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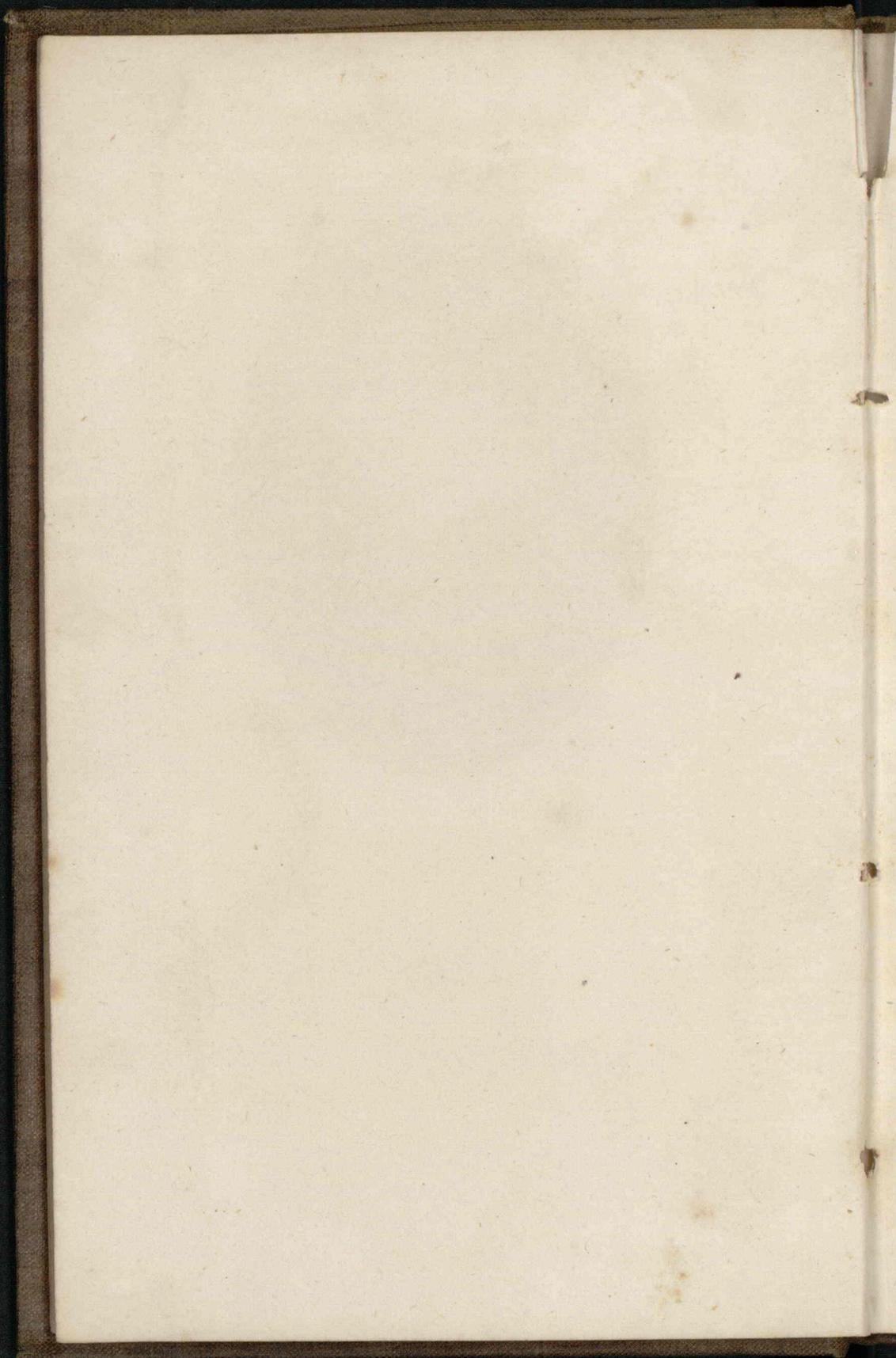
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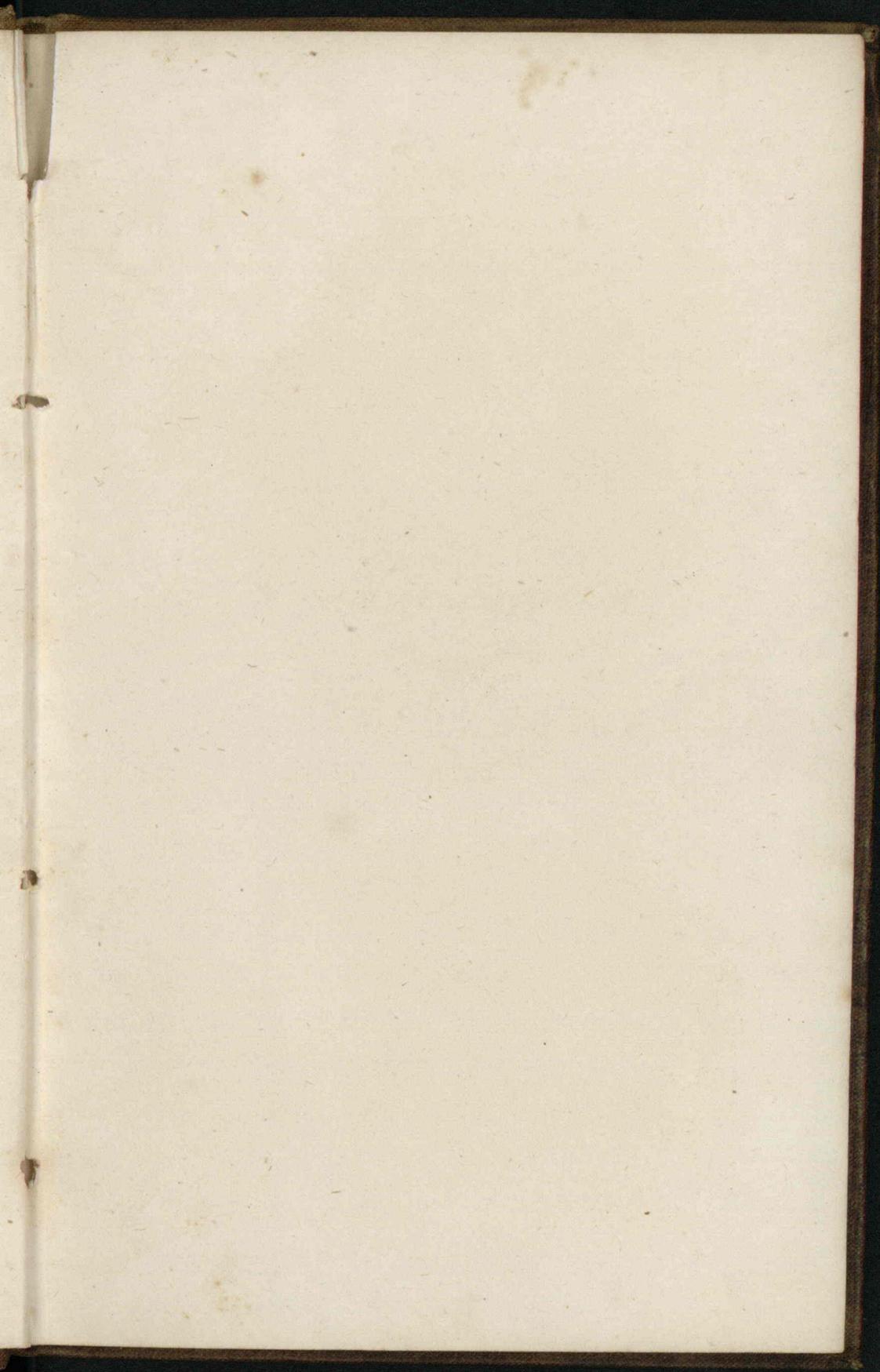
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P. 45

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VENTRILOQUISM
AND
JUGGLERS' TRICKS.

