

Bill Nye Visits a Professional Star Reader.

HIS PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE.

Interesting Information for One Dollar--Warned to Beware of Certain Bad Men.

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"Mad. La Foy de Graw," said I, bowing with the easy grace of a gentleman of the old school, "would you mind peering into the future for me about a half dollar's worth, not necessarily for publication, or cetera."

"Certainly not. What would you like to know?"

"Why, I want to know all I can for the money," I said in a bantering tone. "Of course I do not want to know what I already know. It is what I do not know that I desire to know. Tell me what I do not know, madam. I will detain you but a moment."

She gave me back my large, round half dollar and told me that she was already weary. She asked me to excuse her. She was willing to unveil the future to me in her poor, weak way, but she could not guarantee to let a large flood of light into the darkened basement of a benighted mind for half a dollar.

"You can tell me what year and on what day of what month you were born," said Madam Da Foy, "and I will outline your life to you. I generally require a lock of the hair, but in your case we will dispense with it."

"Does this horoscope which you are using this season give you any idea as to whether money matters will be scarce with me next week or otherwise, and if so, what had I better do about it?"

"Toward the last of the week you will experience considerable monetary prostration, but just as you have become dependent, at the very tail end of the week, the horizon will clear up, and a slight, dark gentleman, with wide trousers, who is a total stranger to you, will loan you quite a sum of money, with the understanding that it is to be repaid on Monday."

"Then you would not advise me to go to Coney Island until the week after next?"

"Certainly not."

"Would it be etiquette in dancing a quadrille to swing a young person of the opposite sex twice around at a select party, when you are but slightly acquainted, but feel quite confident that her partner is unmarried?"

"No, not at the present prices."

"So you predict an early marriage, with threatening weather and strong prevailing easterly winds along the Gulf States?"

"Yes, sir."

"And is there no way that this early marriage may be evaded?"

"No, not unless you put it off till later in life."

"Thank you," I said, rising, and looking out the window, over a broad sweep of undulating alley and wind-swept roof; "and now, how much are you out on this?"

"Sir!"

"What's the damage?"

"Oh, \$1."

"But, don't you advertise to read the past, present, and future, for only fifty cents?"

"Well, that is where a person has had other information before in his life, and has some knowledge to begin with; but where I fill up a vacant mind entirely, and store it with facts of all kinds and stock it up so that it can do business for itself, I charge a dollar. I can not thoroughly refit and refurnish a mental tenement, from the ground up, for fifty cents."

"I do not think we have as good 'astrologists' now as we used to have. Astrologists can not crawl into the tent and pry into the future as they could three or four thousand years ago."

"Well, what is your business?"

"I am a professional star reader."

"What is your business?"

"You know my business for natural history. Well, scarcely a week passes that I do not go into the country botanizing. That day I went to Glencree, where, as you know, the marshy meadows are rich in curious plants, infusoria, and diatoms. I was returning, and was almost in Dublin with my box full of rare specimens, on which I expected to make a report that would astonish the botanical society, when I saw a little girl certainly not more than five or six years old, who was all alone, crying as if her little heart would break. I approached her, but at sight of me she redoubled her cries. I could see that the little one was lost, and that she did not know where to go; so I spoke to her kindly, and, by dint of promising her unlimited bonbons, got her to tell me that her name was Lizzie, and that she lived near Beresford Place, in Lower Abbey street. I took her hand, and we soon started off, talking like old friends. She was a beautiful child, fresh and rosy, with great, candid eyes and fair hair, which was cut short over her eyes and fell in golden ringlets about her shoulders. She trotted bravely along, her soft, little hand holding my great, rugged paw confidently. As we walked she told me remarkable tales, in which figured a big, black horse, a little knife, a doll, and a number of people I did not know.

Lizzie was afraid she would be scolded when she arrived at home, but she was not, and I—I was received with transports by her mother, who was half distracted. Never was gratitude expressed so heartily and pleasantly. Who was I, where did I happen to find her, and a thousand like questions were showered upon me.

"Oh, Mr. Furniss," said the mother, "you are the savior of my child. How can we express our gratitude? We are not rich, but such a debt cannot be paid in gold. How happy my husband will be to repeat my thanks to you. He is still at his office, but—will you do us a great kindness; will you honor our humble board to-morrow? I shall have a savant here like yourself, and you two will enjoy each other's company. I am sure; and my husband will be so happy to have you."

I thanked her for the invitation, and promised to be on hand.

At the appointed hour I was shown into their modest parlor, and you may be sure the husband's gratitude was no less warmly expressed than the wife's. And little Lizzie threw her arms around my neck, and showered on me the innocent caresses of a happy child. I seemed, indeed, to be one of the family.

