear to carry his cooking and hunting apparatus through the mountains for six months, and had ridden him hundreds of miles. But apparently docile as were many of these animals, there was not one among them that would not occasionally give even Adams a sly blow or a sly bite when a good chance offered; hence Old Adams was but a wreck of his former self, and expressed pretty nearly the truth when he said:

“Mr. Barnum, I am not the man I was five years ago. Then I felt able to stand the hug of any grizzly living, and was always glad to encounter, single-handed, any sort of an animal that dared present himself. But I have been beaten to a jelly, torn almost limb from limb, and nearly chewed up and spit out by these treacherous grizzly bears. However, I am good for a few months yet, and by that time I hope we shall gain enough to make my old woman comfortable, for I have been absent from her some years.”

His wife came from Massachusetts to New York, and nursed him. Dr. Johns dressed his wounds every day, and not only told Adams he could never recover, but assured his friends that probably a very few weeks would lay him in his grave.

But Adams was as firm as adamant and as resolute as a lion. Among the thousands who saw him dressed in his grotesque hunter’s suit, and witnessed the apparent vigor with which he “performed” the savage monsters, beating and whipping them into apparently the most perfect docility, probably not one suspected that this rough, fierce-looking, powerful demi-savage, as he appeared to be, was suffering intense pain from his broken skull and fevered system, and that nothing kept him from stretching himself on his deathbed but that most indomitable and extraordinary will of his.

After the exhibition had been open six weeks, the Doctor insisted that Adams should sell out his share in the animals and settle up all his worldly affairs; for he assured him that he was growing weaker every day, and his earthly existence must soon terminate.

“I shall live a good deal longer than you doctors think for,” replied Adams, doggedly; and then, seeming after all to realize the truth of the Doctor’s assertion, he turned to me and said: “Well, Mr. B., you must buy me out.” He named his price for his half of the “show,” and I accepted his offer. We had arranged to exhibit the bears in Connecticut and Massachusetts during the summer, in connection with a circus, and Adams insisted that I should hire him to travel for the summer, and exhibit the bears in their curious performances. He offered to go for \$60 per week and traveling expenses of himself and wife.

I replied that I would gladly engage him as long as he could stand it, but I advised him to give up business and go to his home in Massachusetts; “for,” I remarked, “you are growing weaker every day, and at best cannot stand it more than a fortnight.”

“What will you give me extra if I will travel and exhibit the bears every day for ten weeks?” asked old Adams, eagerly.

“Five hundred dollars,” I replied, with a laugh.

“Done!” exclaimed Adams. “I will do it; so draw up an agreement to that effect at once. But mind you, draw it payable to my wife, for I may be too weak to attend to business after the ten weeks are up, and if I perform my part of the contract, I want her to get the \$500 without any trouble.”

I drew up a contract to pay him \$60 per week for his services, and if he continued to exhibit the bears for ten consecutive weeks I was then to hand him, or his wife \$500 extra.

“You have lost your \$500!” exclaimed Adams on taking the contract; “for I am bound to live and earn it.”

“I hope you may, with all my heart, and a hundred years more if you desire it,” I replied.

“Call me a fool if I don’t earn the \$500!” exclaimed Adams, with a triumphant laugh.

The “show” started off in a few days, and at the end of a fortnight I met it at Hartford, Connecticut.

“Well,” says I, “Adams, you seem to stand it pretty well. I hope you and your wife are comfortable?”

“Yes,” he replied, with a laugh; “and you may as well try to be comfortable too, for your \$500 is a goner.”

“All right,” I replied; “I hope you will grow better every day.”

But I saw by his pale face, and other indications, that he was rapidly failing.

In three weeks more, I met him again at New Bedford, Mass. It seemed to me, then, that he could not live a week, for his eyes were glassy and his hands trembled, but his pluck was great as ever.

“This hot weather is pretty bad for me,” he said, “but my ten weeks are half expired, and I am good for your \$500, and, probably, a month or two longer.”

This was said with as much bravado as if he was offering to bet upon a horse-race. I offered to pay him half of the \$500 if he would give up and go home; but he peremptorily declined making any compromise whatever.

I met him the ninth week in Boston. He had failed considerably since I last saw him, but he still continued to exhibit the bears and chuckled over his almost certain triumph. I laughed in return, and sincerely congratulated him on his nerve and probable success. I remained with him until the tenth week was finished, and handed him his \$500. He took it with a leer of satisfaction, and remarked, that he was sorry I was a teetotaller, for he would like to stand treat!

Just before the menagerie left New York, I had paid \$150 for a new hunting-suit, made of beaver-skins similar to the one which Adams had worn. This I intended for Herr Driesbach, the animal-tamer, who was engaged by me to take the place of Adams whenever he should be compelled to give up.

Adams, on starting from New York, asked me to loan this new dress to him to perform in once in a while in a fair day when we had a large audience, for his own costume was considerably soiled. I did so, and now when I handed him his \$500 he remarked:

“Mr. B., I suppose you are going to give me this new hunting-dress.”

“Oh no,” I replied. “I got that for your successor, who will exhibit the bears to-morrow; besides, you have no possible use for it.”

“Now, don’t be mean, but *lend* me the dress, if you won’t *give* it to me, for I want to wear it home to my native village.”

I could not refuse the poor old man anything, and I therefore replied:

“Well, Adams, I will lend you the dress; but you will send it back to me.”

“Yes, when I have done with it,” he replied, with an evident chuckle of triumph.

I thought to myself, he will soon be done with it, and replied:

“That’s all right.”

A new idea evidently seized him, for, with a brightening look of satisfaction, he said:

“Now, Barnum, you have made a good thing out of the California menagerie, and so have I; but you will make a heap more. So, if you won’t give me this new hunter’s dress, just draw a little writing, and sign it, saying that I may wear it until I have done with it.”

Of course, I knew that in a few days at longest he would be “done” with this world altogether, and, to gratify him, I cheerfully drew and signed the paper.

“Come, old Yankee, I’ve got you this time – see if I hain’t!” exclaimed Adams, with a broad grin, as he took the paper.

I smiled, and said:

“All right, my dear fellow; the longer you live, the better I shall like it.”

We parted, and he went to Neponset, a small town near Boston, where his wife and daughter lived. He took at once to his bed, and never rose from it again. The excitement had passed away, and his vital energies could accomplish no more.

The fifth day after arriving home, the physician told him he could not live until the next morning. He received the announcement in perfect calmness, and with the most apparent indifference; then, turning to his wife, with a smile, he requested her to have him buried in the new hunting suit.

“For,” said he, “Barnum agreed to let me have it until I have done with it, and I was determined to fix his flint this time. He shall never see that dress again.”

His wife assured him that his request should be complied with. He then sent for the clergyman, and they spent several hours in communing together.

Adams told the clergyman he had told some pretty big stories about his bears, but he had always endeavored to do the straight thing between man and man. “I have attended preaching every day, Sundays and all,” said he, “for the last six years. Sometimes an old grizzly gave me the sermon, sometimes it was a panther; often it was the thunder and lightning, the tempest, or the hurricane on the peaks of the Sierra Nevada, or in the gorges of the Rocky Mountains; but whatever preached to me, it always taught me the majesty of the Creator, and revealed to me the undying and unchanging love of our kind Father in heaven. Although I am a pretty rough customer,” continued the dying man, “I fancy my heart is in about the right place, and look with confidence to the blessed Saviour for that rest which I so much need, and which I have never enjoyed upon earth.” He then desired the clergyman to pray with him, after which he grasped him by the hand, thanked him for his kindness, and bade him farewell.

In another hour his spirit had taken its flight; and it was said by those present that his face lighted up into a smile as the last breath escaped him, and that smile he carried into his grave. Almost his last words were: “Won’t Barnum open his eyes when he finds I have humbugged him by being buried in his new hunting-dress?” That dress was indeed the shroud in which he was entombed.

And that was the last on earth of “Old Grizzly Adams.”

CHAPTER V

THE GOLDEN PIGEONS. – GRIZZLY ADAMS. – GERMAN CHEMIST. – HAPPY FAMILY. – FRENCH NATURALIST

“Old Grizzly Adams” was quite candid when, in his last hours, he confessed to the clergyman that he had “told some pretty large stories about his bears.” In fact, these “large stories” were Adam’s “besetting sin.” To hear him talk, one would suppose that he had seen and handled everything ever read or heard of. In fact, according to his story, California contained specimens of all things, animate and inanimate, to be found in any part of the globe. He talked glibly about California lions, California tigers, California leopards, California hyenas, California camels, and California hippopotami. He furthermore declared he had, on one occasion, seen a California elephant, “at a great distance,” but it was “very shy,” and he would not permit himself to doubt that California giraffes existed somewhere in the neighborhood of the “tall trees.”

I was anxious to get a chance of exposing to Adams his weak point, and of showing him the absurdity of telling such ridiculous stories. A fit occasion soon presented itself. One day, while engaged in my office at the Museum, a man with marked Teutonic features and accent approached the door and asked if I would like to buy a pair of living golden pigeons.

“Yes,” I replied, “I would like a *flock* of ‘golden pigeons,’ if I could buy them for their weight in *silver*; for there are no ‘golden’ pigeons in existence, unless they are made from the pure metal.”

“You shall see some golden pigeons alive,” he replied, at the same time entering my office and closing the door after him. He then removed the lid from a small basket which he carried in his hand, and sure enough there were snugly ensconced a pair of beautiful living ruff-necked pigeons, as yellow as saffron and as bright as a double eagle fresh from the mint.

I confess I was somewhat staggered at this sight, and quickly asked the man where those birds came from.

A dull, lazy smile crawled over the sober face of my German visitor, as he replied in a slow, guttural tone of voice:

“What you think yourself?”

Catching his meaning, I quickly answered:

“I think it is a humbug?”

“Of course, I know you will say so; because you ‘forstha’ such things better as any man living, so I shall not try to humbug you. I have color them myself.”

On further inquiry, I learned that this German was a chemist, and that he possessed the art of coloring birds any hue desired, and yet retain a natural gloss on the feathers, which gave every shade the appearance of reality.

“I can paint a green pigeon or a blue pigeon, a gray pigeon or a black pigeon, a brown pigeon or a pigeon half blue and half green,” said the German; “and if you prefer it, I can paint them pink or purple, or give you a little of each color, and make you a rainbow pigeon.”