THE HISTORY OF THE

ARTS AND MANUFACTURES

OF GREAT BRITAIN

AND

VENTRILLOQUISM

AND

JUGGLERS TRICKS.

BY

JOHN HENRY

WATSON

VENTRILOQUISM EXPLAINED:

AND

JUGGLER'S TRICKS, OR LEGERDEMAIN

EXPOSED:

WITH REMARKS

ON

VULGAR SUPERSTITIONS.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO AN INSTRUCTOR.

*** 'that fantastic divination,
Which ancient Eucles did at first invent,
As, from his stomach, he contrived to bring
Words of import ridiculous.'

Trans. from Vespsis.

AMHERST, MS.

J. S. AND C. ADAMS.

1834.

VENTRILLOQUISM EXPLAINED

G.V. 1557

V44

Houdini Coll.

LETTERS ON LEGENDS

EXPOSED

WITH REMARKS

OR

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VULGAR SUBSTITUTIONS

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO AN INSTRUCTOR

Bequest of
Harry Houdini
April 1927

AMERICAN

J. S. AND C. ADAMS

1834



Ms. A. 9. 2. 24
45
To the Author of *Letters on Legerdemain,
and Ventriloquism.*

DEAR SIR.

I THANK you for the opportunity which you have given me, before its publication, to read your little work; which I have done with much interest and pleasure. In the general principles of your philosophy of these subjects, I coincide with you: and think that your explanation of particular cases will satisfy every intelligent and reasonable man, and thus tend, as I would hope, to weaken the hold which superstitious notions still maintain upon many a worthy mind, amid all the light of this century; and which, although they shoot not out into the monstrous distortions and excrescences which were witnessed in past times, do yet exert an enslaving influence upon the intellectual and religious character. So far as I can judge from the feats of ventriloquists which I have witnessed, and from the experimental illustrations which you have yourself given me, I do not doubt but you have hit upon the true theory of its mysteries: while most writers that I have seen, while they have said many good things on the subject, have violated one of the Newtonian rules of philosophising, by not assigning causes enough to account for all the phenomena. I hope your work may extensively circulate, and do as much good as I know it will afford of amusement.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD HITCHCOCK.

Amherst College, Jan. 24, 1834.

To the Author of Letters on Insuperableness
and Ventriolositas.

Dear Sir,

I THANK you for the opportunity which you have given me before the publication to read your little work; which I have done with much interest and pleasure. In the general principles of your philosophy of these subjects, I coincide with you; and think that your explanation of particular cases will satisfy every intelligent and reasonable man, and that, as I would hope, to weaken the hold which superstitious notions still maintain upon many a worthy mind, amid all the light of this century; and which, although they shoot not out into monstrous distortions and excesses which were witnessed in past times, do yet exert an existing influence upon the intellectual and religious character. So far as I can judge from the fears of ventriolositas which I have witnessed, and from the experimental illustrations which you have yourself given me, I do not doubt but you have hit upon the true theory of its mysteries: while most writers that I have seen, while they have said many good things on the subject, have violated one of the Newtonian rules of philosophy, by not assigning causes enough to account for all the phenomena. I hope your work may extensively circulate, and do as much good as I know it will afford of arrangement.

Sincerely yours,

EDWARD BITCHOCK

Amherst College, Jan. 24. 1834.

PREFACE

VENTRILQUISM has always been regarded as a mystery by the learned and illiterate. The former have generally regarded it as a freak of nature in the production of *unusual organs*. And in consequence, they have patronized ventriloquists with few scruples of conscience, as they would patronize any other exhibition of natural curiosities.

The illiterate part of community have gazed with solemn awe, at such feats, and have wasted many a winter evening in rehearsing to friends and children, '*the tricks of the black art man*,' thus perpetuating the most foolish and mischievous fears.

It has been for the interest of *ventriloquists to conceal their art*, and in conse-

quence, they have not been forward in explaining it to the public, and when they have pretended to do this, either want of inclination, or inability, has rendered their views very obscure. Other writers have, of necessity, labored under great disadvantages in treating of the subject, from their want of practical knowledge in it. The manner in which the author was led to pay attention to it is described in the letters, p. 122. He had then no intention of presenting his views to the public, and nothing but the urgent request of others and his own belief that an explanation might be useful has led him to do it. The matter was first prepared in the form of lectures and subsequently enlarged, in the form of letters addressed to a teacher, whose pupils heard one lecture on the subject, and who was desirous of further gratifying their curiosity. Readers may notice that some of the anecdotes vary from those versions of

them in common circulation. Where several forms of the same story have been met with, that best authenticated has been selected, though it has been difficult, in many cases, to make the selection, as of one anecdote given there are at least nine different versions.

Part of the 'views of ventriloquists,' were obtained with difficulty, through the medium of friends, interested in the subject, to whom the author would gratefully express his obligations. Others were readily given, upon personal or written application. Their striking similarity, not only to each other, but to the practice of the author, has greatly strengthened his confidence in the correctness of his theory.

The author addressed enquiries to gentlemen in different sections of the country, who generally concurred in saying that a work on this subject was needed, and gentlemen

who saw the work in its original form, advised to its publication. Other pressing duties have deterred the author from giving it a new form, which might perhaps have been desirable.

It is his hope and prayer, that these pages may exert some feeble influence, in compelling wandering jugglers to live by honest labor rather than by infamous deception; and that they may tend in some degree to dispel those mists of superstition, which have long brooded over the nations, but which must soon disappear before the dawn of millennial day.

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VENTRILOQUISM EXPLAINED.

PART I.

SUPERSTITIONS AND LEGERDEMAIN.

LETTER I.

Prevalence, and baneful effects of Superstitious notions.

MY DEAR SIR,

MY own views, in regard to the superstitions of our day, coincide essentially with those expressed in your letter. It is undoubtedly true, that the fears which were excited by the supposed influence of fallen spirits, at the time of what is called the 'Salem Witchcraft,'* have been generally dissipated by the gradual diffusion of Scientific principles. Indeed, few can be found, at least in our own favored country, who

* For a history of this awful scourge, see 'Upham's Lectures on Witchcraft.'

have any faith in the wonder-working power of hob-goblins.

But there is a painful uncertainty in the minds of many, as to the various phenomena of Legerdemain. They cannot ascribe them to supernatural causes, yet they can account for them in no other way. The tales of the nursery are ever present with their impressions of terror, and although we may silence their clamor by day, they may perhaps return with new phantasms by night, and take ample vengeance for the treatment they receive from common sense. It is certainly to be deplored that the minds of children are so early and so generally infected with superstitious dread. The reckless tongue of some ignorant domestic, or the heedless threat of some well-meaning, but foolish parent, may inflict mental suffering upon the child who has just learned to prattle, which words cannot express, nor life eradicate.

And such dread may be deeply rooted in the mind, by the occurrence of unexpected

and unaccountable events, while no cause has been given by parents or domestics. An instance lately occurred in the family of a clergyman, which is too appropriate to be neglected, as it not only illustrates the point, but affords an example of vigilance on the part of parents, well worthy of imitation. A little boy, four years old, was eating his supper at a table, in a room adjoining the parlor where his parents were sitting at tea. Not a syllable concerning the mysteries, either of nature, or art, had ever been dropped in the child's hearing. His parents were highly intelligent, and never allowed their son to remain with domestics, except in their presence. And he had never before exhibited any signs of fear. But on this occasion he was heard to utter a loud scream, and when his frightened mother reached his chair, she found his breath almost extinguished, his face pale, and his eyes fixed upon a *black kitten*, now for the first time exploring the corner of the room. As the child had seen cats, grey and white, before, it

seems that the *kitten's color* alone caused his fright. But why should color, merely, have thus affected him, if not associated in his imagination with some superstitious dread? And was not this dread instinctive?