The dinner was a merry one, the savant seemed to be an interesting man—in brief, I passed an excellent evening.

The air had been heavy the whole day, and in the evening a storm came on. Thunder-claps succeeded one another without interruption, and the rain fell in torrents. Whether it was the effect of the storm, or I could not breathe comfortably, I could not set out for home, however, for it was late and my house was at some distance; but they insisted that I should stay. It would be foolish to expose myself to such a tempest when I was not feeling well; the mother begged me with such a good grace that I felt forced to remain and pass the night in that hospitable house. They ceremoniously conducted me to my room, and there wished me good night. I remember, even, that Lizzie had fallen asleep in her father's arms, and that I kissed her little cheek, pale by sleep, and her dimpled little arms.

Left alone, I began to undress slowly and warily about the room, as one always does when one sleeps in a strange place. I felt as if I should smother in the close atmosphere of the room. Before getting into bed I wanted to inhale a little of the outside air, and in spite of the roaring storm, I tried to open the window. It was a false window!

"Well, well!" I exclaimed, a little surprised.

I thought I would remove the chimney screen; it was a false chimney. I rushed to the door; it was locked! Fear seized me, and, holding my breath, I listened. The house was quiet; all seemed to be asleep. Then I inspected the room carefully, straining my ears for the least sound. On the floor, near the bed, I noticed spots; it was blood—dried and blackened blood! I shuddered, and a cold sweat stood out on my forehead.

When I recovered consciousness, the room had become silent again. But fright held me nailed to the spot. At length I decided to escape, and with what caution you can imagine. On tiptoe I gained the door, which had not been closed. Not a sound, not a breath. Feeling my way, I passed into the hall. I waited to see a head thrust suddenly from out the shadows, a knife gleam in the dark. But no; the brute, glutted with crime, slept without remorse. I descended the stairs, drew the bolt of the door, and, half fainting, with the blood frozen in my veins, I fell into the gutter of the deserted street.

Doctor Bertram had listened to my recital with the deepest interest.

"And there I found you, Mr. Furniss, and in what a state! Could you recognize the house?"

"Yes," I replied; "but to what end?"

"Well, let me cure you, and we shall then go together to the house of these assassins."

Eight days later the doctor and I stood in Lower Abbey street. I recognized the terrible house. All the blinds were drawn; in front of the door a placard was placed, bearing the legend: "To Let."

I inquired of the former residents from a neighbor.

"They have been gone a month and more," she replied. "It's a great pity, for they were very nice people." [Translated for the Argonaut from the French of Octave Mirbeau.]

"SWAMP ANGEL" INCIDENT.

As I have never seen the following anecdote in the Ledger, I will give it to the readers.

Colonel Serrel, of the New York Engineers, had the charge of the construction of the "Swamp Angel," at Morris Island, S. C., and being of an energetic constitution himself, and not afraid to enter swamps, his surprise can be imagined when one of his lieutenants, whom he had ordered to take twenty men and enter that swamp, said that "he could not do it—the mud was too deep."

Colonel Serrel ordered him to try. He did so, and returning with his men covered with mud said:

"Colonel, the mud is over my men's heads; I can't do it."

The Colonel insisted that it must be done, and told the lieutenant to make a requisition for anything that was necessary for the safe passage of the swamp.

The lieutenant did make his requisition in writing, and on the spot. It read as follows:

"I want twenty men eighteen feet long, to cross a swamp fifteen feet deep."

The joke was a good one. It secured, however, not a cent to the stature of the lieutenant or his twenty men, but rather his arrest for disrespect to his superiors.

The battery, nevertheless, was built with the aid of wheelbarrows and sand. Like Jonah's wheel, it sprang up in a night.

THE FACTS IN THE CASE.

Shakespeare caught the idea and clothed it in a pretty language when he made Juliet say: "Parting is such sweet sorrow that I shall say good night till it be to-morrow." But Lord love you she never said anything of the kind; of course she didn't. She said something like this: "But mercy, how late it is getting! There, I must tell you good night. Oh! did I tell you what a nice time we had at Mr. Tyball's house night before last? Such fun! I thought I would die a-laughing! What a fellow that Mercutio is! How he does run on! There, you really must go now. Do you remember that day we met at the ball? How you did stare at me. There, don't say you didn't. I had on my cream-colored satin that night. Do you think that Sarah Capulet is as pretty as they make her out? I don't; but dear me, good night, Romeo. Wait a minute, what was I wanted to tell you? Oh, yes; I know now," etc., etc., etc.—[Boston Transcript.]

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