The “rainbow pigeon” did not strike me as particularly desirable; but, thinking here was a good chance to catch “Grizzly Adams,” I bought the pair of golden pigeons for ten dollars, and sent them up to the “Happy Family,” marked “Golden Pigeons from California.” Mr. Taylor the great pacificator, who has charge of the Happy Family, soon came down in a state of perspiration.

“Really, Mr. Barnum,” said he, “I could not think of putting those elegant golden pigeons into the Happy Family – they are too valuable a bird – they might get injured – they are by far the most beautiful pigeons I ever saw; and as they are so rare, I would not jeopardize their lives for anything.”

“Well,” I replied, “you may put them in a separate cage, properly labeled.”

Monsieur Guillaudeu, the naturalist and taxidermist of the Museum, has been attached to that establishment since the year it was founded, 1810. He is a Frenchman, and has read everything upon Natural History that was ever published in his own or in the English language. He is now seventy-five years old, but is lively as a cricket, and takes as much interest in Natural History as he ever did. When he saw the “golden pigeons from California,” he was considerably astonished! He examined them with great delight for half an hour, expatiating upon their beautiful color, and the near resemblance which every feature bore to the American ruff-neck pigeon. He soon came to my office and said:

“Mr. B., these golden pigeons are superb, but they cannot be from California. Audubon mentions no such bird in his work upon American Ornithology.”

I told him he had better take Audubon home with him that night, and perhaps by studying him attentively he would see occasion to change his mind.

The next day, the old naturalist called at my office and remarked:

“Mr. B., those pigeons are a more rare bird than you imagine. They are not mentioned by Linnæus, Cuvier, Goldsmith, or any other writer on Natural History, so far as I have been able to discover. I expect they must have come from some unexplored portion of Australia.”

“Never mind,” I replied, “we may get more light on the subject, perhaps, before long. We will continue to label them ‘California Pigeons’ until we can fix their nativity elsewhere.”

The next morning, “Old Grizzly Adams,” whose exhibition of bears was then open in Fourteenth street, happened to be passing through the Museum, when his eyes fell on the “Golden California Pigeons.” He looked a moment and doubtless admired. He soon after came to my office.

“Mr. B.,” said he, “you must let me have those California pigeons.”

“I can’t spare them,” I replied.

“But you *must* spare them. All the birds and animals from California ought to be together. You own half of my California menagerie, and you must lend me those pigeons.”

“Mr. Adams, they are too rare and valuable a bird to be hawked about in that manner; besides, I expect they will attract considerable attention here.”

“Oh, don’t be a fool,” replied Adams. “Rare bird, indeed! Why, they are just as common in California as any other pigeon! I could have brought a hundred of them from San Francisco, if I had thought of it.”

“But why did you not think of it?” I asked, with a suppressed smile.

“Because they are *so common* there,” said Adams. “I did not think they would be any curiosity here. I have eaten them in pigeon-pies hundreds of times, and shot them by the thousand!”

I was ready to burst with laughter to see how readily Adams swallowed the bait, but maintaining the most rigid gravity, I replied:

“Oh well, Mr. Adams, if they are really so common in California, you had probably better take them, and you may write over and have half a dozen pairs sent to me for the Museum.”

“All right,” said Adams; “I will send over to a friend in San Francisco, and you shall have them here in a couple of months.”

I told Adams that, for certain reasons, I would prefer to change the label so as to have it read: “Golden Pigeons from Australia.”

“Well, call them what you like,” replied Adams; “I suppose they are probably about as plenty in Australia as they are in California.”

I fancied I could discover a sly smile lurking in the eye of the old bear-hunter as he made this reply.

The pigeons were labeled as I suggested, and this is how it happened that the Bridgeport non-believing lady, mentioned in the next chapter, was so much attracted as to solicit some of their eggs in order to perpetuate the species in old Connecticut.

Six or eight weeks after this incident, I was in the California Menagerie, and noticed that the “Golden Pigeons” had assumed a frightfully mottled appearance. Their feathers had grown out, and

they were half white. Adams had been so busy with his bears that he had not noticed the change. I called him up to the pigeon cage, and remarked:

“Mr. Adams, I fear you will lose your Golden Pigeons; they must be very sick; I observe they are turning quite pale!”

Adams looked at them a moment with astonishment; then turning to me, and seeing that I could not suppress a smile, he indignantly exclaimed:

“Blast the Golden Pigeons! You had better take them back to the Museum. You can’t humbug me with your painted pigeons!”

This was too much, and “I laughed till I cried” to witness the mixed look of astonishment and vexation which marked the “grizzly” features of old Adams.

“These Golden Pigeons,” I remarked, “are very common in California, I think I heard you say? When do you expect my half-dozen pairs will arrive?”

“You go to thunder, you old humbug!” replied Adams, as he marched off indignantly, and soon disappeared behind the cages of his grizzly bears.

From that time, Adams seemed to be more careful about telling his large stories. Perhaps he was not cured altogether of his habit, but he took particular pains when making marvelous statements to have them of such a nature that they could not be disproved so easily as was that regarding the “Golden California Pigeons.”

CHAPTER VI

THE WHALE, THE ANGEL FISH, AND THE GOLDEN PIGEON

If the fact could be definitely determined, I think it would be discovered that in this “wide awake” country there are more persons humbugged by believing too little than too much. Many persons have such a horror of being taken in, or such an elevated opinion of their own acuteness, that they believe everything to be a sham, and in this way are continually humbugging themselves.

Several years since, I purchased a living white whale, captured near Labrador, and succeeded in placing it, “in good condition,” in a large tank, fifty feet long, and supplied with salt water, in the basement of the American Museum. I was obliged to light the basement with gas, and that frightened the sea-monster to such an extent that he kept at the bottom of the tank, except when he was compelled to stick his nose above the surface in order to breathe or “blow,” and then down he would go again as quick as possible. Visitors would sometimes stand for half an hour, watching in vain to get a look at the whale; for, although he could remain under water only about two minutes at a time, he would happen to appear in some unlooked for quarter of the huge tank, and before they could all get a chance to see him, he would be out of sight again. Some impatient and incredulous persons after waiting ten minutes, which seemed to them an hour, would sometimes exclaim:

“Oh, humbug! I don’t believe there is a whale here at all!”

This incredulity often put me out of patience, and I would say:

“Ladies and gentlemen, there is a living whale in the tank. He is frightened by the gaslight and by visitors; but he is obliged to come to the surface every two minutes, and if you will watch sharply, you will see him. I am sorry we can’t make him dance a hornpipe and do all sorts of wonderful things at the word of command; but if you will exercise your patience a few minutes longer, I assure you the whale will be seen at considerably less trouble than it would be to go to Labrador expressly for that purpose.”

This would usually put my patrons in good humor; but I was myself often vexed at the persistent stubbornness of the whale in not calmly floating on the surface for the gratification of my visitors.

One day, a sharp Yankee lady and her daughter, from Connecticut, called at the Museum. I knew them well; and in answer to their inquiry for the locality of the whale, I directed them to the basement. Half an hour afterward, they called at my office, and the acute mother, in a half-confidential, serio-comic whisper, said:

“Mr. B., it’s astonishing to what a number of purposes the ingenuity of us Yankees has applied india-rubber.”

I asked her meaning, and was soon informed that she was perfectly convinced that it was an india-rubber whale, worked by steam and machinery, by means of which he was made to rise to the surface at short intervals, and puff with the regularity of a pair of bellows. From her earnest, confident manner, I saw it would be useless to attempt to disabuse her mind on the subject. I therefore very candidly acknowledged that she was quite too sharp for me, and I must plead guilty to the imposition; but I begged her not to expose me, for I assured her that she was the only person who had discovered the trick.

It was worth more than a dollar to see with what a smile of satisfaction she received the assurance that nobody else was as shrewd as herself; and the patronizing manner in which she bade me be perfectly tranquil, for the secret should be considered by her as “strictly confidential,” was decidedly rich. She evidently received double her money’s worth in the happy reflection that she could not be humbugged, and that I was terribly humiliated in being detected through her marvelous powers

of discrimination! I occasionally meet the good lady, and always try to look a little sheepish, but she invariably assures me that she has never divulged my secret and never will!

On another occasion, a lady equally shrewd, who lives neighbor to me in Connecticut, after regarding for a few minutes the “Golden Angel Fish” swimming in one of the Aquaria, abruptly addressed me with:

“You can’t humbug me, Mr. Barnum; that fish is painted!”

“Nonsense!” said I, with a laugh; “the thing is impossible!”

“I don’t care, I know it is painted; it is as plain as can be.”

“But, my dear Mrs. H., paint would not adhere to a fish while in the water; and if it would, it would kill him. Besides,” I added, with an extra serious air, “we never allow humbugging here!”

“Oh, here is just the place to look for such things,” she replied with a smile; “and I must say I more than half believe that Angel Fish is painted.”

She was finally nearly convinced of her error, and left. In the afternoon of the same day, I met her in Old Adams’ California Menagerie. She knew that I was part-proprietor of that establishment, and seeing me in conversation with “Grizzly Adams,” she came up to me in some haste, and with her eyes glistening with excitement, she said:

“O, Mr. B., I never saw anything so beautiful as those elegant ‘Golden Pigeons’ from Australia. I want you to secure some of their eggs for me, and let my pigeons hatch them at home. I should prize them beyond all measure.”

“Oh, you don’t want ‘Golden Australian Pigeons,’” I replied; “they are painted.”

“No, they are not painted,” said she, with a laugh, “but I half think the Angel Fish is.”

I could not control myself at the curious coincidence, and I roared with laughter while I replied:

“Now, Mrs. H., I never let a good joke be spoiled, even if it serves to expose my own secrets. I assure you, upon honor, that the Golden Australian Pigeons, as they are labeled, are really painted; and that in their natural state they are nothing more nor less than the common ruff-necked white American pigeons!”

And it was a fact. How they happened to be exhibited under that auriferous disguise was owing to an amusing circumstance, explained in another chapter.

Suffice it at present to say, that Mrs. H. to this day “blushes to her eyebrows” whenever an allusion is made to “Angel Fish” or “Golden Pigeons.”

