

MADAME HARRIS,

No. 8 West Nineteenth street, near Sixth avenue.

The lovely and accomplished princess who, for nearly three years, entertained her illustrious master with tales of queens of magic, and enchanters, and magicians, and other witches of Oriental breed, was actuated by a laudable desire not to have her head cut off, some pleasant morning, by order of that amiable lord of hers. As she could only buy the neck of her head for the next twenty-four hours by seeing her story interesting, we trust we do her no injustice in assuming that, at times, she was slightly given to romancing, and that there was very little genuine truth in the stories related in at least nine hundred and thirty-nine nights of the Arabian Thousand and One. This levity on her part, though perhaps excusable under the melancholy circumstances, was unworthy the dignity and great importance of the Arabian Art of Witchcraft; and it is much to be regretted that this prince, who evidently knew so much of the subject, couldn't have been put upon oath and obliged to identify the bits of truth for the enlightenment of succeeding ages. But she wasn't, and our ignorance is lamentable; moreover, this is a calculating age and we are especially sorry that there was left no affidavit of details. We believe in Aladdin, and have as much faith in his uncle as in our own; but we don't know the pattern of his lamp, we have no photograph of the genie that obeyed it, and we can make no correct computation of the market value of the two hundred slaves with jars of jewels on their heads. Our reporter, who is determined that posterity shall be able to make no such complaint of him or of his history of the Witches of New-York, here solemnly undertakes, upon the faith of his salary, to relate the unadorned truth, and to add to it in so ad libitum variations—imagining, while he writes, that he sees in the distance the critical public, has a many-headed Gradgrind singing out loudly for "Facts, Sir, facts."

The next fact, then, to be investigated and sworn to, is Madame Harris, a very dirty female fact-monger, residing in the upper part of the city, and advertising as follows:

"MADAME HARRIS.—This mysterious Lady is a wonder to all—her predictions are so true. She can tell all the events of life. Office No. 80 West 19th st., near 4th av. Hours 11 a. m. to 6 p. m. Ladies 25 cts.; Gentlemen 50 cts. See causes specify marriage; charge extra."

Wearily our reporter poked his way on foot from Spruce street to West Nineteenth street, feeling to trust himself in a stage or a car, lest the careless conversation of the unthinking and the reprehensible jocularity of the little boys who hang about the corners of the streets which intersect the Sixth Avenue, and pelt unwary pass-ers with paving-stones, should divert his mind from the importance and great moral responsibility of his mission. After encountering a large assortment of the daggers and discomforts incident to pedestrianism in New-York in muddy weather, he achieved West Nineteenth street, and stood in sight of the mysterious domicile of Madame Harris. It is a tenement-house, shabby-genteel even in its first pretensions newness; but it has now lost its former appearance even of semi-respectability, and has degenerated to a state of dirt only conceivable by those unhappy families who live two in a house, and are in a constant state of pit-and-kettle war, and of mutual retorting to clean out the common hall. A little mound of potato-hins and bones and other kitchen refuse, round which he was forced to make a detour, plainly said to our reporter that the population of house No. 80 were in the habit of depositing garbage in the gutters, under cover of the night, and in violation of the city ordinance. A highly-perfumed atmosphere surrounds this delightful abode, for the first floor thereof is occupied as a livery-stable, which constantly exhales some sweet and pungent odors peculiar to equine habitations. Pulling the sticky ball-handle with as dainty a touch as possible, our delegate was admitted by a blatterned, dress-eyed girl of about eighteen, with her hair and dress as tumbled as though she had just been run through a corn-shelling machine, and who was so unnecessarily dirty that even her face had not been washed. She was further distinguished by a wart on her nose, of such shape and dimensions that it gave her face the appearance of being fortified by a many-sided fort which commanded the entire countenance. This interesting young female welcomed her visitor with a clammy "Come in," and led the way upstairs, he following, in due dread of being forever extinguished by an avalanche of unwashed coolers and kennels, which were unsteadily piled up on the landing and which an incautious touch would have toppled over, and deluged the stairs with unknown sweet-smelling compounds, whose legitimate destination was the sewer. On the second floor, directly, judging from the noise, over the stall of the balkiest horse in the stable below is the room of the Madame.

