

MADAME CLIFTON.

No. 183 Orchard street, near Stanton.

The female professors of the Black Art hitherto visited by our reporter had not impressed him with a profound belief in their supernatural power; he was "anxious," and was "asked to inquiry," but he still had doubts, and there was great danger of his backsliding if there wasn't something immediately done for him. He had been greatly disappointed by the absence from the dominion of these good ladies of all the traditional necromantic implements and tools. His disposition to adhere to the modern witch-faith would have been greatly strengthened by the sight of a skull and cross-bones; a tame snake or a little devil in a bottle would have fixed his wavering belief; and his conversion would have been thoroughly assured by the timely exhibition of a broom-stick on which he could see the saddle-marks. None of these things had as yet been forthcoming, and our delegate, mourning the departure of all the romance of the art of Witchcraft, was fast sinking into a state of incurable skepticism on the subject of even its utility, in the dogmatic hands of modern practitioners. Hope had not, however, entirely deserted his heart, but still retained her fabled position in the bottom of his chest near that important vicus, and he therefore courageously continued his pursuit of witchcraft under difficulties. His next visit was to Orchard street, and he was induced to expect favorable results by the encouraging and positive assertion which concludes the subjoined advertisement, that "Madame Clifton is no humbug."

"AN ASTROLOGIST THAT BEATS THE WORLD, and \$5,000 reward is offered to any person who can surpass her in giving correct statements on past, present and future events, particularly absent friends, lost rats, law suits, &c. She also gives lucky numbers. She surpasses any person that has ever visited our city. She is also making great cures. All persons who are afflicted with Consumption, Liver Complaint, Scrofula, Rheumatism, or any other lingering disease, would do well to call and see this wonderful and natural gifted lady, and you will not go away dissatisfied. N. B.—Madame CLIFTON is no humbug. Call and satisfy yourselves. Residence No. 183 Orchard-st., between Houston and Stanton."

Although Orchard street is by no means so objectionable a thoroughfare as human legenuity might make it, still, in spite of its pleasant-sounding name, it is not altogether a vernal paradise. If there ever was any fitness in the name it must have been many years ago, and the ancient orchard bears now no fruit, but low brick houses of assorted sizes and colors, seamy, and, in appearance, semi-respectable. Occasionally a blacksmith shop, a paint room or a livery stable, lower and meaner and more contracted than their neighbors, look as if they never got ripe, but had shrivelled and dropped off before their time. The street is in a state of perennial bloom with half-built dwellings like gaudy scarlet blossoms, which are ripened into tenements by the fostering care of masons and carpenters with the most industrious forcing; and beds of buildings are scattered in every direction, in the shape of mortar-beds and piles of brick and lumber, waiting the due time for their architectural sprouting.

The house of Madame Clifton is of moderate growth, being but two stories high; it has a red brick front and green window-blinds, and is so ingeniously grafted to its nearest neighbor that some little care is necessary to determine which is the parent stock. It presents a fair outside, is but little damaged by age or weather, and is seemingly in a good state of repair.

A neat-looking colored girl answered the bell, and, showing our reporter into the parlor, asked his business, and if he "knew Madame Clifton's terms." Learning that he only wanted to have his fortune told by Madame, and had no occasion to test her skill in the more expensive departments of her profession, the girl appeared to be satisfied of the responsibility of her visitor for that limited amount, and departed to inform her mistress. Our reporter took an observation. The room was a neatly-furnished parlor, a little flashy perhaps in the article of mirrors, but the sofa, chairs, carpet, &c., were plain and not offensive to good taste. A piano was in the room, but it was closed, and its tone and quality are unknown. One curious article, for a parlor ornament, stood in the corner of the room; it was the huge sign board of a perfumery store, and bore in large letters the name of the proprietor of the "Golden Bell," and the outline of a golden bell was also blazoned thereon in all the finery of Dutch metal and bronzes. This conspicuous article, though mysterious and unaccountable, was not cabalistic, and savored not of witchcraft.