CHAPTER VII

PEASE'S HOARHOUND CANDY. – THE DORR REBELLION. – THE PHILADELPHIA ALDERMEN

In the year 1842, a new style of advertising appeared in the newspapers and in handbills which arrested public attention at once on account of its novelty. The thing advertised was an article called "Pease's Hoarhound Candy;" a very good specific for coughs and colds. It was put up in twenty-five cent packages, and was eventually sold wholesale and retail in enormous quantities. Mr. Pease's system of advertising was one which, I believe, originated with him in this country, although many have practiced it since, but of course, with less success – for imitations seldom succeed. Mr. Pease's plan was to seize upon the most prominent topic of interest and general conversation, and discourse eloquently upon that topic in fifty to a hundred lines of a newspaper-column, then glide off gradually into a panegyric of "Pease's Hoarhound Candy." The consequence was, every reader was misled by the caption and commencement of his article, and thousands of persons had "Pease's Hoarhound Candy" in their mouths long before they had seen it! In fact, it was next to impossible to take up a newspaper and attempt to read the legitimate news of the day without stumbling upon a package of "Pease's Hoarhound Candy." The reader would often feel vexed to find that, after reading a quarter of a column of interesting news upon the subject uppermost in his mind, he was trapped into the perusal of one of Pease's hoarhound candy advertisements. Although inclined sometimes to throw down the newspaper in disgust, he would generally laugh at the talent displayed by Mr. Pease in thus captivating and capturing the reader. The result of all this would generally be, a trial of the candy on the first premonitory symptoms of a cough or influenza. The degree to which this system of advertising has since been carried has rendered it a bore and a nuisance. The usual result of almost any great and original achievement is, the production of a shoal of brainless imitators, who are "neither useful nor ornamental."

In the same year that Pease's hoarhound candy appeared upon the commercial and newspaper horizon, the "Governor Dorr Rebellion" occurred in Rhode Island. As many will remember, this rebellion caused a great excitement throughout the country. Citizens of Rhode Island took up arms against each other, and it was feared by some that a bloody civil war would ensue.

At about this time a municipal election was to come off in the city of Philadelphia. The two political parties were pretty equally divided there, and there were some special causes why this was regarded as an unusually important election. Its near approach caused more excitement in the "Quaker City" than had been witnessed there since the preceding Presidential election. The party-leaders began to lay their plans early, and the wire-pullers on both sides were unusually busy in their vocation. At the head of the rabble upon which one of the parties depended for many votes, was a drunken and profane fellow, whom we will call Tom Simmons. Tom was great at electioneering and stump-spouting in bar-rooms and rum-caucuses, and his party always looked to him, at each election, to stir up the subterraneans "with a long pole" – and a whiskey-jug at the end of it.

The exciting election which was now to come off for Mayor and Aldermen of the good city of Brotherly Love soon brought several of the "ring" to Tom.

"Now, Tom," said the head wire-puller, "this is going to be a close election, and we want you to spare neither talent nor liquor in arousing up and bringing to the polls every voter within your influence."

"Well, Squire," replied Tom carelessly, "I've concluded I won't bother myself with this 'lection – it don't pay!"

“Don’t pay!” exclaimed the frightened politician. “Why, Tom, are you not a true friend to your party? Haven’t you always been on hand at the primary meetings, knocked down interlopers, and squelched every man who talked about conscience, or who refused to support regular nominations, and vote the entire clean ticket straight through? And as for ‘pay,’ haven’t you always been supplied with money enough to treat all doubtful voters, and in fact to float them up to the polls in an ocean of whiskey? I confess Tom, I am almost petrified with astonishment at witnessing your present indifference to the alarming crisis in which our country and our party are involved, and which nothing on earth can avert, except our success at the coming election.”

“Oh, tell that to the marines,” said Tom. “We never yet had an election that there wasn’t a ‘crisis,’ and yet, whichever party gained, we somehow managed to live through it, crisis or no crisis. In fact, my curiosity has got a little excited, and I would like to see this ‘crisis’ that is such a bugaboo at every election; so trot out your crisis – let us see how it looks. Besides, talking of pay, I acknowledge the whiskey, and that is all. While I and my companions lifted you and your companions into fat offices that enabled you to roll in your carriages, and live on the fat of the land, we got nothing – or, at least, next to nothing – all we got was – well – we got drunk! Now, Squire, I will go for the other party this ’lection if you don’t give me an office.”

“Give you an office!” exclaimed the “Squire,” raising his hands and rolling his eyes in utter amazement; “why, Tom, what office do you want?”

“I want to be Alderman!” replied Tom, “and I can control votes enough to turn the ’lection either way; and if our party don’t gratefully remember my past services and give me my reward, t’other party will be glad to run me on their ticket, and over I go.”

The gentleman of the “ring” saw by Tom’s firmness and clenched teeth that he was immovable; that his principles, like those of too many others, consisted of “loaves and fishes;” they therefore consented to put Tom’s name on the municipal ticket; and the worst part of the story is, he was elected.

In a very short time, Tom was duly installed into the Aldermanic chair, and, opening his office on a prominent corner, he was soon doing a thriving business. He was generally occupied throughout the day in sitting as a judge in cases of book debt and promissory notes which were brought before him, for various small sums ranging from two to five, six, eight, and ten dollars. He would frequently dispose of thirty or forty of these cases in a day, and as imprisonment for debt was permitted at that time, the poor defendants would “shin” around and make any sacrifice almost, rather than go to jail. The enormous “costs” went into the capacious pocket of the Alderman; and this dignitary, as a natural sequence, “waxed fat” and saucy, exemplifying the truth of the adage “Put a beggar on horseback,” etc.

As the Alderman grew rich, he became overbearing, headstrong, and dictatorial. He began to fancy that he monopolized the concentrated wisdom of his party, and that his word should be law. Not a party-caucus or a political meeting could be held without witnessing the vulgar and profane harangues of the self-conceited Alderman, Tom Simmons. As he was one of the “ring,” his fingers were in all the “pickings and stealings;” he kept his family-coach, and in his general swagger exhibited all the peculiarities of “high life below stairs.”

But after Tom had disgraced his office for two years, a State election took place and the other party were successful. Among the first laws which they passed after the convening of the Legislature, was one declaring that from that date imprisonment for debt should not be permitted in the State of Pennsylvania for any sum less than ten dollars.

This enactment, of course, knocked away the chief prop which sustained the Alderman, and when the news of its passage reached Philadelphia, Tom was the most indignant man that had been seen there for some years.

Standing in front of his office the next morning, surrounded by several of his political chums, Tom exclaimed:

“Do you see what them infernal tories have done down there at Harrisburg? They have been and passed an outrageous, oppressive, barbarous, and unconstitutional law! A pretty idea, indeed, if a man can’t put a debtor in jail for a less sum than ten dollars! How am I going to support my family, I should like to know, if this law is allowed to stand? I tell you, gentlemen, this law is unconstitutional, and you will see blood running in our streets, if them tory scoundrels try to carry it out!”

His friends laughed, for they saw that Tom was reasoning from his pocket instead of his head; and, as he almost foamed at the mouth in his impotent wrath they could not suppress a smile.

“Oh, you may laugh, gentlemen – you may laugh; but you will see it. Our party will never disgrace itself a permitting the tories to rob them of their rights by passing unconstitutional laws; and I say, the sooner we come to blood, the better!”

At this moment, a gentleman stepped up, and addressing the Alderman, said:

“Alderman, I want to bring a case of book debt before you this morning.”

“How much is your claim?” asked Tom.

“Four dollars,” replied the rumseller – for such he proved to be – and his debt was for drinks chalked up against one of his “customers.”

“You can’t have your four dollars, Sir,” replied the excited Alderman. “You are robbed of your four dollars, Sir. Them legislative tories at Harrisburg, Sir, have cheated you out of your four dollars, Sir. I undertake to say, Sir, that fifty thousand honest men in Philadelphia have been robbed of their four dollars by these bloody tories and their cursed unconstitutional law! Ah, gentlemen, you will see blood running in our streets before you are a month older. (A laugh.) Oh, you may laugh; but you will see it – see if you don’t!”

A newsboy was just passing by.

“Here, boy, give me the Morning Ledger,” said the Alderman, at the same time taking the paper and handing the boy a penny. “Let us see what them blasted cowboys are doing down at Harrisburg now. Ah! – what is this?” (Reading:) “‘Blood, blood, blood!’ Aha! laugh, will you, gentlemen? Here it is.” Reads:

“‘Blood, blood, blood! The Dorrites have got possession of Providence. The military are called out. Father is arrayed against father, and son against son. Blood is already running in our streets.’

“Now laugh, will you, gentlemen? Blood is running in the streets of Providence; blood will be running in the streets of Philadelphia before you are a fortnight older! The tories of Providence and the tories of Harrisburg must answer for this blood, for they and their unconstitutional proceedings are the cause of its flowing! Let us see the rest of this tragic scene.” Reads:

“‘Is there any remedy for this dreadful state of things?’”

Alderman. – “Of course not, except to hang every rascal of them for trampling on our g-l-orious Constitution.” Reads:

“‘Is there any remedy for this dreadful state of things? Yes, there is.’”

Alderman. – “Oh, there is, is there? What is it? Let me see.” Reads:

“‘Buy two packages of Pease’s hoarhound candy.’”

“Blast the infernal Ledger!” exclaimed the now doubly incensed and indignant Alderman, throwing the paper upon the pavement with the most ineffable disgust, amid the shouts and hurrahs of a score of men who by this time had gathered around the excited Alderman Tom Simmons.

As I before remarked, the “candy” was a very good article for the purposes for which it was made; and as Pease was an indefatigable man, as well as a good advertiser, he soon acquired a fortune. Mr. Pease, Junior, is now living in affluence in Brooklyn, and is bringing up a “happy family” to enjoy the fruits of his industry, probity, good habits, and genius.

The “humbug” in this transaction, of course consisted solely in the manner of advertising. There was no humbug or deception about the article manufactured.

CHAPTER VIII

BRANDRETH'S PILLS. – MAGNIFICENT ADVERTISING. – POWER OF IMAGINATION

In the year 1834, Dr. Benjamin Brandreth commenced advertising in the city of New York, “Brandreth’s Pills specially recommended to purify the blood.” His office consisted of a room about ten feet square, located in what was then known as the Sun building, an edifice ten by forty feet, situated at the corner of Spruce and Nassau streets, where the Tribune is now published. His “factory” was at his residence in Hudson street. He put up a large gilt sign over the Sun office, five or six feet wide by the length of the building, which attracted much attention, as at that time it was probably the largest sign in New York. Dr. Brandreth had great faith in his pills, and I believe not without reason; for multitudes of persons soon became convinced of the truth of his assertions, that “all diseases arise from impurity or imperfect circulation of the blood, and by purgation with Brandreth’s Pills all disease may be cured.”

