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PEEPING INTO FUTURITY.

Omaha Fortune-Tellers Asked to Throw Open the Doors.

HOW THEY WORK THE FAKE.

An Investigator Goes the Rounds and Exposes the Silly Twaddle With Which the Credulous Public is Humbugged.

Among the Clairvoyants.

In Ingersoll's recent reply to Gladstone occurs one of those metaphorical passages for which the gifted infidel is noted, and it is apropos here because it serves as an excellent picture of the land of superstition. He says:

The dark continent of motive and desire has never been explored. In the brain, that wonderous world with one inhabitant, there are recesses dim and dark, treacherous sands and dangerous shores, where seeming sirens tempt and fade; streams that rise in unknown lands from hidden springs, strange seas with ebb and flow of tides, resistless billows urged by streams of flame, profound and awful depths, hidden by mist of dreams, obscure and phantom realms where vague and fearful things are half revealed, jungles where passion's tigers crouch, and skies of cloud and blue where fancies fly with painted wings that dazzle and mislead; and the poor sovereign of this pictured world is led by old desires and ancient hates, and stained by crimes of many vanished years, and pushed by hands that long ago were dust, until he feels like some bewildered slave that Mockery has throned and crowned.

After this exquisite imagery any ordinary description of the home of human hopes and fears would be commonplace indeed. But a word as to the prevalence of superstition. Observation extended over a series of years leads to the conviction that few, very few persons are free from superstitious notions. The monster seems to have captured most intellects and usurped the throne of reason, often banishing reflection and judgment, making courtiers of the passions and slaves of the virtues and breeding vice and credulity.

Superstition flourishes most luxuriously in ignorance, but the people of all ages and countries and conditions have believed in the power of professors of the mystic art to foretell the future. Chinese, Hindoos, Turks and Christians have been believers in this ability of certain persons to lift the veil and take a peep at coming events. The records of clairvoyance are as old as history. Pliny was induced to believe that the soul of Hermotimus of Clazomenae could separate from the body and make wonderful predictions. The classics recite as a fact that on the day of the battle of Pharsalia a priest named Cornelius, of renowned piety, was able to give a perfect picture of transpiring events although he was far away from the scene of action, in the city of Padua. Socrates and Apollonius claimed to possess clairvoyant powers. The writings of Cicero disclose an investigation of the claims of the seers. Tertullian gives an account of the doings of two females celebrated for their piety and ecstasy, and he declares that they entered into the trance state in the midst of congregations and revealed celestial secrets and knew the innermost hearts of the persons present. Saint Justin affirmed that the sybils could read the future and quoted Plato as coinciding with his views.

But we need not go to the ancients. We can find plenty of evidences of the abundance of such practices in this enlightened day and this educated land of ours. All over the country are people who live upon the hopes and fears of the credulous by enticing the almighty dollars from their pockets with honeyed promises of information about their future. Fortune tellers are numerous and do a thriving business. Their peddlings of fortune—with matrimony thrown in for variety—are mixed with a dregs of misfortune to give the artistic effect of light and shadow. A few events that occur in almost every life, a number of glittering generalities, and the picture is big enough and bright enough to satisfy many people that they have their money's worth.

Omaha has a number of clairvoyants and fortune tellers, and a BEE reporter visited several of them to see what he could find of interest. The first madam called on (they are all madam—it's foreign and Frenchy, you know) claimed for herself gifts and powers whose enumeration would make a respectable catalogue. Her "parlor" was found in a second story out-of-the-way flat. It had not yet become acquainted with luxury, which may be owing to the fact that the madam has been here but four weeks, hardly long enough, the reader will admit, to get well established in the hearts and pockets of Omahans. The room was cheaply furnished with a table, three chairs and an abused ingrain carpet. In one corner was a sink with a piece of soap on its outer ledge looking over for a soft spot on the floor to land. Several glasses and a limp, discouraged dish-rag completed the sink's complement. Another corner held a gasoline stove, and in a third was a trunk, while a basket of clothing had to find breathing room on the back porch. The only ornament was a gay lithograph representing a girl handing a package of tobacco to the passenger of a departing steamer. As the red and blue girl leans forward her draperies are raised, and the intent of the designer seems to have been that bold, bad man should measure the virtue of the tobacco by the length of leg exposed.

The madam was something less than fifty, and built on a broad-gauge pattern. Her hair was blonde and powdered, and at a first glance had the appearance of a wig. She was decked out in an airy white gown, trimmed with cardinal ribbons, like a girl, an "old girl" to a T.

"Will the gentleman have a trance sitting, or learn his fate from the cards, or by measurement of the head?"