Presently the quiet colored girl returned, and in a low voice, and with a subdued, well-trained manner invited our reporter to follow her; meekly obeying, he was led up two flights of respectable stairs into a room wherein there was nothing mysterious, nor was there anything particularly suggestive except a large glass case filled with a stock of perfumery. What was the propriety of so very many bottles filled with perfumes and medicines did not at first appear; but the assortment of imprisoned odors, and liquid drugs, and the sign of the Golden Bell down stairs, and Madame Clifton, and the store of the Golden Bell in Broadway, and the proprietor thereof, so tangled themselves together in the brain of our reporter that he has never since that time been able to disconnect one from the other. Upon a small stand were two packs of cards—the one an ordinary playing pack, and the other what are known sometimes as fortune-telling cards. The devices on these latter differed materially from those in ordinary use; there were no plain cards; every one was ornamented with some kind of a significant design; there were pictures of women, of men, of ships and raging seas, of hearers, and sickbeds, and shrouds, and coffins, and corpses, and graves, and tombstones, and similar cheerful objects; there were vases, squares, and circles, and hands with scales, and hands with daggers, and heads sticking through clouds, and purses of money, and carriages, and moons, and suns, and serpents, and hearts and cupids, and eyes, and rays of light coming from nowhere and shining on nothing, and Herculeses with big clubs, and big arms bigger than the clubs, and big legs bigger than both together, and swords and spears, and sun dials, and many other designs equally intelligible and profitable. Soon the Madame appeared, and the attention of our delegate was immediately diverted from surrounding objects; and riveted on the incomprehensible woman who was "no humbug," and who, according to her own opinion of herself, would have exactly realized Mr. Alfred Sparkler's idea of a "dem'd fine woman, with no bigodnensense about her."

Madame Clifton is a woman of medium height, aged about thirty-five years, with very light, piercing blue eyes, and very black hair, one little lock of which is precisely twisted into a very elaborate little curl, which rests in the middle of her forehead between her eyes, as if to keep those quarrelsome orbs apart. Her eyebrows are unusually heavy, so much so as to give a curious menacing look to the upper part of her face, which disagreeable expression is intensified by the extreme paleness of her countenance. Her dress was unassuming, neat and tasteful, save in the one article of jewelry, of which she wore as much as if the stock in trade at the store of the Golden Bell had been pearls and gold and diamonds, instead of perfumes and essences. Her deportment was self-possessed and lady-like, that is, if an expression of tireless watchfulness and unslumbering suspicion are consistent with refined and easy manners. She never took her steel-blue eyes from our reporter's face; she did not for an instant relax her confident smile; she did not speak but in the lowest, softest tones; but her visitor felt every instant more convinced that the voice was the falsest voice he ever heard, the smile the falsest smile he ever saw, and that the cold piercing eye above was true, and that was only true because no art could conceal its calculating glitter. If one could imagine a smiling cat, Madame Clifton would resemble that cat more than any one thing in the world. Neat and precise is her outward appearance; not a fold of her garments, not a thread of lace or ribbon, not a hair of her head, but was exactly smooth and orderly, and in its exact place; not a glance of her eye that was not watchful and suspicious; not a tone of word that was not treacherous in sound; not a movement of body or of limb that was not soft and stealthy; her false resemblance developed themselves more and more every instant, until at last our reporter came to regard her as some kind of dangerous animal in a

state of temporary and perfidious repose. The language she used, when freed from the technical phrases of her trade, was good enough for every day, and she did not distinguish herself by any specialty of bad English.

She asked our reporter, with her most insinuating smile, if he would have her "run the cards for him," and on receiving an affirmative answer she took the pack of playing cards into her velvet hands, pawed them dexterously over a few times to shuffle them, laid them into three rows with the faces upward, and softly purred the following words: "I am uncertain whether to run you a club or a diamond, for I do not exactly see how it is; but I will run you a club first, and if you find that it does not tell your past history, please to mention the fact to me, and I will then run you a diamond." She then proceeded to mention a number of fictitious events which she asserted had happened in the past life of her customer, but that individual, who did not find that her revelations agreed with his own knowledge of his former history, tremblingly informed her of that fact; and she then, with a most vicious contraction of the overhanging eyebrows, broke short the thread of her fanciful story, and proceeded to "run him a diamond." She evidently was determined to make the diamond come nearer the truth—to which end she dexterously strove by a series of very sharp cross-questionings to elicit some circumstance of his early history on which she might enlarge, or to get some clue to his present circumstances, and hopes and aspirations, that she might find some peg on which to hang a prediction with an appearance of probability. Our reporter—with humiliation he confesses it—is a bachelor. His heart has proved unassailable, and Cupid has hitherto failed to hit him. On this occasion he proved characteristically unimpressible; and the insinuating smile, the inquiring look and the winning manner all failed of effect, and he remained pertinaciously non-committal. Finding this to be the case, the false madame changed her tactics, and, as if to spite her intractable customer, began to prophesy innumerable ills and evils for him. She apparently strove to mitigate in some degree the sting of her predictions by an increased softness of manner, which was only a more cat-like demeanor than ever. She spoke as follows—the cold eye growing more cruel, and the wicked smile more treacherous every instant. First, however, came this guileful question, which was but a declaration of war under a flag of truce:

"You do not want me to flatter you, do you? You want me to tell you exactly what I see in the cards, do you not?" Our reporter stated that he was able to bear at least the recital of his future adversity, even if, when the reality came, he should be utterly smashed; whereupon she proceeded:

"I see here a great disappointment, you will be disappointed in business, and the disappointment will be very bitter and hard to bear—but that is not all, nor the worst by any means. I see a burial—it may be only a death of one of your dearest friends, or some near relative, such as your sister, but I see that you yourself are weak in the chest and lungs; you are impulsive, proud, ambitious and quick-tempered, which last quality tends much to aggravate any diseases of the chest, and I fear that the burial may be your own. Your disease is serious, you cannot live long I think—I do not think you will live a year—in fact, there is the strongest probability that you will die before nine months. I think you will certainly die before nine months, but if you survive it will only be after a most severe and painful illness, in the course of which you will undergo the extreme of human suffering. I see that you love a light complexioned lady, but her friends object to her marriage with you, and are doing all they can to prevent it. A dark complexioned man is trying to get her away from you, you must beware of him or he will do you great injury, for he has both the will and the power; he has already deceived and injured you, and will do so again even more deeply than he has yet. I see a journey, trouble and misfortune, grief, sorrow, heavy loss and heaviness of heart. I again tell you, that you will die before nine months; but if you chance to survive, it will only be to encounter perpetual crosses and misfortunes. I might, if I was disposed to flatter you and give you false hopes, tell you that you will be lucky, fortunate in business, that you will get the lady, and I might promise you all sorts of good luck, but I don't want to flatter you; it would be much more agreeable to me to tell you a good life, for it sometimes pains me more than I can tell you to read bad lives to people, and I feel it very deeply; but I assure you that I never saw anybody's cards run as badly as do yours—I never saw so many losses and crosses, and so much trouble and misfortune in anybody's cards in my whole life—even if you outlive the nine months you will have the greatest trouble in getting the lady, and will always have bad luck."

She then tried by means of the cards to spell out our reporter's name, but failed utterly, not getting a single letter right; then she recommenced and threatened him with so much bad luck that he began almost to fear that he would break his leg before he rose from his chair, or would instantly fall down in a fit and be carried off to die at the Hospital. She told him that his lucky days were the 1st, 5th, 17th, 27th and 29th of every month. Then, perceiving that his feelings were deeply moved by the intractability of the "cruel parients" of the light-complexioned lady and the black look of things generally, she slightly relented, and went on to say:

"If you will put your trust in me, and take my advice as a friend, I can sell you something that will surely secure for you the lady, and thwart all your enemies—it is not for my interest that I tell you this, for upon my honor I make only five shillings upon fifty dollars' worth—it is no trick, but it is a charm which you must wear about you, and which you must wish over about the girl at stated times, and it will be sure to have the desired effect."

Our reporter asked the price of this wonderful charm. "It is from five to fifty dollars, but as you are so extraordinarily unlucky I would advise you to take the full charm. It is the *Chinese Ruling Planet Charm*, and I import it from China at great expense. You must wear it about you, and every time you use it you must do it in the name of God; so you see there can be no demon about it. By means of this charm I have brought together husbands and wives who have been apart for three years, and I say a woman who can do that is doing good, and there is no demon about her. While you wear it you will not die, or meet with bad luck, but it will change the whole current of your life."

She then told our unlucky delegate to make a wish and she would tell him by the cards whether he could have it or not—the answer was in the negative, and it was evident that nothing but the *Chinese Ruling Planet Charm* would save him, and no less than \$50 worth of that. So the smiling Madame returned to the charge. "If you will take my advice as a friend, take the charm; it is for your sake only that I say 'this, for I make nothing by it—but I feel an interest in you, and I wish you would buy the charm for my sake as well as your own, for I want to see its effect on a fortune so bad as yours. If you don't buy it, 'and all kinds of ill-fortune befalls you, don't say I didn't warn you, and don't call Madame Clifton a 'humbug; but if you do buy it, you may be sure that you will ever bless the day you saw Madame Clifton.'"

Our reporter didn't have with him the \$50—to pay for the charm, but intimated that he would call again, after he got his year's salary. She then said: "If you happen to call when I am engaged, tell the girl to say 'that you want to see me about medicine, and I will see you, for I never put off anybody who wants medicine—no matter who is with me, say medicine, and I will see you instantly.'" Here she softly showed our reporter to the door and then on him until he stood on the outside steps. He then departed, secretly wondering what kind of "medicine" she was prepared to furnish in case any unlooked for occasion should suggest a second call upon Madame Clifton.

Mrs. Hayes, the clairvoyant of No. 176 Grand street, is the person to whom our reporter next paid his respects. A description of that gifted lady and of her manner of doing business, will form the subject of the next article.