But great and reasonable as might have been the faith of Dr. Brandreth in the efficacy of his pills, his faith in the potency of advertising them was equally strong. Hence he commenced advertising largely in the Sun newspaper – paying at least \$5,000 to that paper alone, for his first year’s advertisements. That may not seem a large sum in these days, when parties have been known to pay more than five thousand dollar for a single day’s advertising in the leading journals; but, at the time Brandreth started, his was considered the most liberal newspaper-advertising of the day.

Advertising is to a genuine article what manure is to land, – it largely increases the product. Thousands of persons may be reading your advertisement while you are eating, or sleeping, or attending to your business; hence public attention is attracted, new customers come to you, and, if you render them a satisfactory equivalent for their money, they continue to patronize you and recommend you to their friends.

At the commencement of his career, Dr. Brandreth was indebted to Mr. Moses Y. Beach, proprietor of the New York Sun, for encouragement and means of advertising. But this very advertising soon caused his receipts to be enormous. Although the pills were but twenty-five cents per box, they were soon sold to such a great extent, that tons of huge cases filled with the “purely vegetable pill” were sent from the new and extensive manufactory every week. As his business increased, so in the same ratio did he extend his advertising. The doctor engaged at one time a literary gentleman to attend, under the supervision of himself, solely to the advertising department. Column upon column of advertisements appeared in the newspapers, in the shape of learned and scientific pathological dissertations, the very reading of which would tempt a poor mortal to rush for a box of Brandreth’s Pills; so evident was it (according to the advertisement) that nobody ever had or ever would have “pure blood,” until from one to a dozen boxes of the pills had been taken as “purifiers.” The ingenuity displayed in concocting these advertisements was superb, and was probably hardly equaled by that required to concoct the pills.

No pain, ache, twinge, or other sensation, good, bad, or indifferent, ever experienced by a member of the human family, but was a most irrefragable evidence of the impurity of the blood; and it would have been blasphemy to have denied the “self-evident” theory, that “all diseases arise from impurity or imperfect circulation of the blood, and that by purgation with Brandreth’s Pills all disease may be cured.”

The doctor claims that his grandfather first manufactured the pills in 1751. I suppose this may be true; at all events, no *living* man will be apt to testify to the contrary. Here is an extract from one of Dr. Brandreth’s early advertisements, which will give an idea of his style:

“What has been longest known has been most considered, and what has been most considered is best understood.

“The life of the flesh is in the blood.’ – Lev. xxii, 2.

“Bleeding reduces the vital powers; Brandreth’s Pills increase them. So in sickness never be bled, especially in Dizziness and Apoplexy, but always use Brandreth’s Pills.

“The laws of life are written upon the face of Nature. The Tempest, Whirlwind, and Thunderstorm bring health from the Solitudes of God. The Tides are the daily agitators and purifiers of the Mighty World of Waters.

“What these Providential means are as purifiers of the Atmosphere or Air, Brandreth’s Pills are to man.”

This splendid system of advertising, and the almost reckless outlay which was required to keep it up, challenged the admiration of the business community. In the course of a few years, his office was enlarged; and still being too small, he took the store 241 Broadway, and also opened a branch at 187 Hudson street. The doctor continued to let his advertising keep pace with his patronage; and he was finally, in the year 1836, compelled to remove his manufactory to Sing Sing, where such perfectly incredible quantities of Brandreth’s Pills have been manufactured and sold that it would hardly be safe to give the statistics. Suffice it to say, that the only “humbug” which I suspect in connection with the pills was, the very harmless and unobjectionable yet novel method of advertising them; and as the doctor amassed a great fortune by their manufacture, this very fact is *prima facie* evidence that the pill was a valuable purgative.

A funny incident occurred to me in connection with this great pill. In the year 1836, while I was travelling through the States of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, I became convinced by reading Doctor Brandreth’s advertisements that I needed his pills. Indeed, I there read the proof that every symptom that I experienced, either in imagination or in reality, rendered their extensive consumption absolutely necessary to preserve my life. I purchased a box of Brandreth’s Pills in Columbus, Miss. The effect was miraculous! Of course, it was just what the advertisement told me it would be. In Tuscaloosa, Alabama, I purchased half a dozen boxes. They were all used up before my perambulating show reached Vicksburg, Miss., and I was a confirmed disciple of the blood theory. There I laid in a dozen boxes. In Natchez, I made a similar purchase. In New Orleans, where I remained several months, I was a profitable customer, and had become thoroughly convinced that the only real “greenhorns” in the world were those who preferred meat or bread to Brandreth’s Pills. I took them morning, noon, and night. In fact, the advertisements announced that one could not take too many; for if one box was sufficient to purify the blood, eleven extra boxes would have no injurious effect.

I arrived in New York in June 1838, and by that time I had become such a firm believer in the efficacy of Brandreth’s Pills, that I hardly stopped long enough to speak with my family, before I hastened to the “principal office” of Doctor Brandreth to congratulate him on being the greatest public benefactor of the age.

I found the doctor “at home,” and introduced myself without ceremony. I told him my experiences. He was delighted. I next heartily indorsed every word stated in his advertisements. He was not surprised, for he knew the effects of his pills were such as I described. Still he was elated in having another witness whose extensive experiments with his pills were so eminently satisfactory. The doctor and myself were both happy – he in being able to do so much good to mankind; I in being the recipient of such untold benefits through his valuable discovery.

At last, the doctor chanced to say that he wondered how I happened to get his pills in Natchez, “for,” said he, “I have no agent there as yet.”

“Oh!” I replied, “I always bought my pills at the drug stores.”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed the doctor, “then they are were all counterfeits! vile impositions! poisonous compounds! I never sell a pill to a druggist – I never permit an apothecary to handle one of my pills. But they counterfeit them by the bushel; the unprincipled, heartless, murderous impostors!”

I need not say I was surprised. Was it possible, then, that my imagination had done all this business, and that I had been cured by poisons which I supposed were Brandreth’s Pill? I confess I laughed heartily; and told the doctor that, after all, it seemed the counterfeits were as good as the real pills, provided the patient had sufficient faith.

The doctor was puzzled as well as vexed, but an idea struck him that soon enabled him to recover his usual equanimity.

“I’ll tell you what it is,” said he, “those Southern druggists have undoubtedly obtained the pills from me under false pretences. They have pretended to be planters, and have purchased pills from me in large quantities for use on the plantations, and then they have retailed the pills from their drug-shops.”

I laughed at this shrewd suggestion, and remarked: “This may be so, but I guess my imagination did the business!”

The doctor was uneasy, but he asked me as a favor to bring him one of the empty pill boxes which I had brought from the South. The next day, I complied with his request, and I will do the doctor justice to say that, on comparison, it proved as he had suspected; the pills were genuine, and although he had advertised that no druggist should sell them, they were so popular that druggists found it necessary to get them “by hook or by crook;” and the consequence was, I had the pleasure of a glorious laugh, and Doctor Brandreth experienced “a great scare.”

The doctor “made his pile” long ago, although he still devotes his personal attention to the “entirely vegetable and innocent pills, whose life-giving power no pen can describe.”

In 1849, the doctor was elected President of the Village of Sing Sing, N. Y. (where he still resides,) and was re-elected to the same office for seven consecutive years. In the same year, he was elected to the New York State Senate, and in 1859 was again elected.

Dr. Brandreth is a liberal man and a pleasant, entertaining, and edifying companion. He deserves all the success he has ever received. “Long may he wave!”

II. THE SPIRITUALISTS

CHAPTER IX

**THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS, THEIR RISE AND PROGRESS. –
SPIRITUAL ROPE-TYING. – MUSIC PLAYING. – CABINET SECRETS.
– “THEY CHOOSE DARKNESS RATHER THAN LIGHT,” ETC. – THE
SPIRITUAL HAND. – HOW THE THING IS DONE. – DR. W. F. VAN VLECK**

The Davenport Brothers are natives of Buffalo, N. Y., and in that city commenced their career as “mediums” about twelve years ago. They were then mere lads. For some time, their operations were confined to their own place, where, having obtained considerable notoriety through the press, they were visited by people from all parts of the country. But, in 1855, they were induced by John F. Coles, a very worthy spiritualist of New York City, to visit that metropolis, and there exhibit their powers. Under the management of Mr. Coles, they held “circles” afternoon and evening, for several days, in a small hall at 195 Bowery. The audience were seated next the walls, the principal space being required for the use of “the spirits.” The “manifestations” mostly consisted in the thrumming and seemingly rapid movement about the hall of several stringed instruments, the room having been made entirely dark, while the boys were supposed or asserted to be quietly seated at the table in the centre. Two guitars, with sometimes a banjo, were the instruments used, and the noise made by “the spirits” was about equal to the united honking of a large flock of wild geese. The manifestations were stunning as well as astonishing; for not only was the sense of hearing smitten by the dreadful sounds, but, sometimes, a member of the circle would get a “striking demonstration” over his head!

At the request of the “controlling spirit,” made through a horn, the hall was lighted at intervals during the entertainment, at which times the mediums could be seen seated at the table, looking very innocent and demure, as if they had never once thought of deceiving anybody. On one of these occasions, however, a policeman suddenly lighted the hall by means of a dark lantern, without having been specially called upon to do so; and the boys were clearly seen with instruments in their hands. They dropped them as soon as they could, and resumed their seats at the table. Satisfied that the thing was a humbug, the audience left in disgust; and the policeman was about to march the boys to the station-house on the charge of swindling, when he was prevailed upon to remain and farther test the matter. Left alone with them, and the three seated together at the table on which the instruments had been placed, he laid, at their request, a hand on each medium’s head; they then clasped both his arms with their hands. While they remained thus situated (as he supposed,) the room being dark, one of the instruments, with an infernal twanging of its strings, rose from the table and hit the policeman several times on the head; then a strange voice through the trumpet advised him not to interfere with the work of the spirits by persecuting the mediums! Considerably astonished, if not positively scared, he took his hat and left, fully persuaded that there was “something in it!”