The universal prevalence of superstition among all heathen and christian nations, and in all ages, proves that our race are naturally inclined to such fears.

If the example to which I have alluded were to be followed by all parents, and if they should be able and willing to explain the wonders, for which their children can discover no cause, the very instincts of children might be directed safely, and usefully. The child which was frightened to death in Birmingham, as recorded not long since in some periodical, by the unaccountable appearance of a mask, placed at the foot of its bed by a servant, affords another, among a thousand instances, of the fatal effects of superstitious fear, and is an unanswerable argument in favor of attention to this subject by parents. Had the parents of that

child been sufficiently careful, the event would never have occurred, for, if the child had seen the mask, it would have quietly waited to have its mother explain the strange appearance.

Mysteries do exist, and must probably exist forever; but it is an unpardonable offence to add to their number. Lectures upon scientific subjects have done much good throughout our country, but the dark deeds of mountebanks cannot be too severely reprobated. And I can give no better epithet than *mountebank* or *juggler*, to those penny-seeking idlers, who impose upon the public by their petty tricks of legerdemain. Many of our honest yeomen have been robbed of their shillings to see a man 'eat tow,' 'spit fire,' and 'swallow jacknives,' who have been repaid by nothing but a few idle tricks, which they themselves could easily perform, with a little instruction, and which, when performed, are of no possible utility.

It was with a view to prevent your pupils from being thus foolishly robbed, as you will

recollect, that I lately addressed them on the subject of ventriloquism.

Before entering upon that theme, however, in these letters, I deem it important to offer some suggestions respecting childish fears and legerdemain.

I am yours, &c.

L E T T E R I I .

Origin of superstitious views suggested, &c.

SINCE writing my last, I have had an interview with a few literary friends, who offered some remarks upon the origin of childish fears, which will, I think, be worth your notice. One gentleman, from the Southern section of the states, is of opinion that such fears are rarely met with, unless excited by suggestions of terror from servants. He stated that colored servants are invariably addicted to telling stories of ghosts and goblins to their master's children, and often make use of *terror* as a penalty among

their own children. His own superstitions, he is confident, arose wholly from this source.

A colored nurse was once detected in his own family, in the very act of personating an evil spirit, to frighten a child.

Another gentleman, whose childhood was passed in Boston, corroborated this opinion by his personal experience. He could distinctly recollect the frequent forebodings of an unmarried aunt, whom he sometimes visited, who perceived death in every accident, and an imp in every shadow. And he stated that even now, when every other vestige of childhood has disappeared, the rustling of a leaf in the solitude of a grove, or the echo of some indistinct sound, will send his blood back to his heart with momentary trepidation.

The childhood of several others furnished similar testimony. One of our circle, who was educated, in part, in the county of Worcester, Mass. mentioned numerous instances of youthful fright, occasioned by the wild tales of his landlord.

After having listened to the awful adventures of a family, in which a mother had died, her death having been predicted, as they supposed, by the song of a whip-poor-wil, the snapping of the fire, and several ticks of the death-watch, he was almost deprived of life by seeing a huge ghost, accompanied by various other wonders, all of which were soon transformed, by the approach of a light, into white sheets.

Could you have heard the opinions expressed by these gentlemen, you would no longer have doubted as to the wisdom of your present plan of explaining all cases of natural magic to your pupils, which you have power to explain.

As before suggested, there seems to be an instinctive fear of the supernatural in the minds of children, and every unexplained phenomenon increases that fear. I recollect myself having been terribly alarmed at a rumbling over my head, which often disturbed my youthful slumbers, but which ceased to terrify, when I had traced it to

the effect of wind, upon a lightning-rod. The family of a near relative was haunted for years by a loud moaning, heard at midnight, and at noon, in an upper chamber. Having heard the sound, which certainly bore no faint resemblance to a dying groan, I was happily successful in dispelling all the alarm it excited, by tracing it to an old clock, whose pendulum, swinging a little farther at the hour of twelve, gently rubbed against the door of its case.

Both these instances, had they never been explained, would have greatly tended to confirm my own half-formed faith in the active agency of limbless sprites.

I would not say that all such hidden sources of wonder can be brought to light. My belief is that nearly all may be discovered, and my axiom for practice is, that *all effects have a cause*, and that in our day, *material changes have a material cause*, whatever may have been the case in the day of miracles.

I trust that I shall be able to make this

appear in regard to 'slight of hand,' and 'ventriloquism' by *tracing the principles* upon which *natural causes* produce, apparently, *unnatural results*. And another anecdote may serve to show, that persevering investigation will often bring to light the most mysterious sources of astonishment, though they may long elude discovery. I am personally acquainted with the gentleman to whom I allude, a clergyman, of high repute. He was attracted, during a restless attempt to sleep, at midnight, by a bright appearance, of the size of a dollar, upon the ceiling of his bed room. Every light, and every fire in the house was out, and no neighboring light met his eye, as he surveyed his vicinity for some source of this phenomenon. The moon shone full, but his room faced the west, and she had but just commenced her career through the skies, so that he could not attribute the light to her rays, unless by reflection; and on mounting a chair, he discovered that the range of vision outside of the window, was wholly in the shade, when

the observer placed his eye near the illuminated spot. It could not be phosphorescent, for it was transferred to his hand when that was placed before the place. After an hour's fruitless search, and when almost compelled to regard the appearance as supernatural, he chanced to perceive a small round opening in a door, through which, as he looked, placing his eye in the vicinity of the luminous spot, he saw a small reflecting surface in an adjoining apartment, upon which the rays of the moon were falling through a window. Had he not been persevering in his efforts, this little circumstance would probably have been connected with similar incidents, and the death of a relative, which soon followed, might have been regarded as a predicted calamity. If such imaginary omens should serve to remind us of the shortness of life, they might be useful, although their supposed prophetic enunciations, generally prove false so soon as they assume a definite shape.

Let me urge your pupils, my dear Sir, to be always careful to detect, as far as possible, all secret causes of wonder.

LETTER III.

Brief outline of modern Auguries.

THOSE of your pupils who are versed in the mythological fables of ancient literature, may be surprised at the mention of augury, as existing in our day, and especially in our country. But though few have any faith in witchcraft, many, even among professing christians, are not yet free from some lingering belief in omens. As such belief tends greatly to favor the opinion that legerdemain and ventriloquism are also supernatural, I propose to name a few of these 'ominous circumstances,' for the benefit of such of your younger pupils as have not yet divested themselves of that impression. Naming them alone will be almost sufficient, I think, to show their folly. I would not be understood as discarding all prognostications of weather, for the experience of the weather-beaten sailor must furnish many correct data, from long observation, but I refer to such

supposed premonitions, as can only be ascribed to supernatural causes.

The negroes, at the South, have been already mentioned as much given to superstition. They have set of a notions, respecting dreams, spilling water, and salt, &c. which must have been brought, in part, from their native shores. In addition to these, they readily imbibe every new omen of which they hear. They suppose the 'incubus,' or 'night-mare,' to be an actual blow, or death-grasp of an evil spirit, and often place some small grain on a looking-glass, near their beds, to feed him, and thus bribe him to depart, with numerous similar practices.

Sailors have many singular superstitions. They are generally fond of the marvelous, and from thence suppose that the particular sounds of the wind—the roaring of the waves—the twinkling of the stars, and the influence of the moon, are presages of good or evil.