Our reporter took an observation. The furnishings of the apartment showed an attempt to keep up a show, which was by far too miserably transparent to hide the shoddiness which peeped out everywhere through the tawdry gilding. There were so many oil-paintings on the walls, in such gaudy frames, that it seemed as if the room had been dipped in a bath of cheap auction pictures, and hadn't been wiped dry, or had been out in a shower of them, and hadn't come in until it had got very wet. A broad gilt window cornice stood leaning in the corner of the room instead of being in its legitimate place; a pair of lace curtains were wadded up and thrown in a chair, while the windows were covered with the odiousst painted muslin-binder; a piano of wood in the middle of the room, but there was no piano; these were the indications of "better days;" these were the shallow traps set to inveigle the beholder into a belief in the opulence of the occupants of this charming residence. But the little brick stove, on which two smouldering coals were heating the straps of different-patterned carpets which hid the floor, and made it look as if covered with some kind of variegated w. oleu color, the second-hand, conciliating please-buy-me look of the three chairs and the dirt and greasy game which gave a character to the place, told at once the true state of facts.

On one side of the room was a little door, evidently communicating with a closet or small bed-room; on this door was a slip of tin, on which was painted

Office—Madame Harris, Astrologist.

and into this "Office" the weak-eyed girl disappeared with a shame-faced look as if she had tried to steal our reporter's pocket-book, and hadn't succeeded. Presently there came from the closet a sound of half-suppressed merriment, as if a constant succession of laughs were born there, full-grown and boisterous, but were notably garbled by some unknown power, until each one expired in a kind of choking giggle. There was also a noise of the making of a bed, the hustling of chairs, the passing away of toilet articles out of sight, and over all was heard the oddling voice of Madame Harris, who was evidently dressing herself, superintending these other various operations, and croaking the weak-eyed maiden all at once. At last the latter individual got so far the better of her jocularity that she was able to depart herself with outward seriousness when she emerged from the mysterious-closet and said to our reporter, "Walk in." At this time she was uttering a kind of laugh that she would inevitably have exhibited had she not the

instant her visitor turned his back, let go the safety-valve and allowed himself by a guffaw which would have been an honor and a credit to any one of the heroes on the first floor.

The room in which Madame Harris was waiting to receive her customer was so dark that he could see over a chair and fall across a bed before he could see where he was. Then he recovered himself, and took an observation.

The room was a very small one—so diminutive, indeed, that the bed, which occupied one side of it, reduced the available space more than two-thirds. It was partitioned off from the rest of the room by a dirty patch-work bed-quilt with more holes than pyonics. The walls were scrawled over with pencil-marks, evidently drawings made by young children who had the usual childish notions of proportion and perspective; and on one side of the wall, near the head of the bed, a bit of pasteboard persisted in this startling announcement—

TERMS Cash

A narrow strip of rag carpet was on the floor; a small stand and a chair completed the furnishing of the room, and a single smoky pewter lamp exhausted itself in a dismal combat with the gloom, which constantly got the better of it. When our reporter stumbled, and took an involuntary flying leap into the middle of the bed, an awful voice came out of the darkness saying, "There is a chair right there behind you." This information proved to be correct, and our discomfited delegate sidestepped it to it and gazed solidly at the Madame. If Madame Harris were worth as much by the pound as beef, her market-price would be about twenty-five dollars. She was situated in a loose morning-gown of an exceedingly fleshy pattern, open before, disclosing a skirt meant to be white, but whose cleanliness she mysteriously refused to speak for it was carefully hidden from his inquiring gaze and its unknown beauties are left to the imagination of the reader. Perched mysteriously on the back of her head, where it was retained by some mysterious hocus pocus which has ever been a soiled mystery to mankind, was a little black burlap, marvelous in pattern and design; from this depended a thick black veil, covering her countenance, and disguising her as effectually as if she had washed her face and put on a clean dress.