The boys produced the manifestations by grasping the neck of the instrument, swinging it around, and thrusting it into different parts of the open space of the room, at the same time vibrating the strings with the fore-finger. The faster the finger passed over the strings, the more rapidly the instrument seemed to move. Two hands could thus use as many instruments.

When sitting with a person at the table, as they did with the policeman, one hand could be taken off the investigator’s arm without his knowing it, by gently increasing, at the same time, the pressure of the other hand. It was an easy matter then to raise and thrum the instrument or talk through the horn.

About a dozen gentlemen – several of whom were members of the press – had a private séance with the boys one afternoon, on which occasion “the spirits” ventured upon an extra “manifestation.” All took seats at one side of a long, high table – the position of the mediums being midway of the row. This time, a little, dim, ghostly gaslight was allowed in the room. What seemed to be a hand soon appeared, partly above the edge of the vacant side of the table, and opposite the “mediums.” One excited spiritualist present said he could see the finger-nails.

John F. Coles – who had for several days, suspected the innocence of the boys – sprang from his seat, turned up the gaslight, and pounced on the elder boy, who was found to have a nicely stuffed glove drawn partly on to the toe of his boot. That, then, was the spirit-hand! The nails that the imaginative spiritualist thought he saw were not on the fingers. The boy alleged that the spirits made him attempt the deception.

The father of these boys, who had accompanied them to New York, took them home immediately after that exposure. In Buffalo, they continued to hold “circles,” hoping to retrieve their lost reputation as good mediums – by being, not more honest, but more cautious. To prevent any one getting hold of them while operating, they hit upon the plan of passing a rope through a button-hole of each gentleman’s coat, the ends to be held by a trusty person – assigning, as a reason for that arrangement, that it would then be known no one in the circle could assist in producing the manifestations. The plan did not always work well, however; for a skeptic would sometimes cut the rope, and then pounce upon “the spirit” – that is, if he didn’t happen to miss that individual, on account of the darkness and while trying to avoid a collision with the instruments.

To secure greater immunity from detection, and to enable them to exhibit in large halls which could not easily be darkened, the boys finally fixed upon a “cabinet” as the best thing in which to work. They had, some time before, made the “rope-test” a feature of their exhibitions; and in their cabinet-show they depended for success in deceiving entirely upon the presumption of the audience that their hands were so secured with ropes as to prevent their playing upon the musical instruments, or doing whatever else the spirits were assumed to do.

Their cabinet is about six feet high, six feet long, and two and a half feet deep, the front consisting of three doors, opening outward. In each end is a seat, with holes through which the ropes can be passed in securing the mediums. In the upper part of the middle door is a lozenge-shaped aperture, curtained on the inside with black muslin or oilcloth. The bolts are on the inside of the doors.

The mediums are generally first tied by a committee of two gentlemen appointed from the audience. The doors of the cabinet are then closed, those at the ends first, and then the middle one, the bolt of which is reached by the manager through the aperture.

By the time the end doors are closed and bolted, the Davenport, in many instances, have succeeded in loosening the knots next their wrists, and in slipping their hands out, the latter being then exhibited at the aperture. Lest the hands should be recognized as belonging to the mediums, they are kept in a constant shaking motion while in view; and to make the hands look large or small, they spread or press together the fingers. With that peculiar rapid motion imparted to them, four hands in the aperture will appear to be half-a-dozen. A lady’s flesh colored kid glove, nicely stuffed with cotton, is sometimes exhibited as a female hand – a critical observation of it never being allowed. It does not take the medium long to draw the knots close to their wrists again. They are then ready to be inspected by the Committee, who report them tied as they were left. Supposing them to have been securely bound all the while, those who witness the show are very naturally astonished.

Sometimes, after being tied by a committee, the mediums cannot readily extricate their hands and get them back as they were; in which case they release themselves entirely from the ropes before the doors are again opened, concluding to wait till after “the spirits” have bound them, before showing hands or making music.

It is a common thing for these impostors to give the rope between their hands a twist while those limbs are being bound; and that movement, if dexterously made, while the attention of the

committee-men is momentarily diverted, is not likely to be detected. Reversing that movement will let the hand out.

The great point with the Davenports in tying themselves is, to have a knot next their wrists that looks solid, “fair and square,” at the same time that they can slip it and get their hands out in a moment. There are several ways of forming such a knot, one of which I will attempt to describe. In the middle of a rope a square knot is tied, loosely at first, so that the ends of the rope can be tucked through, in opposite directions, below the knot, and the latter is then drawn tight. There are then two loops – which should be made small – through which the hands are to pass after the rest of the tying is done. Just sufficient slack is left to admit of the hands passing through the loops, which, lastly, are drawn close to the wrists, the knot coming between the latter. No one, from the appearance of such a knot, would suspect it could be slipped. The mediums thus tied can, immediately after the committee have inspected the knots, and closed the doors, show hands or play upon musical instruments, and in a few seconds be, to all appearance, firmly tied again.

If flour has been placed in their hands, it makes no difference as to their getting those members out of or into the ropes; but, to show hands at the aperture, or to make a noise on the musical instruments, it is necessary that they should get the flour out of one hand into the other. The moisture of the hand and squeezing, packs the flour into a lump, which can be laid into the other hand and returned without losing any. The little flour that adheres to the empty hand can be wiped off in the pantaloons pocket. The mediums seldom if ever take flour in their hands while they are in the bonds put upon them by the committee. The principal part of the show is after the tying has been done in their own way. Wm. Fay, who accompanies the Davenports, is thus fixed when the hypothetical spirits take the coat off his back.

As I before remarked, there are several ways in which the mediums tie themselves. They always do it, however, in such a manner that, though the tying looks secure, they can immediately get one or both hands out. Let committees insist upon untying the knots of the spirits, whether the mediums are willing or not. A little critical observation will enable them to learn the trick.

To make this subject of tying clearer, I will repeat that the Davenports always untie themselves by using their hands; as they are able in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, however impossible it may seem, to release their hands by loosening the knots next their wrists. Sometimes they do this by twisting the rope between their wrists; sometimes it is by keeping their muscles as tense as possible during the tying, so that when relaxed there shall be some slack. Most “committees” know so little about tying, that anybody, by a little pulling, slipping, and wriggling, could slip his hands out of their knots.

A violin, bell, and tambourine, with perhaps a guitar and drum, are the instruments used by the Davenports in the cabinet. The one who plays the violin holds the bell in his hand with the bow. The other chap beats the tambourine on his knee, and has a hand for something else.

The “mediums” frequently allow a person to remain with them, providing he will let his hands be tied to their knees, the operators having previously been tied by “the spirits.” The party who ventures upon that experiment is apt to be considerably “mussed up,” as “the spirits” are not very gentle in their manipulations.

To expose all the tricks of these impostors would require more space than I can afford at present. They have exhibited throughout the Northern States and the Canadas; but never succeeded very well pecuniarily until about two years ago, when they employed an agent, who advertised them in such a way as to attract public attention. In September last, they went to England, where they have since created considerable excitement.

If the hands of these boys were tied close against the side of their cabinet, the ropes passing through holes and fastened on the outside, I think “the spirits” would always fail to work.

Dr. W. F. Van Vleck, of Ohio, to whom I am indebted for some of the facts contained in this chapter, can beat the Davenport brothers at their own game. In order that he might the better learn

the various methods pursued by the professed “mediums” in deceiving the public, Dr. Van Vleck entered into the medium-business himself, and by establishing confidential relations with those of the profession whose acquaintance he made, he became duly qualified to expose them.

He was accepted and indorsed by leading spiritualists in different parts of the country, as a good medium, who performed the most remarkable spiritual wonders. As the worthy doctor practiced this innocent deception on the professed mediums solely in order that he might thus be able to expose their blasphemous impositions, the public will scarcely dispute that in this case the end justified the means. I suppose it is not possible for any professed medium to puzzle or deceive the doctor. He is up to all their “dodges,” because he has learned in their school. Mediums always insist upon certain conditions, and those conditions are just such as will best enable them to deceive the senses and pervert the judgment.

Anderson “the Wizard of the North,” and other conjurers in England, gave the Davenports battle, but the “prestidigitators” did not reap many laurels. Conjurers are no more likely to understand the tricks of the mediums than any other person is. Before a trick can be exposed it must be learned. Dr. Van Vleck, having learned “the ropes,” is competent to expose them; and he is doing it in many interesting public lectures and illustrations.

If the Davenports were exhibiting simply as jugglers, I might admire their dexterity, and have nothing to say against them; but when they presumptuously pretend to deal in “things spiritual,” I consider it my duty, while treating of humbugs, to do this much at least in exposing them.

CHAPTER X

THE SPIRIT-RAPPING AND MEDIUM HUMBUGS. – THEIR ORIGIN. – HOW THE THING IS DONE. – \$500 REWARD

The “spirit-rapping” humbug was started in Hydesville, New York, about seventeen years ago, by several daughters of a Mr. Fox, living in that place. These girls discovered that certain exercises of their anatomy would produce mysterious sounds – mysterious to those who heard them, simply because the means of their production were not apparent. Reports of this wonder soon went abroad, and the Fox family were daily visited by people from different sections of the country – all having a greed for the marvelous. Not long after the strange sounds were first heard, some one suggested that they were, perhaps, produced by spirits; and a request was made for a certain number of raps, if that suggestion was correct. The specified number were immediately heard. A plan was then proposed by means of which communications might be received from “the spirits.” An investigator would repeat the alphabet, writing down whatever letters were designated by the “raps.” Sentences were thus formed – the orthography, however, being decidedly bad.

What purported to be the spirit of a murdered peddler, gave an account of his “taking off.” He said that his body was buried beneath that very house, in a corner of the cellar; that he had been killed by a former occupant of the premises. A peddler really had disappeared, somewhat mysteriously, from that part of the country some time before; and ready credence was given the statements thus spelled out through the “raps.” Digging to the depth of eight feet in the cellar did not disclose any “dead corpus,” or even the remains of one. Soon after that, the missing peddler reappeared in Hydesville, still “clothed with mortality,” and having a new assortment of wares to sell.

That the “raps” were produced by disembodied spirits many firmly believed. False communications were attributed to evil spirits. The answers to questions were as often wrong as right; and only right when the answer could be easily guessed, or inferred from the nature of the question itself.