They concur with the rustics of all coun-

tries, in ascribing baneful results to the rays of the full moon. A sea captain of talent, and perfect honesty, lately said, that he had been himself poisoned by partaking of a fish, which had been thus exposed, and had seen a bright dollar oxydated by being exposed in a fish's mouth to the full midnight moon, while another, similarly placed in another fish, *in the shade*, remained *perfectly bright*.

They also concur with the rustics in ascribing evil to the rays of 'Sirius,' or the 'Dog Star,' and regard the accidental exposure of food, or of any thing, at particular times, ominous of some catastrophe upon themselves, or friends.

Some Farmers are also very notional in regard to their seeds, planting, and all their agricultural business. They have a system of rules as to planting corn, beans, &c. which render a failure in following them, a sure sign of the loss of their crops. They believe, that bushes must be cut, all in four days, in the latter part of August, or they

will sprout up again; and they must kill swine in 'the old of the moon,' or pork will shrink up, and be unpalatable when cooked. During the Revolutionary struggle, these whims were very pernicious among the soldiery, and without a doubt more than once decided the fate of battle. Even while I am writing, a man stands at my door, whom I have sometimes employed to perform some little jobs of work, insisting that it will storm tomorrow, *for he saw a large circle, with one star in it, round the last evening's moon, and if my wood is not sawed before the storm, it will all burn to ashes;* probably implying by the last phrase, that it will be less capable of emitting heat.

I need not mention the death-watch, nor the cooing of a mateless dove, nor the screech of the owl, nor the moon, seen over the left shoulder, as all will remember the traditionary tales of horror, founded upon their predictions of calamity. But do they thus predict? Certainly not, except so far as they are phenomena, which long observa-

tion has noticed, as usually preceding the events they are supposed to designate; and that, only when Philosophy shows the 'why and wherefore' in the case. Thus the clouds, which form the ring, portend rain or snow, though the ring itself may be the only indication of their existence. And the food, commonly given at a particular time of the month, may cause the supposed diminution in pork, killed in time of 'new moon.'

The few omens which I have suggested, may assist your youthful charge in discovering and explaining others.

LETTER IV.

Legerdemain—Its History, and origin.

THE skill which individuals have acquired in doing wonderful things, by slight of hand or 'legerdemain,' is certainly very surprising, and I cannot blame the lads, whom you mention as doubting the practicability of an explanation.

But the wonders thus exhibited, are not greater than nature constantly exhibits, 'in every leafy grove,' nor are they half so inexplicable. There is a cause for every phenomenon, and the whole art of the juggler is to conceal that cause. Before searching into the mysteries of the 'black art,' it will be best to inquire into its history and origin.

We can clearly trace the feats of the wandering juggler of our day back through English history, through the dark ages, and even through the whole history of the world, with sufficient accuracy to feel assured, that its full history would require much more time for delineation than I can bestow, or your pupils desire. I content myself, therefore, with a brief outline. About 2300 years after the creation, we find an instance of deception, which, though it can hardly be called legerdemain, seems to show that handicraft was not then unknown. A young man was requested by his father to hunt some game, and cook some venison. The father was rather aged, and promised to give his son a

blessing, on his return. A brother of the young man, however, cooked a kid, and so adroitly concealed his deception, that he succeeded in personating his brother, and stole the promised blessing. (See Gen. Chap. 27.)

The Egyptians too, 1500 years before Christ, were considerable masters of slight of hand, as appears from Exodous Chap. 7, verses 11, 12, and 22. 'Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt they also did in like manner with their enchantments for they cast down every man his rod and they become serpents. * * * * And the magicians of Egypt did so with their enchantments,' &c.

I shall not give any detailed history of the tricks of the ancient priests. Their whole literature teems with proof of the extensive application of jugglery in all their religious rights. As Dr. Brewster states in his 'Letters on Natural Magic,' the secret use of ancient discoveries in science has hidden many of them from modern view. They

‘killed and made alive’ by means of soporific drugs, they taught statues to speak and sing, they caused fountains of water, and fountains of oil to break forth at will. Marble wept, and wooden birds flew, and golden seats, ‘with three legs, walked.’

Divination by examining slain beasts was manifestly ‘an art of cunning device,’ as was divination by birds, which are at the present day taught to fly, and return at the signal of their master. I need not mention here their use of ventriloquism to aid legerdemain, as I shall speak of that more fully hereafter. Simon Magus was a skillful magician certainly, but the conviction produced in his mind by seeing real miracles, proves his whole art to have consisted in mere handicraft. The miracles of the Catholic Fathers are allowedly mere chemical experiments, and such they have ever been, according to their ablest chroniclers. The early history of Scotland is fraught with wonders, which might easily be reacted by a performer of our day.

As an exemplification of the 'art' at the present day, I will briefly describe what I was witness to, in early youth, while travelling in one of the Eastern states. A 'professor of legerdemain' was to perform. He was standing on a kind of stage, as I entered, with a table before him, on which were displayed cups, papers, images, &c. He made a short, flattering speech, and commenced by folding a sheet of paper, as he said, 'curiously.' He then distributed a few cards to the company, and a little image nodded and struck a bell, to point out their situation, according to his repeated queries. He loaded a pistol with a ladies ring, fired it---took a ladies glove, put it in a box, which he locked, opened the box, and, lo! the glove was not there, but a beautiful dove came out with the ring in its mouth. He fired a pistol, loaded with a bullet, and caught the bullet, to all appearance, as it left the barrel, on the point of a penknife, having exhibited it, marked before loading, and afterwards showing the bullet marked on his knife. He ap-

peared to swallow a large jack-knife. He made an egg jump up and down on a table, and then run all over his own body. He appeared to send a small image through a table saying 'Presto, Presto,' &c. to it. He made a paper man dance a reel to martial music. He made an old man talk in a small box, and a pig squeal, and a chicken peep. He asked a lady to choose an egg from a basket, and she having picked out one she thought good, he hatched it in her hand, and out came what appeared to be a little yellow chicken. He asked a man to choose a pack of cards, and afterwards found a mouse in the pack. He suspended a cent by a cotton thread, burned the thread, and the cent still 'hung in air.' And to close the whole, he ate tow, spit fire, and pulled ribbands out of his mouth.

This can hardly be called a history or a description, of the art, I am well aware, but time forbids my adding more.

The origin of legerdemain must be found in the natural superstitions of ancient days.

Princes and priests could obtain ascendancy over common minds in no other way so well, and they sedulously cultivated mysteries, and have handed them down to us, in a thousand forms.

For a full outline of them, and for a philosophical delineation of their secrets, I would refer your pupils to Dr. Brewster on 'Natural Magic,' and to the Encyclopedias.

I will improve the earliest opportunity, which my other duties afford, to offer an explanation of these performances, with a view of the principles upon which such results appear.

LETTER V.

Principles of legerdemain exemplified.