She proceeded at once to business, and opened conversation with this appropriate remark: "My terms is fifty cents for gentlemen and the pay is always in advance." Here followed a disbursement on the part of the anxious reader after knowledge, and an approving chuckle was heard under the veil. Taking up a pack of cards so overlaid with dirt that it was a work of time and study to tell a queen from a king spot or distinguish the knaves from the aces, she presented them with the imperative remark, "Cut them once." Then ensued the following wonderful predictions uttered by a dubious and uncertain voice under the veil—which voice seemed one minute to come from the mouth then it issued from the throat, then it sprang out of the stomach, then it was heard from the back of the head under the burlap, and, in the course of a few minutes it came from so many places that the posited bearer was dubious as to its exact whereabouts—these curious effects being, doubtless, attributable to the thick covering of the face. But its various communications when gathered together, were found to sum up as follows:

"You face back all fortune and trouble, of which you have had much, but they are now behind you and you have no more to fear. You will henceforth be successful in business, you will have a great deal of money. Your affection card faces up a young woman with dark eyes and dark hair, about twenty-three years old; she is older than she has led you to believe; there is a dark-complexioned man when you will see in two days, who is your enemy; you may not know it, but you had better beware of him, for he will do you an injury, if he can; you will see him and speak with him the night of day-after-to-morrow. Your marriage card faces up this dark woman, as I said before. I don't see a great deal of money layin' round her, but there is plenty of money layin' round you in the future. Somebody will die and leave you money within nine weeks, not counting this week. You was born under the planet Mars, which gives you two lucky days in every week—Mondays and Thursdays; anything you begin on those days will sure'y succeed."

Here she handed the cards to be cut again, which operation disclosed a new feature in our reporter's matrimonial future, for she went on to say:

"There is another woman who faces your love-card, who has light hair and light eyes; she favors your love card and will be your first wife; you will have five children—four girls and one boy; look out for the dark-complexioned man, for he favors your first wife and, though she does not favor him very much, he will try to get her away from you. Your line of life is long; you will live to be sixty-eight years old, but you will die very suddenly; your line of death crosses your line of life very suddenly, which always brings sudden death."

Having given this cheering promise, she again held out the cards to be cut and said, "Cut them again now, and make a wish at the same time, and I will tell you if you will have your wish." When the required ceremony had been solemnly performed, she continued: "You will have your wish, but not right away; don't expect to get it before week after next, but then you will be sure to have it, for there is no disappointment in the cards for you." She then informed her customer that she always answered anxiously two questions, which he was now at liberty to propound. He made a couple of inquiries relative to his future business prospect, and received in reply the promise of most gratifying results. Having then, as he supposed, got his money's worth, he was about to take his leave, when he interrupted her thus:

"I have a charm for securing good luck to whoever wears it; you can wear it, and your most intimate friend would never suspect it; my charge is one dollar for gentlemen; a great many have bought it of me; many more would have been on the point of doing so, if they had better possessed this charm, and have saved; you had better possess it, for it will be sure to bring you good luck; if you possess yourself of it, you will always be successful in business; Mr Lynch of Mot-street is possessed himself of it, and has been very lucky ever since besides a great number I could name; my advice to you is, purchase yourself of the charm."

She then put her elbows on her knees after the manner of a Fulton Market apple-prodler, in which attitude she awaited an answer. The decision, however, not favorable to her hopes; for our economical reporter concluded not to invest in the charm, although it had brought such excellent fortune to Mr Lynch of Mot-street. He departed, encountering again a hindrance the week-eyed one, who met him with a smile, escorted him to the door with a great sigh, and dismissed him with a joyous grin.

His next visit was to Madame Flurry of No. 200 Broome street, near Columbia, who will be duly glorified in another article.