The gentleman thought he would take the trance route as being the most wonderful, the best for observation, and the most likely to give him the worth of his $2 cash, spot.

The madam said she was controlled by an Indian maiden, who would answer all questions, while the medium would be profoundly ignorant of all that was said. After a momentary stare at the innocent ceiling she closed her eyes, drew the lids up with a twitch, gave a sickly shudder with shoulders hunched up to the ears, put a screwsome contortion upon her face, and with a wave of the hand was off in the land of spirits.

"I am Wanita," said the oracle. "I loved a pale-face, but my father, the chief, took his life, and I have since devoted myself to the service of white braves. I am uneducated in your language"—but she spoke excellent English, just the same. Wanita then let herself loose on a pretty talk about how the noble red man, the child of nature, saw the manifestations of the Great Spirit in the rustling of the trees, the babbling of the brooks, etc., etc., "but the white man lusts after money, money, always money." Then she proceeded to tell "the brave" how and where to find his fortune.

"Take the iron horse—you understand!—and go far away, many leagues from here, beyond the setting sun, and you shall find a mine, a rich mine, with silver and iron in it." Then she urged the aforesaid "brave" to go at once, before it should be too everlastingly late. The investigator asked for more definite directions about the trip. Wanita called for a pencil and wrote "Mexico." That was explicit enough for any reasonable man, but the Indian maiden told the reporter that when he got there "he will find the mine 2,200 feet towards the setting sun." Surely a blind man ought to find that. Later in the performance she referred to the fortune as coming from the east, and again gave the inquirer but 365 days of life. He plaintively asked what good the fortune would be in that case, but an inopportune shudder made Wanita fly the track and land on a new subject.

This was the extent of the "peer into the future," and the inquirer asked about his past. The astute Indian maiden said he had seen much trouble, but was a pretty good boy notwithstanding. Queried about his chances in the matrimonial market, the madam gave a confident start like the heavy villain when he says: "Ahe! I have thee!" She had found sure footing. The astonished subject learned that he had wronged a trusting white dove, and was a terribly bad boy. He was urged to go back to her and right the grevious wrong. At his apparent reluctance to make the amende honorable, the old lady turned the tap on her mouth and let flow a stream of platitudes, of sentiment and of mawkish pleading. Satisfied that he had all the information Wanita could give him about his past, present and future, the visitor rang down the curtain. At intervals during the talk the madam put her head in her right hand, while the elbow rested on the table, and muttered:—"It is dark—all is dark." The attitude was one of profound thought, and usually followed a question. She punctuated the communication with frequent contortions and passes of the hands, and came out of the trance with a spasm of extra vigor.

The notes of a piano floated in at the windows, and the madam said she was fond of music. She wished she could afford a piano—perhaps the visitor would furnish her one! The seeress became sociable and chatty. She lit a cigarette and offered the stranger her pack and a light. She brought forth a glass of lemonade for him, and after he had taken a taste she, with the nonchalence of good fellowship, drank out of the other side of the tumbler. The reporter sat down to do some pertinent quizzing, when a Mrs. Somebody, a friend of the madame's, came in. Madame offered her a cigarette with an apology that she feared she was presuming, because Mrs. Somebody had such excellent habits in other respects. The madame explained that the intruder was a roomer of hers, and suggested that the young man should go and see "what a nice room it is." The woman took the hint and went. The seeker after information demurred, but the old lady got up and insisted. She almost embraced the young scribe and urged:

"She's a nice, respectable woman. Do go and see how comfortably she is fixed. You'll be kind to her and do what's right, won't you, dearie?"

That "dearie" settled it and the explorer having exhausted the main performance, concluded to take a look at the side-show. Mrs. Somebody was forty, quite likely, but she was anything but fair and fat. She was lank, lean, angular, homely, and looked like a worked-out farmer's wife who has been fed on corn-meal and salt pork. She told a tale of sorrow. She had been deserted by her husband, and then by her "solid fellow" after he had squandered all of her $800. Yes, in answer to queries, she believed the madam did a good business. She had all kinds of people for customers, but a great many of them were evidently well-to-do, well-up persons. There had been four other visitors that day. Two of them were young ladies, fashionably dressed, and a third was an elderly lady of fine appearance. Here were $10 as the madam's receipts for one single day. After telling her story Mrs. Somebody threw out a suggestion that made the reporter blush, and he fled.