I was much interested in this subject in early childhood, and had discovered before my tenth year, that it was an easy matter to frighten my friends, by doing what they considered wonderful. I will try to amuse your

pupils by a review of my childish pranks as a ventriloquist, when I come to speak more particularly respecting that art, but I will mention a single instance, in which a natural cause was made to subserve a roguish end, by working upon the heated imagination. A cousin of mine had come from a distant town to make the family a visit. He was about twenty three years of age, and manly in all his deportment. One day as he was sitting by me in a drawing room, I suddenly started from my seat and asked him the day of the month, he replied, 'the 10th of March.' 'Is it?' said I, in a tone of great of great apparent alarm. I then looked at a watch, hanging on the shelf, and exclaimed in a solemn tone, 'Cousin! you must *leave this room, or be frightened.*' He supposed me joking, as I was in fact. I then told him that in just five minutes, if he continued in the room, he would hear a *knocking on the back of the stove*, and in ten minutes he would *hear his name called* from the same place. He laughed at me, but as the time drew near, I bolted the

door, and pretended to be violently agitated. The five minutes were passed, and knock, knock, knock, was heard on the stove back, though I did not stir. My cousin was alarmed. He had read Mather's Magnalia, and so had I. He tried to leave the room, but I had hid the key, and now, with all the strength I could muster, I assailed him and threw him into a chair, saying, in a harsh tone, 'you need not think you are going to escape so. You shall stay now five minutes longer, and hear your own name.' He heard his name, and was completely overcome with fright at the supposed presence of a wizard, in the shape of his dear cousin. Some of the youth, whom I lately addressed in your Academy, would probably have joined him, had they been present, in leaving the room as soon as possible. But I soon satisfied him as to the manner in which I had perpetrated the roguery. I had often heard a similar knocking, and with some effort, had traced it to the noise occasioned by a brickboard, (placed against the door of an oven, above

which, thirty feet from the little room where we sat, the stove-pipe entered the chimney.) Here a little girl was scouring knives. She jarred the door, and the sound was continuously reflected till it reached the back of the stove, whence it seemed to originate. I had told the little girl to knock on the door at exactly 10, A. M. and to open the door and call out my cousins name at five minutes past 10. It only remained for me to 'play my part' with him, by appearing to predict, without having planned it beforehand. I give this as an introductory anecdote, but must add that it was a roguish freak, which I now wholly disapprove, for I was greatly criminal in using the necessary deception, and were I to retrace my juvenile steps, I would leave out this and all similar exhibitions of folly.

It is to the attention, thus early paid to the subject, however, that I owe what little knowledge I have of 'practical wonders,' and I am willing to use it, now that it is acquired, for public good.

I shall aim to offer the principles of what the vulgar call 'the black art,' by a brief abstract of them in the outset, and with a pretty extended detail of their application. The latter were discovered in childhood, elicited from performers themselves, compiled from miscellaneous writings, or taken from systems of Legerdemain by masters of the art. You must excuse extracts from the writings of others, many of which I shall give without name, and some of which are anonymous in the works from which they are taken.

A distinction must be made between *real* and *pretended* miracles, or marvelous tricks.

A miracle must be obvious to every spectator's perception, without any concealment whatever, and must be obviously opposed to all the known laws of Nature. Marvelous events are only wonderful, because their cause is concealed, though natural causes do exist.

Peter and John healed a lame beggar, who immediately leaped and walked, before

a vast multitude. All saw what was done, with no instrumentality but words; 'and they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.' All acknowledged it a miracle. There was no concealment, no deception. There could have been none, amid such a throng. Aaron's rod became a serpent. It was a miracle. The magicians cast serpents out from their hollow rods, and concealed their rods again. This was merely a *pretended miracle*, or piece of *jugglery*. And when Moses had been directed to perform wonders, which jugglery could not reach, the magicians said unto Pharaoh. 'This is the finger of God.'*

M. Eusebe Salvertè, has given to the world a treatise on the occult sciences, in which he endeavors to explain away real miracles, by referring many of them to natural causes.

* For fuller thoughts on this point see Abercrombie on the Intell. Powers. Also Dwight's Theology—and various Treatises on the marvelous.

I would carefully avoid suggesting such thoughts to your pupils. Raising the dead, healing diseases, and bestowing supernatural gifts, as exhibited in the word of God, can only be ascribed to his own omnipotence. But while we wonder and adore at such displays of his power and goodness, we must not assume that such power is delegated to fallen spirits, or to men, in our day, for base purposes of gain.

The first great principle, upon which the deceptions of handicraft are founded, is the great tendency of the human race to superstition, which occupied our attention in my first three letters. Others I must defer for my next letter.

LETTER VI.

Principles of Legerdemain, continued.

THERE is something in the very announcement of a singular feat to be performed,

which heats the imagination, and prepares us for being more easily deceived. Every juggler is well aware of this, and makes all possible use of it. The following directions to a young performer, taken from an old work, drawn up by a man of experience in the 'art,' contain a full acknowledgment of this fact.

'The exhibitor must be possessed of great presence of mind, and set a good face upon the matter, even at the worst of times: he must have much boldness, and an undaunted spirit; he must be glib of tongue, and able to speak many strange words and sayings, which pertain to no known language; he must also be able to contort and writhe his limbs and face, if need require, to mystify his audience. Let him be thus ready, and the excited admiration of his audience will be easily led to disbelieve their very senses.'

In addition to the ludicrous predisposition, to credit such pretensions, which is so well delineated in the old American play, called 'the conjurer,' which your pupils have all

probably seen, jugglers are governed by certain *rules of action*, although most of them are too illiterate to know any thing more of these than their practical application. They are, '1. Act with great *apparent carelessness*, while at the same time every motion must be, in fact, *rapid* and *highly* dexterous.

2. Every device must be employed, to fix the attention of the audience upon something *remote from yourself*, while performing any feat.

3. While all *appears* to be open and unconcealed, you must have abundant means of concealment, and of assistance, provided beforehand.

4. You must be familiar with such chemical phenomena as are applicable to your purpose, and preparations for such phenomena should be previously made while you *appear* to have made *no previous preparation*.

5. Numerous images, and curious devices must be presented to the audience, merely to beguile them by anticipation of something

different from that you are about to perform to assist in securing the object of rule 2d. For this purpose, cups with false bottoms, &c. must be provided in abundance.'

These rules alone have been sufficient to enable many a straggler to gain a wizard's fame, even in the sober hamlets of N. England. They apply to numberless feats, and explain almost every wonder of Legerdemain, and are also, in part, applicable, as we shall see, to ventriloquism. My illustrations of them must be necessarily detached, as they are found in many different authors and selected from a vast variety of other matter. I trust, however, they will answer my purpose, notwithstanding that infelicity.

An eminent author states, 'that if he could have obtained them, he should hardly have given rules of Legerdemain to the public, for though if it be proper to make the existence of such an art known, it will readily occur to every reflecting mind, that the attainment of it should not be rendered easy to those who might make it subservient to

purposes of deception and concealment.' However plausible language like this may be as a veil for ignorance, I am not disposed to adopt it. My letters are not addressed to mountebanks. *They* rarely search *books* or *manuscripts* for their art. But I am hoping, by calling the attention of youth to the subject, to diffuse some information respecting jugglery among those, who, while too much enlightened to practise it, have not been sufficiently enlightened, in many instances, to avoid being deceived.

L E T T E R V I I .

Legerdemain—Examples explained.

Catching a marked bullet, fired from a pistol, on the point of a pen-knife.—ANON.

' ISABELLA was young when she left Scotland, and was, at first, reluctant to attend the show. But her brother urged, and her parents rather favored the plan, and her pru-

dish doubts soon gave way. The whole scenery of the theatre awed her, for she never saw a stage before, where 'living statues aped the ways of man.' Senior Carvelli, stood behind a dresser of oak upon which lay a pistol, some powder, and a saucer of bullets. Taking up the saucer, he asked her brother to examine them. He did so, and pronounced them all solid lead. The pistol was then presented for examination; after which the performer requested some one present to mark a bullet, and load the pistol. This having been done, at his positive request, it was aimed at *Carvelli's heart*, from the farther end of the stage, and fired. A ball instantly appeared stuck upon the point of a knife, which he had placed before his heart, and which, upon being examined, was pronounced to be the self-same ball which was marked and inserted in the barrel, &c.?

EXPLANATION—*by a performer.*

The pistol was two-barrelled, the lower

barrel appearing to be the place for the ramrod. The larger, upper barrel had no connection with the trigger. This not being suspected, when the pistol was examined, escaped the notice of the man who loaded it, and when it was fired, the lower barrel, (which had been previously loaded,) gave a loud report, and while every spectator's eye was directed *towards the pistol*, Carvelli, marked a bullet very adroitly, and sticking it upon his knife, was prepared for the trick.