The Fox family moved to Rochester, New York, soon after the rapping-humbug was started; and it was there that their first public effort was made. A committee was appointed to investigate the matter, most of whom reported adversely to the claims of the “mediums;” though all of them were puzzled to know how the thing was done. In Buffalo, where the Foxes subsequently let their spirits flow, a committee of doctors reported that these loosely-constructed girls produced the “raps” by snapping their toe and knee joints. That theory, though very much ridiculed by the spiritualists then and since, was correct, as further developments proved.

Mrs. Culver, a relative of the Fox girls, made a solemn deposition before a magistrate, to the effect that one of the girls had instructed her how to produce the “raps,” on condition that she (Mrs. C.) should not communicate a knowledge of the matter to any one. Mrs. Culver was a good Christian woman, and she felt it her duty – as the deception had been carried so far – to expose the matter. She actually produced the “raps,” in presence of the magistrate, and explained the manner of making them.

Doctor Von Vleck – to whom I referred in connection with my exposition of the Davenport imposture – produces very loud “raps” before his audiences, and so modulates them that they will seem to be at any desired point in his vicinity; yet not a movement of his body betrays the fact that the sounds are caused by him.

The Fox family found that the rapping business would be made to pay; and so they continued it, with varying success, for a number of years, making New York city their place of residence and

principal field of operation. I believe that none of them are now in the “spiritual line.” Margaret Fox, the youngest of the rappers, has for some time been a member of the Roman Catholic Church.

From the very commencement of spiritualism, there has been a constantly increasing demand for “spiritual” wonders, to meet which numerous “mediums” have been “developed.”

Many, who otherwise would not be in the least distinguished, have become “mediums” in order to obtain notoriety, if nothing more.

Communicating by “raps” was a slow process; so some of the mediums took to writing spasmodically; others talked in a “trance” – all under the influence of spirits!

Mediumship has come to be a profession steadily pursued by quite a number of persons, who get their living by it.

There are various classes of “mediums,” the operations of each class being confined to a particular department of “spiritual” humbuggery.

Some call themselves “test mediums;” and, by insisting upon certain formulas, they succeed in astonishing, if they don’t convince most of them who visit them. It is by this class that the public is most likely to be deceived.

There is a person by the name of J. V. Mansfield, who has been called by spiritualists the “Great Spirit Postmaster,” his specialty being the answering of sealed letters addressed to spirits. The letters are returned – some of them at least – to the writers without appearing to have been opened, accompanied by answers purporting to be written through Mansfield by the spirits addressed. Such of these letters as are sealed with gum-arabic merely, can be steamed open, and the envelopes resealed and reglazed as they were before. If sealing-wax has been used, a sharp, thin blade will enable the medium to nicely cut off the seal by splitting the paper under it; and then, after a knowledge of the contents of the letter is arrived at, the seal can be replaced in its original position, and made fast with gum-arabic. Not more than one out of a hundred would be likely to observe that the seal had ever been tampered with. The investigator opens the envelope, when returned to him, at the end, preserving the sealed part intact, in order to show his friends that the letter was answered without being opened!

Another method of the medium is, to slit open the envelope at the end with a sharp knife, and afterward stick it together again with gum, rubbing the edge slightly as soon as the gum is dry. If the job is nicely done, a close observer would hardly perceive it.

Mr. Mansfield does not engage to answer all letters; those unanswered being too securely sealed for him to open without detection. To secure the services of the “Great Spirit-Postmaster,” a fee of five dollars must accompany your letter to the spirits; and the money is retained whether an answer is returned or not.

Rather high postage that!

Several years since, a gentleman living in Buffalo, N. Y., addressed some questions to one of his spirit-friends, and inclosed them, together with a single hair and a grain of sand, in an envelope, which he sealed so closely that no part of the contents could escape while being transmitted by mail. The questions were sent to Mr. Mansfield and answers requested through his “mediumship.” The envelope containing the questions was soon returned, with answers to the letter. The former did not appear to have been opened. Spreading a large sheet of blank paper on a table before him, the gentleman opened the envelope and placed its contents on the table. The hair and grain of sand were not there.

Time and again has Mansfield been convicted of imposture, yet he still prosecutes his nefarious business.

The “Spirit-Postmaster” fails to get answers to such questions as these:

“Where did you die?”

“When?”

“Who attended you in your last illness?”

“What were your last words?”

“How many were present at your death?”

But if the questions are of such a nature as the following, answers are generally obtained:

“Are you happy?”

“Are you often near me?”

“And can you influence me?”

“Have you changed your religious notions since entering the spirit-world?”

It is to be observed that the questions which the “Spirit-Postmaster” can answer *require no knowledge of facts about the applicant*, while those which he cannot answer, do require it.

Address, for instance, your spirit-father without mentioning his name, and the name will not be given in connection with the reply purporting to come from him – unless the medium knows your family.

I will write a series of questions addressed to one of my spirit-friends, inclose them in an envelope, and if Mr. Mansfield or any other professed medium will answer those questions pertinently in my presence, and without touching the envelope, I will give to such party five hundred dollars, and think I have got the worth of my money.

CHAPTER XI

THE “BALLOT-TEST.” – THE OLD GENTLEMAN AND HIS “DISEASED” RELATIVES. – A “HUNGRY SPIRIT.” – “PALMING” A BALLOT. – REVELATIONS ON STRIPS OF PAPER

An aptitude for deception is all the capital that a person requires in order to become a “spirit-medium;” or, at least, to gain the reputation of being one. Backing up the pretence to mediumship with a show of something mysterious, is all-sufficient to enlist attention, and insure the making of converts.

One of the most noted of the mediumistic fraternity – whose name I do not choose to give at present – steadily pursued his business, for several years, in a room in Broadway, in this city, and succeeded not only in humbugging a good many people, but in what was more important to him – acquiring quite an amount of money. His mode of operating was “the ballot-test,” and was as follows:

Medium and investigator being seated opposite each other at a table, the latter was handed several slips of blank paper, with the request that he write the first (or Christian) names – one on each paper – of several of his deceased relatives, which being done, he was desired to touch the folded papers, one after the other, till one should be designated, by three tips of the table, as containing the name of the spirit who would communicate. The selected paper was laid aside, and the others thrown upon the floor, the investigator being further requested to write on as many different pieces of paper as contained the names, and the relation (to himself) of the spirits bearing them. Supposing the names written were Mary, Joseph, and Samuel, being, respectively, the investigator’s mother, father, and brother. The last-named class would be secondly written, and one of them designated by three tips of the table, as in the first instance. The respective ages of the deceased parties, at the time of their decease, would also be written, and one of them selected. The first “test” consisted in having the selected name, relationship, and age correspond – that is, refer to the same party; to ascertain which the investigator was desired to look at them, and state if it was the case. If the correspondence was affirmed, a communication was soon given, with the selected name, relationship, and age appended. Questions, written in the presence of the medium, were answered relevantly, if not pertinently. Investigators generally did their part of the writing in a guarded manner, interposing their left hand between the paper on which they wrote and the medium’s eyes; and they were very much astonished when they received a communication, couched in affectionate terms, with the names of their spirit-friends attached.

By long practice, the medium was enabled to determine what the investigator wrote, by the motion of his hand in writing. Nine out of ten wrote the relationship first that corresponded with the first name they had written. Therefore, if the medium selected the first that was written of each class, they in most cases referred to the same spirit. He waited till the investigator had affirmed the coincidence, before proceeding; for he did not like to write a communication, appending to it, for instance, “Your Uncle John,” when it ought to be “Your Father John.” The reason he did not desire inquirers to write the surnames of their spirit-friends, was this: almost all Christian names are common, and he was familiar with the motions which the hand must make in writing them; but there are comparatively few people who have the same surnames, and to determine them would have been more difficult. No fact was communicated that had not been surreptitiously gleaned from the investigator.

An old gentleman, apparently from the country, one day entered the room of this medium and expressed a desire for a “spirit communication.”

He was told to take a seat at the table, and to write the names of his deceased relatives. The medium, like many others, incorrectly pronounced the term “deceased,” the same as “diseased” – sounding the s like z.

The old gentleman carefully adjusted his “specs” and did what was required of him. A name and relationship having been selected from those written, the investigator was desired to examine and state if they referred to one party.

“Wal, I declare they do!” said he. “But I say Mister, what has them papers to do with a sperit communication?”

“You will see, directly,” replied the medium.

Whereupon the latter spasmodically wrote a “communication,” which read somewhat as follows:

“My Dear Husband: – I am very glad to be able to address you through this channel. Keep on investigating, and you will soon be convinced of the great fact of spirit-intercourse. I am happy in my spirit-home; patiently awaiting the time when you will join me here, etc. Your loving wife, Betsey.”

“Good gracious! But my old woman can’t be dead,” said the investigator, “for I left her tu hum!”

“Not dead!” exclaimed the medium. “Did I not tell you to write the names of deceased relatives?”

“Diseased!” returned the old man; “Wal, she ain’t anything else, for she’s had the rumatiz orfully for six months!”

Saying which, he took his hat and left, concluding that it was not worth while to “keep on investigating” any longer at that time.

This same medium, not long since, visited Great Britain for the purpose of practicing his profession there.

In one of the cities of Scotland, some shrewd investigator divined that he was able to nearly guess from the motion of the hand what questions were written.

“Are you happy?” being a question commonly asked the “spirits,” one of these gentlemen varied it by asking:

“Are you hungry?”

The reply was, an emphatic affirmative.

They tricked the trickster in other ways; one of which was to write the names of mortals instead of spirits. It made no difference, however, as to getting a “communication.”

To tip the table without apparent muscular exertion, this impostor placed his hands on it in such a way that the “pisiform bone” (which may be felt projecting at the lower corner of the palm, opposite the thumb) pressed against the edge. By pushing, the table tipped from him, it being prevented from sliding by little spikes in the legs of the side opposite the operator.

There are other “ballot-test mediums,” as they are called, who have a somewhat different method of cheating. They, too, require investigators to write the names – in full, however – of their spirit-friends; the slips of paper containing the names, to be folded and placed on a table. The medium then seizes one of the “ballots,” and asks:

“Is the spirit present whose name is on this?”

Dropping that and taking another:

“On this?”

So he handles all the papers without getting a response. During this time, however, he has dexterously “palmed” one of the ballots, which – while telling the investigator to be patient, as the spirits would doubtless soon come – he opens with his left hand, on his knee, under the edge of the table.

A mere glance enables him to read the name. Refolding the paper, and retaining it in his hand, he remarks:

“I will touch the ballots again, and perhaps one of them will be designated this time.”