After his first experience the seeker after truth thought it convenient to have a name, and he successively impersonated Messrs. Brewster, Burlingame and Boggs. He next encountered a clairvoyant who claimed the right to practice medicine. She was a rather good-looking woman with rather dark hair, a petite form and a face of more than ordinary intelligence. The doctor informed her visitor that consultations were free, and as the price seemed to fit the condition of his pocketbook he took one. She threw her hand across her brow and with a far-away look (one of those looks that the boy with the apple has when the other boys want a bite) she began to diagnose the case.

"You are troubled with thumping in the side when you climb the stairs, and a dizzy feeling—"

About at this point she was informed that her visitor was tougher than a pine knot, and came to see about a sick woman.

"Oh, yes, I see; your wife. She is a blue-eyed lady, with light hair and she has been troubled with nervousness for three years. I see it all now. You have come to the right place. I can cure her. I can will any one to do just what I please, and it will be done."

If the man that this female doctor knows as Brewster has any wife at all that wife hasn't a blue eye in the front of her head nor a yellow hair on the top of it. As the doctor told Brewster to bring his wife to her office on Saturday, it is presumable that she "willed" the suggestion should be carried out.

In his search for material the investigator discovered several advertisements in THE BEE, and he got around to answer two of them. The "ad" of the first read as follows, to-wit, to put it legally:

MADAME WINTERS—Gifted dead trance clairvoyant and astrologist; can be consulted on all affairs of life or death; reunites the separated, causes luck and speedy marriages, shows photo of future wife or husband, locates diseases and cures them by massage and magnetic treatment; has the celebrated Hindoo charm for luck. All those in trouble will do well to call on this gifted seeress—give you a correct written reading through mail for $2, with lock of hair. The madame has taken parlors at 417 South Eleventh street, second floor, parlor, 2 and 3.

That announcement of the madam's seemed to fit his case about as snug as a tailor-made suit sets to the shoulders of a Broadway belle, and he concluded to make a call. Four hundred and seventeen South Eleventh street is in a row of two story bricks at the corner of Howard. Ascending the uncarpeted stairs, a female was seen sitting in the back room. This female proved to be the madam and the room to be the "parlors" she had taken. The gentleman gave his name as Burlingame, and announced his recent arrival from China.

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed the madam. "My control informed me last night that I was about to be visited by a nephew of the late Anson Burlingame."

This seemed good, as the visitor didn't know before what kind of reception he might expect. The "parlors" are an uncarpeted back room, furnished with a round table, chairs and a zink trunk. The madam gave the information that she had taken the whole flat and was renting furnished rooms; that one of her rooms was at present occupied by a "Pinkie" detective and a friend, and that a short time ago another had been occupied by a couple that she feared were practicing the panel game.

Burlingame gave the madam to understand that he did not take much stock in the fotune telling trade as practiced by modern seeresses. The madam moved her chair a hitch closer and remarked, with a sly wink:

"What a lovely blue eye you have."

Under any name the hero of this tale is awfully modest, and this wink, with the large warmed up smile that opened out under it, made him blush like a lobster. He had serious thoughts of jumping out of the back window, but the porch was full of clothes that wouldn't fit anything but a big woman. The madam volunteered the information that her weight was 165 pounds. She has a shock of yellow hair, which she wears cut short, possibly so that no inducement will be held out to the urchins to sing that familiar song about getting it cut. She admitted that the fortune-telling business was a "fake," so far as she was concerned, and said:

"I never try to fool such intelligent gentlemen as you with the nonsense."

About this time a real good-looking young man, from some jewelry store, came ins bringing a bangle bracelet strung with dime, bearing various monograms. After the young man's departure madam opened the zink trunk, took out another bracelet, and when she came back sat down so close to Burlingame that there was no chance for the air to circulate between them. She put on the same old smile and said:

"Darling, I want to put gold dollars on this bracelet. Won't you give me one with your initials on it?"

"Darling" thought possibly he might, and she then suggested that if he would bring it down at 9 in the evening there would be no one else in the house and a good time might be had. If she fails to see him at 9 these lines will inform her that he is chasing after the other fortune tellers to see if any of them can indicate the whereabouts of the pleasant clime where gold dollars, with monograms on them, grow on the bushes.

She didn't show her Hindoo charm "for luck," nor for the beer, either, but she said she was a native of New York city, had been in California, and incidentally gave the impression that she was longingly looking for a sucker that would pay her freight back to the land of gold and centipedes. She showed her horseshoes, which she kept for luck; also her slippers, which she kept to cover some feet and more corns, and gave it out cold that a present of a pair of the latter would be accepted. The visitor left his name with her and carried away the impression that she was a fraud as a clairvoyant. Having lost his name, the truth-hunter was forced to find another, which he did on the way to the following:

MADAM ECCLES, clairvoyant. Powers are most remarkable, as is testified by all who have met her; reputation as a clairvoyant has long been established, and she is one of the best fortune-tellers in the world. Room 1, 322 North Sixteenth street.