Nailing a card to the wall, by a pistol shot.

LETTER FROM A FRIEND.

‘ A stranger was asked to take a card from a number handed him, and tear off a part of it, that he might know it again. A saucer was then brought in from behind the screen, and the stranger was requested to burn the card, and put the ashes into the saucer. This being done, powder was mixed with the ashes, and a pistol was charged with the powder and ashes. Instead of ball, a marked nail was put into the barrel. The

pistol was then fired, with some strange motions of the performer, and the burned card appeared nailed to the wall. The stranger, who marked them both, declared that the card and nail were the very same which he had selected and marked before the pistol was loaded. If any thing can be more indicative of magical power, I never saw it.'

EXPLANATION—*from an old Grammar of Magic.*

'When the performer sees that the card is torn, he takes it, goes out to get a saucer, and while out, leaves the torn card, tearing a similar card in the same way. This he gives to the man who tore it, (the man not knowing but it is the same one,) and asks him to burn it. The ashes, mixed with gunpowder, must be put into a pistol, with a nail which has been marked. The performer then goes behind the screen for a ramrod, and marks another nail as that was marked, and when priming the pistol, adroitly takes out the nail. The performer then says over

sundry magic words, fires the pistol, and at the same instant, his assistant behind the curtain, pulls it aside a little, and the torn card, appears, having been stuck up by him just before the firing.'

Putting a ring into a pistol, and after the pistol is fired, finding the ring in a box, in the bill of a dove, although the box had been found empty a moment before.

I have myself seen this done. The explanation is from, 'Nicherson's Hocus Pocus.'

A ring was borrowed from a lady, and a gentleman present was requested to load a pistol with it. He did so. The pistol was fired, and the gentleman was told that he would be compelled to pay for the ring. A box was then passed round for examination, and was certainly empty. The box was then locked, and a ribband wound round it, which was tied and sealed with wax. After having rested a few moments on the table during which the performer spoke several sentences of outlandish gibberish, the box

was opened, and found to contain a tame dove, and the ring was in the dove's bill.

This trick is thus explained.

‘After the pistol is loaded with ring, &c. the performer takes it, to show how it is to be managed, and secretly smuggles out the ring. It is then dropped under the table, where the assistant takes it, and by a trap door, or lid in the table, and through a false bottom in the box, puts in the dove, with the ring in its mouth, while the performer mutters strange words. Or the performer may do it by concealing the dove in his coat, and putting it into the box through the false bottom while his back is turned to the audience. The latter method is practised by those who are perfectly expert in handicraft.

Shooting birds, and bringing them to life.—ANON.

‘A robin was placed on the table in a coarse wire cage. A gun was loaded with small shot, and fired at the bird, which immediately appeared to fall dead from its perch. The performer then took up the

bird, threw it on the table, and called over it certain hard words for a few minutes, when the bird began to kick, hopped up, and at last flew off and lighted on a post in one end of our hall.

EXPLANATION.

The shot was not leaden, but made of quicksilver, and flour, and pulverized gunpowder. When fired, the shot, of course, evaporated instantly, and the bird, unhurt, was stunned by the noise, and the fumes of the quicksilver and powder, but soon resumed its vigor, appearing to come to life.

This trick, Nickerson asserts, is sometimes performed with simple quicksilver in its natural state.

LETTER VIII.

Legerdemain.—Further Examples.

You ask me to continue my illustrative anecdotes, so as to explain *all* the common feats of jugglers. You are not aware, I pre-

sume, that such illustrations would occupy many letters, and perhaps serve for very little benefit, save to satisfy mere curiosity. However interesting a few such anecdotes may be, any one who will try to read through the work of Nickerson, of which I have spoken, will readily perceive that they soon become insipid. It will be my purpose to give a few more, and my young friends must not complain if I give them but a few.

In turning over my old letters, I lately found one, sent me some time since, which I will transcribe entire. It is from a friend in the interior of Massachusetts, a plain, common-sense man, who had become interested in this subject during a previous conversation with me.

‘My dear sir. Will you do me the favor, if you are able, to explain the following feat of what is called legerdemain, of which I was myself an eye witness.

A gentleman was conversing on this subject in my sitting room, since you were with me, who made some observations, the truth

of which I questioned. To prove his assertions plausible, he said to me that he could make any name appear on the back of his hand. I could not believe him, and he offered to do it, and he asked me what I should like to see on his hand. I told him, my own name. He then asked for a pitcher of water, and having brought his gloves from his hat in the entry, he drank some of the water, wetting his two forefingers with it. He then showed me the back of his hand. No name was there, and I could not help laughing at him. He continued drinking, notwithstanding that, and held his fingers still, and opposite to each other, on his knee. I watched him closely, and know that he did nothing with his hand after showing it to me, but within five minutes *my name appeared! distinctly delineated!* not with ink, nor in any color, but *swelled up, and like type, elevated considerably*; I saw it, and *felt it* to be my very name. There was no deception, for others saw it as well as myself. It could not be the action of muscles, nor the

influence of water, and I could see no cause for it. Now, sir, if you can satisfactorily explain to me this phenomena, I shall be certainly greatly obliged to you. I do not believe it to be witchcraft, but it looks like it.'

I have not the answer which I sent to the above. I remember that I afterwards heard that a young man who saw the trick, tried to imitate it, but after swallowing a considerable quantity of water, he gave it up, finding that his efforts were not successful. I remember also receiving another letter on the same affair, from a young man who saw it, and who gave some additional particulars. I gave the following reply, in substance, and have often seen the gentleman who performed the wonder since, and he has confirmed my explanation.

Some skins are peculiarly thin, and tender. My own is so, and a slight scratch produces, in such cases, a very considerable swelling. The performer was a man whose skin was thus tender, and whose disposition was

quite jocose. He marked the name on his hand when he 'went out for the gloves,' with a pin-head, and the consequent swelling took place in a few minutes. Almost any one, especially if of a nervous temperament, may repeat the experiment. Writing any name rather hard, on the back of most hands, will cause it to look red and swell in time. Other cutaneous wonders have been exhibited on the same plan, repeatedly, and no tricks excite so much astonishment.

Knives are 'swallowed' by slipping them into the sleeve, or into a handkerchief in the lap.

Tow is 'eaten,' by *spitting it out*, when taking in a new mouthful, and fire is 'spit out' by putting into the mouth burning tow, and blowing it out as it burns, while care is taken, by the moistened tongue, to keep the mouth from being burned.

Eggs are made 'to dance' by putting in quicksilver in a sealed quill, when the egg is just boiled and hot; and by putting a live bat into two half egg shells, neatly glued together

and painted white; and often by means of hairs, attached to them, and moved by the hand, a cane, or an accomplice out of sight. In the latter way cards, and paper images are made to dance to music, and to jump about.

I presume that by this time, your pupils are satisfied that *magic* is '*natural*' rather than '*supernatural*,' and can easily see, that the man who plays the fool in this idle exhibition of wonders, is no fit object for either charity, or patronage. A boy can write a name on a white plaistered wall with a bit of tallow. The marks will not be seen unless a hat or something similar be struck over the spot, but then, the fur and dust will make the word visible. But, though this is wonderful to the ignorant spectator, it requires no magic, no '*supernatural*,' nor '*unnatural*' powers to perform it. And we may find that in ventriloquism no wonderful organs are employed, and but moderate art is necessary. My next will commence that interesting topic, which we have so long delayed.

VENTRILOQUISM EXPLAINED.

PART II.

LETTER IX.

Definition of Ventriloquism.