Dropping among the rest the one he had “palmed,” he soon picks it up again, whereat three loud “raps” are heard.

“That paper,” says he to the investigator, “probably contains the name of the spirit who rapped; please hold it in your hand.”

Then seizing a pencil, he writes a name, which the investigator finds to be the one contained in the selected paper.

If the ballots are few in number, a blank is put with the pile, when the medium “palms” one, else the latter might be missed.

It seems the spirits can never give their names without being reminded of them by the investigator, and then they are so doubtful of their own identity that they have but little to say for themselves.

One medium to whom I have already alluded, after a sojourn of several years in California – whither he went from Boston, seeking whom he might humbug – has now returned to the East, and is operating in this city. Besides answering sealed letters, he furnishes written “communications” to parties visiting him at his rooms – a “sitting,” however, being granted to but one person at a time. His terms are only five dollars an hour.

Seated at a table in a part of the room where is the most light, he hands the investigator a strip of blank, white paper, rather thin and light of texture, about a yard long and six inches wide, requesting him to write across one end of it a single question, addressed to a spirit-friend, then to sign his own name, and fold the paper once or twice over what he has written. For instance:

“Brother Samuel: – Will you communicate with me through this medium? William Franklin.”

To learn what has been written, the medium lays the paper down on the table, and repeatedly rubs the fingers of his right hand over the folds made by the inquirer. If that does not render the writing visible through the one thickness of paper that covers it, he slightly raises the edge of the folds with his left hand while he continues to rub with his right; and that admits of the light shining through, so that the writing can be read. The other party is so situated that the writing is not visible to him through the paper, and he is not likely to presume that it is visible to the medium; the latter having assigned as a reason for his manipulations that spirits were able to read the questions only by means of the odyllic, magnetic, or some other emanation from the ends of his fingers!

Having learned the question, of course the medium can reply to it, giving the name of the spirit addressed; but before doing so, he doubles the two folds made by the inquirer, and, for a show of consistency, again rubs his fingers over the paper. Then more folds and more rubbing – all the folding, additional to the inquirer’s, being done to keep the latter from observing, when he comes to read the answer, that it was possible for the medium to read the question through the two folds of paper. The answer is written upon the same strip of paper that accompanies the question.

The medium requires the investigator to write his questions each on a different strip of paper; and before answering, he every time manipulates the paper in the way I have described. When rubbing his fingers over the question, he often shuts the eye which is toward the inquirer – which prevents suspicion; but the other eye is open wide enough to enable him to read the question through the paper.

Should a person write a test-question, the medium could not answer it correctly even if he did see it. In his “communications” he uses many terms of endearment, and if possible flatters the recipient out of his common-sense, and into the belief that “after all there may be something in it!”

Should the inquirer “smell a rat,” and take measures to prevent the medium from learning, in the way I have stated, what question is written, he (the medium) gets nervous and discontinues the “sitting,” alleging that conditions are unfavorable for spirit-communication.

CHAPTER XII

SPIRITUAL “LETTERS ON THE ARM.” – HOW TO MAKE THEM YOURSELF. – THE TAMBOURINE AND RING FEATS. – DEXTER’S DANCING HATS. – PHOSPHORESCENT OIL. – SOME SPIRITUAL SLANG

The mediums produce “blood-red letters on the arm” in a very simple way. It is done with a pencil, or some blunt-pointed instrument, it being necessary to bear on hard while the movement of writing is being executed. The pressure, though not sufficient to abrade the skin, forces the blood from the capillary vessels over which the pencil passes, and where, when the reaction takes place, an unusual quantity of blood gathers and becomes plainly visible through the cuticle. Gradually, as an equilibrium of the circulation is restored, the letters pass away.

This “manipulation” is generally produced by the medium in connection with the ballot-test. Having learned the name of an investigator’s spirit-friend, in the manner stated in a previous article, the investigator is set to writing some other names. While he is thus occupied, the medium quickly slips up his sleeve under the table, and writes on his arm the name he has learned.

Try the experiment yourself, reader. Hold out your left arm; clench the fist so as to harden the muscle a little, and write your name on the skin with a blunt pencil or any similar point, in letters say three-quarters of an inch long, pressing firmly enough to feel a little pain. Rub the place briskly a dozen times; this brings out the letters quickly, in tolerably-distinct red lines.

On thick, tough skins it is difficult to produce letters in this way. They might also be outlined more deeply by sharply pricking in dots along the lines of the desired letters.

Among others who seek to gain money and notoriety by the exercise of their talents for “spiritual” humbuggery, is a certain woman, whom I will not further designate, but whose name is at the service of any proper person, and who exhibited not long since in Brooklyn and New York. This woman is accompanied by her husband, who is a confederate in the playing of her “little game.”

She seats herself at a table, which has been placed against the wall of the room. The audience is so seated as to form a semicircle, at one end of which, and near enough to the medium to be able to shake hands with her, or nearly so, sits her husband, with perhaps an accommodating spiritualist next to him. Then the medium, in an assumed voice, engages in a miscellaneous talk, ending with a request that some one sit by her and hold her hand.

A skeptic is permitted to do that. When thus placed, skeptic is directly between the medium and her husband, and with his back to the latter. The husband plays spirit, and with his right hand – which is free, the other only being held by the accommodating spiritualist – pats the investigator on the head, thumps him with a guitar and other instruments, and may be pulls his hair.

The medium assumes all this to be done by a spirit, because her hands are held and she could not do it! Profound reasoning! If any one suggests that the husband had better sit somewhere else, the medium will not hear to it – “he is a part of the battery,” and the necessary conditions must not be interfered with. Sure enough! Accommodating spiritualist also says he holds husband fast.

A tambourine-frame, without the head, and an iron ring, large enough to pass over one’s arm, are exhibited to the audience. Medium says the spirits have such power over matter as to be able to put one or both those things on to her arm while some one holds her hands.

The party who is privileged to hold her hands on such occasion, has to grope his way to her in the dark. Having reached her, she seizes his hands, and passes one of them down her neck and along her arm, saying:

“Now you know there is no ring already there!”

Soon after he feels the tambourine-frame or ring slide over his hand and on to his arm. A light is produced in order that he may see it is there.

When he took her hands he felt the frame or ring – or at any rate, a frame or ring – under his elbow on the table, from which place it was pulled by some power just before it went on to his arm. Such is his report to the audience. But in fact, the medium has two frames, or else a tambourine, and a tambourine-frame. She allows the investigator to feel one of these.

She has, however, previous to his taking her hands, put one arm and head through the frame she uses; so that of course he does not feel it when she passes his hand down one side of her neck and over one of her arms, as it is under that arm. Her husband pulls the tambourine from under the investigator's elbow; then the medium gets her head back through the frame, leaving it on her arm, or sliding it on to his, and the work is done!

She has also two iron rings. One of them she puts over her arm and the point of her shoulder, where it snugly remains, covered with a cape which she persists in wearing on these occasions, till the investigator takes her hands (in the dark) and feels the other ring under his elbows; then the husband disposes of the ring on the table, and the medium works the other one down on to her arm. The audience saw but one ring, and the person sitting with the medium thought he had that under his elbow till it was pulled away and put on the arm!

Some years ago, a man by the name of Dexter, who kept an oyster and liquor saloon on Bleeker street, devised a somewhat novel exhibition for the purpose of attracting custom. A number of hats, placed on the floor of his saloon, danced (or bobbed up and down) in time to music. His place was visited by a number of the leading spiritualists of New York, several of whom were heard to express a belief that the hats were moved by spirits! Dexter, however, did not claim to be a medium, though he talked vaguely of “the power of electricity,” when questioned with regard to his exhibition. Besides making the hats dance, he would (apparently) cause a violin placed in a box on the floor to sound, by waving his hands over it.

The hats were moved by a somewhat complicated arrangement of wires, worked by a confederate, out of sight. These wires were attached to levers, and finally came up through the floor, through small holes hidden from observation by the sawdust strewn there, as is common in such places.

The violin in the box did not sound at all. It was another violin, under the floor, that was heard. It is not easy for a person to exactly locate a sound when the cause is not apparent. In short, Mr. Dexter's operations may be described as only consisting of a little well-managed Dexterity!

A young man “out West,” claiming to be influenced by spirits, astonished people by reading names, telling time by watches, etc., in a dark room. He sat at a centre-table, which was covered with a cloth, in the middle of the room. Investigators sat next the walls. The name of a spirit, for instance, would be written and laid on a table, when in a short time he pronounced it. To tell the time by a watch, he required it to be placed on the table, or in his hand. With the tablecloth over his head, a bottle of phosphorated oil enabled him to see, when not the least glimmer of light was visible to others in the room.

If any of the “spiritualist” philosophers were to be asked what is the philosophy of these proceedings, he would probably reply with a mess of balderdash pretty much like the following:

“There is an infinitesimal influence of sympathy between mind and matter, which permeates all beings, and pervades all the delicate niches and interstices of human intelligence. This sympathetic influence working upon the affined intelligence of an affinity, coagulates itself into a corporiety, approximating closely to the adumbration of mortality in its highest admensuration, at last accumulating in an accumulation.”

On these great philosophic principles it will not be difficult to comprehend the following actual quotation from the Spiritual Telegraph:

“In the twelfth hour, the holy procedure shall crown the Triune Creator with the most perfect disclosive illumination. Then shall the creation in the effulgence above the divine seraphemal,

arise into the dome of the disclosure in one comprehensive revolving galaxy of supreme created beatitudes.”

That those not surcharged with the divine afflatus may be able to get at the meaning of the above paragraph, it is translated thus:

“Then shall all the blockheads in the nincompoopdome of disclosive procedure above the all-fired leather-fungus of Peter Nephninnygo, the gooseberry grinder, rise into the dome of the disclosure until coequaled and coexistensive and conglomerate lumuxes in one comprehensive mux shall assimilate into nothing, and revolve like a bob-tailed pussy cat after the space where the tail was.”

What power there is in spiritualism!

I shall be glad to receive, for publication, authentic information, from all parts of the world in regard to the doings of pretended spiritualists, especially those who perform for money. It is high time that the credulous portion of our community should be saved from the deceptions, delusions, and swindles of these blasphemous mountebanks and impostors.