This madam is old enough to be the mother of the others. She is very fly in her business, too, and says that she is making money. "Boggs" had hardly got seated when she accused him of being a reporter. This rather made Boggs think that the old lady might have had a dose of printer's ink some time, but he succeeded in lulling her suspicions. She wanted to read Boggs a pile of letters about her wonderful gifts, but he don't like to hear women read and excused himself. She claims to be a daughter of the late Judge O'Brien, who, in his day, was a somewhat noted criminal lawyer of Chicago, and assigned as a reason for being in the fortune-telling business that a scoundrel in Chicago had borrowed $16,000 from her and run away. Here Boggs was cheeky enough to intimate that if the madam could see away off into time to come she ought to have been able to know that the aforesaid rogue would skip with her cash. She had no reply for this. When she gets one that is satisfactory Boggs will come up to her "parlor" and bring the crowd he spoke of and have a séance.

The reader has a fair idea of Omaha clairvoyants, seeresses and fortune tellers. The conclusion of any intelligent person must be that they are unmitigated frauds. The conviction would be ineradicable if the reader could have listened to the silly twaddle to which the investigator subjected himself. That people will patronize such barefaced deceivers is proof of the sway of superstition.

MUSICAL AND DRAMATIC.

Fanny Davenport's recent two weeks' engagement in San Francisco amounted to over $16,000.

The run of the "Lady or the Tiger," at Wallack's New York theater will close on June 30.

Miss Amelia Summerville has received an offer by telegraph from Mr. John Cobb for a season in London.

The recent production of Herne's new play, "Drifting Apart," in Boston was reported a substantial success.

Harry Miner has sued Mrs. Potter to recover $2,838.40, being money advanced to her at various times last fall.

J. M. Hill's "Possible Case" Combany open their season at the Hollis Street theater, Boston, on September 3 next.

The fact that Sarah Bernhardt has in her possession 800 unread plays illustrates one of the sad features of contemporary life.

Joseph Jefferson is spending the summer on the shores of Buzzard Bay, Mass. His next tour will begin on September 24.

A play of "Jekyll and Hydes" is ravaging the rural districts, from which the farmers have found shelter in the seclusion of their homes.

The "Pearl of Pekin" will after all not go to London this season. The magnificent costumes have all been packed away until the fall, when the "Pearl" will make a tour of the country.

When "La Marchaude de Saurives" is produced in America there may be a "howl" throughout the land; but it will "get there" all the same, unless the adapter tampers with it too much.

Kit Clarke is still up in Canada on his fishing trip, where he has met with great success. Mr. Clarke may be termed an American nomad. It is a fact that he owns the finest trout and salmon tackle in this country.

Mr. James Owen O'Connor, the tragedian, is not without a host of believers in his histrionic ability and it is confidently stated that he will yet be seen in New York with the favorable result he is thought to be entitled to.

Hoyt and Thomas will have "A Tin Soldier," "A Hole in the Ground," "A Midnight Bell" on the road next season. "A Rag Baby" has been shelved, but by the middle of the season Mr. Hoyt will have a comedy ready, which he is now finishing at his country home in Charlestown, N. H.

The American tour of "The Stowaway" will begin at the Walnut Street theatre, Philadelphia, early in September. After a round of the other eastern cities it will be put on at one of the Broadway theatres, New York, for a run. The piece is described as being an English melo-drama of uncommon strength and action.

A strange sort of theatrical crank has been discovered in Paris at the Ambigu. It is a woman who sits nightly in one of the galleries and learns the pieces by heart. It is said to take her eight days, and she recites with the actors in a whisper. Her neighbors are surprised to hear her answering the cues before the actor is heard.

Nat Goodwin will play a London season next spring, having signed a contract with Manager Edwards, of the Gaiety theatre. The opening play will be "A Gold Mine," by Leander Mathews and George Jessup, and the engagement will begin with the London season on March 1. Goodwin will also give a round of familiar plays.

CONNUBIALITIES.

A twining lock of woman's hair
The lover's heart sets in a flutter,
But when he's wed, it makes him swear
To find a sample in the butter.

Why is a lover like a kernel of corn? Because he turns pale when he pops.

A good many women who have married dry goods clerks have got two yards of illusion as a premium.

The man who marries a rich woman never forgets it; the man who marries a good woman never regrets it.

Mollie Garfield has married J. Stanley Brown, and it is to be hoped she will make J. Stanley comb out his first name.