THE art of speaking so that the source of sound cannot be easily detected has received various names, as Gastriloquism, Engastrimythism, &c. Various powers have been ascribed to the ventriloquist in different ages. Some have regarded him as superhuman, and blended his deception with fabulous legends of witchcraft. Chambers defines it 'the power of speaking inwardly, with a peculiar art of forming speech, so that the voice, proceeding out of the thorax, to a bystander seems to come from a distance.'

In Dobson's Philadelphia Encyclopedia, it is defined, 'an art by which certain persons

can so modify their voice as to make it appear to the audience to proceed from any distance, and from any direction.' In the Universal Cyclopaedia, we find it described, as 'a term applied to persons who speak inwardly, by drawing air into the lungs, so that the voice seems to come in any direction.' Nicholson states that, 'by it, the human voice, and other sounds, are rendered audible, as if they proceeded from various different places, though the utterer does not change his place, and in many cases does not appear to speak.'

Good states that the Ventriloquist 'is well known to have the power of modifying his voice in such a manner as to imitate the voices of different persons, conversing at a considerable distance from each other, and in various tones.'

Dr. Brewster says, that 'ventriloquism loses its distinctive character, if its imitations are not performed by a voice from the stomach.'

Dugald Stewart, however, regards it as

‘the effect of imagination excited by the deceptions of extraordinary powers of imitation,’ and thus defines it.

M. de la Chapelle regarded it in the same light, as did M. Richerand also. The Chevalièr Chapponier, in his Physiology of the human species,* concurs in the same opinion, adding ‘that the articulation appears to arise in the stomach and to be articulated in its cavities.’

Another writer under the name of Sena Sama, (probably feigned,) considers it, ‘the power of speaking without moving the muscles of the throat or face, with the addition of strong imitative powers.’

I have referred to these definitions, that your pupils may see the light in which the subject has been regarded by various men, and hereafter choose for themselves.

As will be seen in the following pages my

*I am happy to inform you, and your pupils, that you will probably be able to obtain this work soon, as I have been told that a gentleman of my acquaintance is now giving it an English dress.

own views coincide with those of Stewart, and Sena Sama.

In my future letters, I shall speak of the history of the art ; shall give a detail of anecdote respecting it ; shall give the explanations of various performers, and of different philosophical writers ; and shall subjoin my own views, with an explanation of the vocal organs.

LETTER X.

History of Ventriloquism. 'Witch of Endor.'

IT was known probably in the earliest ages of civilization. The Chevalièr Chapponier states, that 'the most ancient authors make mention of this manner of speaking.' Hippocrates in his fifth book on Epidemics, notices it at some length. M. de la Chapelle has been at great pains to establish the same point, ascribing oracles to the ingenious application of Ventriloquism by the priests.

The well authenticated fact, that Alexander the Great was invited on one occasion

‘to hear a man imitate the Nightengale’ is presumptive evidence of the same thing, that being one of the feats of modern ventriloquism.

Rolandus regards it thus in his Agglosostomographia.

Many learned men have ascribed the terror of Saul, at his interview with the Endor Witch, to the skill of a ventriloquist, aided by tricks of natural magic. As this matter is somewhat important, allow me to dwell on it to some extent. I would *state* the argument however, without *deciding* it.

The first argument is drawn from the story*—*Saul saw* nothing. The performer, the witch, *looked for him*. Saul only heard the voice, and the witch, if possessed of common sense, must have been able to predict that which Samuel had predicted before his death.† She also knew the strength of the Philistines, and that they probably must conquer, and knowing Saul’s temperament and

* See I. Sam. 24. chapter.

† See I. Sam. 13. ch. 14. v.

superstitious fearfulness, implied by his very consultation of herself, she could foresee that he would probably die. Her prediction might influence him to kill himself, as perhaps it did.‡

The second argument is drawn from the facts discovered respecting ancient oracles, and ancient magic, which must have been known, in some degree, very early. In Hercules' temple, in ancient Tyre, gods often rose, to all appearance, from a hallowed seat, composed of consecrated stone, and that, too, amid numerous assemblies. Pliny mentions this fact. At Tarsus, images of Esculapius were often thus exhibited; and Goddesses appeared to men, in the temple of Enguinum in Sicily.

Basil, Emperor of Macedonia, was shown his dead son, mounted on horseback, after having obtained the aid of Santaharen, a celebrated wonder worker, and prayer maker, of his times. All this was done by the use of

‡ See I. Sam. 31. ch. 4 v.

a concave mirror, and smoke, and tapestry paintings. We are told by Jamblicius, that 'the ancient magicians caused gods to appear among smoke.' Maximus, the conjurer, made Hecate's image laugh, by substituting a living statue for the marble one; and Damascius describes the appearance of Osinis, as such a painting, gradually formed, and disappearing on the wall, as a concave mirror, moved backward and forward from a screen, would produce.

Cellini tells a story of modern magic, which, while it may be all explained by the reflections of mirrors upon smoke, shows that the effects of such illusions are terrible. A Sicilian priest, a man of genius, and a scholar in Latin and Greek literature, offered to display the mysteries of necromancy to him.

The priest warned him to *be resolute*, and, after taking him to the 'Hall of Secrets,' began to draw circles on the floor, &c. The company was placed within one of the circles; perfumes were thrown on the fire,

and the *amphitheatre* seemed to be filled with goblins, of horrible aspect. On another occasion, 'the necromancer having called by their names a multitude of demons, with his awful ceremonies, addressed their leaders in Hebrew, and also in Latin and Greek, insomuch that the *house was at once filled* with legions of demons, &c. These demons were actual phantasms, produced by concave lenses, reflecting paintings and images upon smoke which constantly arose from 'the incense, burned to conciliate the demons!'

Now if magic could create thousands of visible images, could not the necromancer of Endor (even if Saul had seen the raised shade himself,) have produced *one* image, upon smoke?

Another argument is drawn from the original text. Although the performer is said to 'have a familiar spirit, the Hebrew word 'ob' (plural 'oboth') is usually translated in the Septuagint by 'eggastrimuthos,' a ventril-

quist. Thus it is used in Isaiah ch. 19. v. 3. Pythonesses were also called ventriloquists* and the vulgate call these witches pythonesses, in I. Sam. ch. 38. v. 7 and 8.

The arguments for this explanation of the scene are certainly plausible, and if satisfactory, must throw the practice of this art farther back than we could otherwise have traced it.

In my next I will consider the history of of ventriloquism in later days. Your pupils will do well to examine the exigetical argument, which I mention, for themselves.

LETTER XI.

History of Ventriloquism continued, Anecdotes, &c.

DURING the dark ages, I can find no authenticated facts respecting ventriloquism.

* See Plutarch (De def. Orac. Tom II. p. 414.) Suidas, (Tom I. ad voc. eggastrimuthos. p. 667.) also Josephus. (Antiq. Lib. 14 p. 354)

Several improbable stories are recorded as to persons possessing great strength of voice, and numerous allusions may be met with to supernatural and ominous sounds which may now be ascribed perhaps to this art. I am inclined, however, to think that it was little practised among nations at all civilized. It is true that the Roman Church used every kind of deception * to impose upon her subjects, but though she may have made great use of this art, she has carefully concealed the fact. A surprizingly successful performer lived in the sixteenth century, patronized by the gallant Francis I. and in the seventeenth century, the famous King is recorded as a ventriloquist, to whose lectures all classes crowded, nobility not excepted. In the last century we find mention of a horde of petty ventriloquists, among whom several finished tragedians might be named. Since our own century commenced, there has been no lack of men to impose upon credulity even in our country. But I see no reason for collecting their names. Charles and Rip-

See Appendix, Note A.

ley, with all their brotherhood, have sunk into insignificance, if not into the grave, although for a time, they exerted a great influence over many who had 'faith in infernal aid.' A number are now seeking a livelihood by such displays of folly as mountebanks can always show. I must, of necessity, record their feats, but I hope that in doing so I shall contribute my mite towards spoiling their gains, and compelling them to seek a more suitable employment. Besides the performer from New Hampshire of whom I lately heard your pupils speak, they can probably name others, without my aid. A large number of anecdotes have been related by different authors respecting this curious art. I shall give them as I find them with little alteration, adding some which I have obtained orally. M. Bordeau, a critic of the sixteenth century gives the following.