CHAPTER XIII

DEMONSTRATIONS BY “SAMPSON” UNDER A TABLE. – A MEDIUM WHO IS HANDY WITH HER FEET. – EXPOSÉ OF ANOTHER OPERATOR IN DARK CIRCLES

Considerable excitement has been created in various parts of the West by a young woman, whose name need not here be given, who pretends to be a “medium for physical manifestations.” She is rather tall and quite muscular, her general manner and expression indicating innocence and simplicity.

The “manifestations” exhibited by her purport to be produced by Samson, the Hebrew champion and anti-philistine.

In preparing for her exhibition, she has a table placed sideways against the wall of the room, and covered with a thick blanket that reaches to the floor. A large tin dishpan, with handles (or ears,) a German accordeon, and a tea-bell are placed under the table, at the end of which she seats herself in such a way that her body is against the top, and her lower limbs underneath, her skirts being so adjusted as to fill the space between the end legs of the table, and at the same time allow free play for her pedal extremities. The blanket, at the end where she sits, comes to her waist and hangs down to the floor on each side of her chair. The space under the table is thus made dark – a necessary condition, it is claimed – and all therein concealed from view. The “medium” then folds her arms, looks careless, and the “manifestations” commence. The accordeon is sounded, no music being executed upon it, and the bell rung at the same time. Then the dishpan receives such treatment that it makes a terrible noise. Some one is requested to go to the end of the table opposite the “medium,” put his hand under the blanket, take hold of the dishpan, and pull. He does so, and finds that some power is opposing him, holding the dishpan to one place. Not being rude, he forbears to jerk with all his force, but retires to his seat. The table rises several inches and comes down “kerslap,” then it tips forward a number of times; then one end jumps up and down in time to music, if there is any one present to play; loud raps are heard upon it, and the hypothetical Samson has quite a lively time generally. Some of the mortals present, one at a time, put their fingers, by request, against the blankets, through which those members are gingerly squeezed by what might be a hand, if there was one under the table. A person being told to take hold of the top of the table at the ends, he does so, and finds it so heavy that he can barely lift it. Setting it down, he is told to raise it again several inches; and at the second lifting it is no heavier than one would naturally judge such a piece of furniture to be. Another person is asked to lift the end furthest from the medium; having done so, it suddenly becomes quite weighty, and, relaxing his hold, it comes down with much force upon the floor. Thus, by the power – exercised beneath the table – of an assumed spirit, that piece of cabinet-ware becomes heavy or light, and is moved in various ways, the medium not appearing to do it.

In addition to her other “fixins,” this medium has a spirit-dial, so called, on which are letters of the alphabet, the numerals, and such words as “Yes,” “No,” and “Don’t know.” The whole thing is so arranged that the pulling of a string makes an index hand go the circuit of the dial-face, and it can be made to stop at any of the characters or words thereon. This “spirit-dial” is placed on the table, near the end furthest from the medium, the string passing through a hole and hanging beneath. In the end of the string there is a knot. While the medium remains in the same position in which she sat when the other “manifestations” were produced, communications are spelled out through the dial, the index being moved by some power under the table that pulls the string. A coil-spring makes the

index fly back to the starting-point, when the power is relaxed at each indication of a character or word. The orthography of these “spirits” is “bad if not worse.”

Now for an explanation of the various “manifestations” that I have enumerated.

The medium is simply handy with her feet. To sound the accordeon and ring the bell at the same time, she has to take off one of her shoes or slippers, the latter being generally worn by her on these occasions. That done, she gets the handle of the tea-bell between the toes of her right foot, through a hole in the stocking, then putting the heel of the same foot on the keys of the accordeon, and the other foot into the strap on the bellows part of that instrument, she easily sounds it, the motion necessary to do this also causing the bell to ring. She can readily pass her heels over the keys to produce different notes. She is thus able to make sounds on the accordeon that approximate to the very simple tune of “Bounding Billows,” and that is the extent of her musical ability when only using her “pedals.”

To get a congress-gaiter off the foot without using the hands is quite easy; but how to get one on again, those members not being employed to do it, would puzzle most people. It is not difficult to do, however, if a cord has been attached to the strap of the gaiter and tied to the leg above the calf. The cord should be slack, and that will admit of the gaiter coming off. To get it on, the toe has to be worked into the top of it, and then pulling on the cord with the toe of the other foot will accomplish the rest.

The racket with the dishpan is made by putting the toe of the foot into one of the handles or ears, and beating the pan about. By keeping the toe in this handle and putting the other foot into the pan, the operator can “stand a pull” from an investigator, who reaches under the blanket and takes hold of the other handle.

To raise the table, the “medium” puts her knees under and against the frame of it, then lifts her heels, pressing the toes against the floor, at the same time bearing with her arms on the end. To make the table tip forward, one knee only is pressed against the frame at the back side. The raps are made with the toe of the medium’s shoe against the leg, frame, or top of the table.

What feels like a hand pressing the investigator’s fingers when he puts them against the blanket, is nothing more than the medium’s feet, the big toe of one foot doing duty for a thumb, and all the toes of the other foot being used to imitate fingers. The pressure of these, through a thick blanket, cannot well be distinguished from that of a hand. When this experiment is to be made, the medium wears slippers that she can readily get off her feet.

To make the table heavy, the operator presses her knees outwardly against the legs of the table, and then presses down in opposition to the party who is lifting, or she presses her knees against that surface of the legs of the table that is toward her, while her feet are hooked around the lower part of the legs; that gives her a leverage, by means of which she can make the whole table or the end furthest from her seem quite heavy, and if the person lifting it suddenly relaxes his hold, it will come down with a forcible bang to the floor.

To work the “spirit-dial,” the medium has only to press the string with the toe of her foot against the top of the table, and slide it (the string) along till the index points at the letter or word she wishes to indicate. The frame of the dial is beveled, the face declining toward the medium, so that she has no difficulty in observing where the index points.

After concluding her performances under the table, this medium sometimes moves her chair about two feet back and sits with her side toward the end of the table, with one leg of which, however, the skirt of her dress comes in contact. Under cover of the skirt she then hooks her foot around the leg of the table and draws it toward her. This is done without apparent muscular exertion, while she is engaged in conversation; and parties present are humbugged into the belief that the table was moved without “mortal contact” – so they report to outsiders.

This medium has a “manager,” and he does his best in managing the matter, to prevent “Samson being caught” in the act of cheating. The medium, too, is vigilant, notwithstanding her appearance of

carelessness and innocent simplicity. A sudden rising of the blanket once exposed to view her pedal extremities in active operation.

Another of the “Dark Circle” mediums gets a good deal of sympathy on account of her “delicate health.” Her health is not so delicate, however, as to prevent her from laboring hard to humbug people with “physical demonstrations.” She operates only in private, in presence of a limited number of people.

A circle being formed, the hands of all the members are joined except at one place where a table intervenes. Those sitting next to this table place a hand upon it, the other hand of each of these parties being joined with the circle. The medium takes a position close by the table, and during the manifestations is supposed to momentarily touch with her two hands the hands of those parties sitting next to the table. Of course, she could accomplish little or nothing if she allowed her hands to be constantly held by investigators; so she hit upon the plan mentioned above, to make the people present believe that the musical instruments are not sounded by her. These instruments are within her reach; and instead of touching the hands of those next the table with both her hands, as supposed, she touches, alternately, their hands with but one of hers, the other she expertly uses in sounding the instruments.

Several years ago, at one of the circles of this medium, in St. John’s, Mich., a light was suddenly introduced, and she was seen in the act of doing what she had asserted to be done by the “spirits.” She has also been exposed as an impostor in other places.

As I have said before, the mediums always insist on having such “conditions” as will best enable them to deceive the senses and mislead the judgment.

If there were a few more “detectives” like Doctor Von Vleck, the whole mediumistic fraternity would soon “come to grief.”

CHAPTER XIV

SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPHING. – COLORADO JEWETT AND THE SPIRIT-PHOTOGRAPHS OF GENERAL JACKSON, HENRY CLAY, DANIEL WEBSTER, STEPHEN A. DOUGLAS, NAPOLEON BONAPARTE, ETC. – A LADY OF DISTINCTION SEEKS AND FINDS A SPIRITUAL PHOTOGRAPH OF HER DECEASED INFANT, AND HER DEAD BROTHER WHO WAS YET ALIVE. – HOW IT WAS DONE

In answer to numerous inquiries and several threats of prosecution for libel in consequence of what I have written in regard to impostors who (for money) perform tricks of legerdemain and attribute them to the spirits of deceased persons, I have only to say, I have no malice or antipathies to gratify in these expositions. In undertaking to show up the “Ancient and Modern Humbugs of the World,” I am determined so far as in me lies, to publish nothing but the truth. This I shall do, “with good motives and for justifiable ends,” and I shall do it fearlessly and conscientiously. No threats will intimidate, no fawnings will flatter me from publishing everything that is true which I think will contribute to the information or to the amusement of my readers.

Some correspondents ask me if I believe that all pretensions to intercourse with departed spirits are impositions. I reply, that if people declare that they privately communicate with or are influenced to write or speak by invisible spirits, I cannot prove that they are deceived or are attempting to deceive me – although I believe that one or the other of these propositions is true. But when they pretend to give me communications from departed spirits, to tie or untie ropes – to read sealed letters, or to answer test-questions through spiritual agencies, I pronounce all such pretensions ridiculous impositions, and I stand ready at any time to prove them so, or to forfeit five hundred dollars, whenever these pretended mediums will succeed in producing their “wonderful manifestations” in a room of my selecting, and with apparatus of my providing; they not being permitted to handle the sealed letters or folded ballots which they are to answer, nor to make conditions in regard to the manner of rope tying, etc. If they can answer my test-questions relevantly and truly, without touching the envelopes in which they are sealed – or even when given to them by my word of mouth, I will hand over the \$500. If they can cause invisible agencies to perform in open daylight many of the things which they pretend to accomplish by spirits in the dark, I will promptly pay \$500 for the sight. In the mean time, I think I can reasonably account for and explain all pretended spiritual gymnastic performances – throwings of hair-brushes – dancing pianos – spirit-rapping – table-tipping – playing of musical instruments, and flying through the air (in the dark,) and a thousand other “wonderful manifestations” which, like most of the performances of modern “magicians,” are “passing strange” until explained, and then they are as flat as dish-water. Dr. Von Vleck publicly produces all of these pretended “manifestations” in open daylight, without claiming spiritual aid.

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