The most unique runaway yet is from Byrdstown, Ky., where a lad of thirteen ran away with and married a damsel just twice his age.

Mary Whetstone is the name of an eastern girl who eloped with a barber, and the barber is in great luck. He can sharpen his razors on Mary.

In a divorce suit in Sacramento the husband acknowledged that he had contributed for the support of his family during the past seven years the sum of $7.

A Washington, D. C., woman who is trying to get a divorce from her husband, alleges that a short time ago he tried to take her life by chloroforming her while she was asleep.

Talk of mothers-in-law and son-in-law not agreeing," remarked Titmarsh. "My mother-in-law and I agree. She says I ought not to have married her daughter, and I coincide with her."

This is from a recent issue of "The Tombstone Warbler:" "If Nola Twigg, the servant girl in Portland, Ore., who recently fell heir to $200,000, will call at this office, she will hear of something to her advantage. We are a bachelor."

A few years ago it cost $7.50 to get married in Manitoba, but the government has recently reduced the fee to $2.50, and there is much rejoicing thereby. But is not most every girl a little dear, whatever the marriage fee may be?

Miss Mary Stauffel, of Schuylkill, Penn., died five minutes after her marriage to Luke Fisher. They were to have been married a week later, but the poor girl was fatally hurt, and expressed a wish to die his wife, so the sad ceremony was hurriedly performed.

The Lancaster, Pa., woman who only eats once every fifty-four days has received 300 offers of marriage from young Philadelphia lawyers. She declined them all on the ground that since she enjoys only seven meals a year she wants to be sure that she will get them.

An odd elopement occurred in Indianapolis. A woman, arrested on the charge of murder, was sent to the hospital for medical treatment. There she became acquainted with a sufferer from chronic rheumatism, and, though he could walk only by the aid of a crutch and cane, the couple managed to elope during the night.

Mr. Wasecom, of Indiana, has been married three times. In that there is nothing very remarkable—but it is a trifle odd that his three wives were sisters all, and that each of the last two ceremonies was performed within the day of the dead wife's burial, and by the minister who officiated at the funeral. The last sad occasion was just a day or two ago, and the groom was seventy-nine, the bride seventy-one, and the one witness a great grandson and great nephew, respectively, of the blushing pair.

That's What's the Matter.

Why is a man so cross and glum?
Why does he look so mad?
What makes him keep so awful mum?
What makes him feel so sad?

Why, now, just see him slam around
And bang the office door;
Just hear him make the room resound,
So fiercely does he roar.

And now he's still and mum again,
And never speaks a word;
What is it gives him such a pain?
What bad news has he heard?

Come hither and present your ear,
And keep still as a mouse:
In one short line I'll make it clear—
His wife is cleaning house.

About Summer Religion.

By common consent the activities of the church in the cities are either intermitted or abated during the heated term, says the Philadelphia Times. To close houses of worship altogether, unless for necessary repairs, does not appear to be exactly the right thing, as thus an unfavorable impression is likely to be made on the public mind touching the great interest involved, besides the putting of the can't-get-away population to a serious disadvantage in carrying out their convictions of duty. Neither is it admirable to fill the temporarily vacant pulpits with unacceptable and inficient supplies. Far wiser would it be to have some strong instructive and attractive preacher proclaim the truth, even if it should be to several contiguous and united congregations, in this way furnishing him with an encouraging audience and kindling the enthusiasm which is essential to the completeness of all public assemblies. By such a course the good cause would be propelled with success, and the depletion of churches averted which is so hard to be overcome by the autumnal zeal of the guardians of the folds after their return to their routine of labor. One thing is certain—that the summer vacation of pastors and people is not an actual loss to christianity, as some good people seem to fear it is. Pastoral life is in all respects, an irksome and exhausting one, and requires intervals of travel and repose to give it permanent freshness and force. The regular visitors to the sanctuary, also, need recreation, change of scenery, and new surroundings for a time, that their drooping energies may be revived. Hence, all reasonable people should be more than reconciled to the brief absence of their spiritual overseers and fellow-churchmembers. Especially should this be so in remembrance of the fact that such absentees are legitimately supposed to carry with them the spirit of their professions, doing good as they have opportunity wherever they go, and thus making what might appear a local loss to religion a general gain in the grand result. Many a spiritually destitute neighborhood, by the mountain or the seaside, has experienced large and lasting benefit from the temporary residence of benevolent visitors.

The oldest newspaper in the whole wide world is the King-Pau, or Capital Sheet, published in Pekin. It first appeared A. D. 911, but came out only at irregular intervals. Since the year 1351, however, it has been published weekly and of uniform size. Now it appears in three editions daily.