Lewis Brabant, a courtier of Francis I. of France, had the misfortune to fall desperately in love with a young, very beautiful, and quite rich heiress, whose father forbade his

attentions, because his circumstances were not equal, as to fortune, to hers. However, her father soon after died, and the bold lover, nothing daunted by previous failure, was determined to see what might be done under new circumstances, and to see whether ventriloquism, in which he was an adept, might not be called to his aid. He therefore called on the widowed mother, as soon as he could do it with propriety, and again urged his suit for her daughter. But she could not forget her husband's views, and made no scruple of again denying him. But, while doing it, a low, guttural, sepulchral voice was heard by herself, and by every friend who was with her, and was instantly recognized as the voice of the father, who commanded her to give her daughter immediately to Lewis Brabant, whom the piteous spirit declared he now knew to be a most worthy and excellent man, much richer than he had thought him to be when he was living. He also said that he was then suffering the horrors of purgatory for having refused to favor

so exemplary a man, and that nothing but her consent to giving her daughter to Brabant could release him.

The company were dumb with astonishment, but the ventriloquist was more wonder-struck, to appearance, than all the rest. With great modesty he remarked that he had little expected to hear his merits, which appeared so small to himself, thus rehearsed by the dead, but that he should be happy indeed if he could be the means of relieving the unhappy father of the lady he adored.

No one doubted as to the supernatural voice, and the mother, the daughter, and the whole family circle gave their immediate and unanimous consent, and Brabant was directed to prepare for the nuptials without delay. For this preparation money was needful. How should a poor man get it? The wit which had so easily procured a wife, was at little loss as to procuring money. One Cornu, a rich old banker lived at Lyons, who had amassed his great property by extortion and usury, and who, on that account, was

stung most terribly by conscience. Brabant saw in this old gentleman a fit subject for imposition. To Lyons, therefore, he went with great celerity, and commenced an acquaintance with Cornu. At every interview he was careful to remind him, in the flow of conversation, of the pure happiness enjoyed by the man whose conscience could look back like Cornu's, as he was pleased to say, on a life devoted to acts of charity and benevolence. He would sometimes, also, point out the horrors of the wretch who had amassed heaps of money by usury and injustice, and whose mental torments were only a foretaste of what awaited him hereafter.

The miser was perpetually trying to change the conversation; but the more he tried, the more his companion pressed upon him with it. On one occasion, when the miser had become much agitated respecting it, Brabant regarded his opportunity as having arrived, and at that instant, a low, solemn, sepulchral muttering was heard, and proved at last to be the voice of Cornu's father, who had been dead sometime. The voice declared

that he had been since his death enduring the tortures of purgatory, from which, he had just learned, nothing could deliver him but his son's paying ten thousand crowns, to Brabant, then with him, for the rescue of christian slaves from the Turks. As in the former case, all was unutterable astonishment, but Brabant was the most astonished of the two. He modestly declared that now, for the first time in his life, he was convinced of the possibility of the dead holding conversation with the living. He admitted that he had been for years engaged in redeeming Christian slaves from the Turks, although native bashfulness had kept him from avowing it publicly. The old miser was distressed with a thousand contending passions. He was suspicious with no good reason, he thought, for being so. Regard to his father urged him to rescue his soul from purgatory, but ten thousand crowns was a great sum to pay, even for that purpose. He resolved to appoint another place, where to revive the conversation with Brabant, invoking the supernatural voice again to present its claims

to them both. He told Brabant that he hoped by this delay to give his father an opportunity of bargaining for a smaller sum.

They accordingly separated, but renewed their meeting the next day with the punctuality of business-men. Cornu had selected a place for this meeting, on a common, near Lyons, where neither a house, nor a wall, nor a bush, nor a tree, could hide a confederate even if such a person should be employed. No sooner had they met, than the old banker's ears were again assailed with the same hideous and sepulchral cries. They upbraided him for having suffered his father to remain twenty four hours in torment. They threatened that if not immediately paid, the ransom money would be doubled, and the miser himself condemned to the same doleful portion with a vast increase of misery. But I must defer the remainder of this narrative to another opportunity.

LETTER XII.

Ventriloquism, Anecdotes. Brabant.

I WAS speaking of Cornu's second interview with Brabant. Wherever he turned, he heard the awful voice of his dead father. At length, instead of one voice alone, he was assailed with the dreadful outcry of a hundred ghosts at once, those of his grandparents, his great grandparents, his uncles, and his aunts, and the whole Cornu family, for several generations. It seems that they were all suffering in purgatory, and might all be released for the ten thousand crowns. They all besought him, in the name of every saint of the calendar, to have mercy on himself and his poor relatives. Cornu could not muster fortitude to resist eloquence like this. He instantly paid the money, and rejoiced that by one day's delay he had been enabled to rescue not only his father, but all his kindred, for the sum at first demanded for his father alone. The cunning ventriloquist,

having obtained the money, returned to Paris, married his intended bride, and entertained his sovereign by a narration of the whole story. Cornu is said to have died of mere vexation, when he learned the manner in which he was deceived.

During the seventeenth century the whole English court were present at an exhibition of one Thomas King, a lecturing ventriloquist and imitator. A screen was erected to separate the audience from the performer. Behind this screen, three butchers were heard conversing for some time, about the price of veal, and the market in general, with different degrees of interest. A dog was with them and barked, but took a flogging, with a severe rebuke for his noisy interruption. At last, a calf was dragged in, resisting and bleating. A knife was whetted, and the calf killed. The audience then heard the creature suspended and cut up, amid the laughs and jests of the butchers, the growling of the dog, and the whetting of the knife. The whole scene was represented to the ears

of the audience with perfect accuracy. They could scarcely believe it an imposition, but when the curtain was raised, King was alone, on his carpeted stage, and the butchers, dog and quartered veal, all vanished like the midnight ghost.

Peter Pindar has founded one of his satirical efforts upon a trick of ventriloquism. The occurrence, although well authenticated I believe, is given by the facetious original of Pindar, nearly as it occurred, as it is sufficiently ludicrous of itself without aid from fancy.

At a small dinner party, a laundress was announced at the door, desirous of seeing a gentleman present. The servant retires, and the gentleman follows, leaving the door partly open. A female voice is then heard, stating her wants in no measured terms, and offering a bill for washing. The gentleman tells her that it is now an unsuitable time, but she is not to be put off. Hard words ensue. The emotions of the audience may be imagined, but cannot be described. The gentleman,

however, continues to remonstrate and promise ; all in vain The laundress complains of being abused ; says she has been talked to in this way long enough, and at last the gentleman loses all command of himself. He is so angry as to threaten the poor woman,— she defies him. A slap on the face is heard, and the company hear her fall headlong down a pair of stairs near the door, with cries of ‘murder,’ and ‘help!’ They hasten to her relief, full of indignation, but the angry gentleman is picking his teeth, perfectly regardless of the groaning sufferer, whose voice has now ceased, and even herself wholly vanished.

I once produced a similar effect, upon a small circle. I was sitting near an entry, and by imitating two voices, as if at the outside door, after knocking on the back of my chair, unobserved. The company prepared themselves to receive an expected visitor, the head of the family setting a chair for him, near the fire, and advancing to meet him. The incident afforded much amusement.

It is well known that there existed a strong propensity among the literati of the past age for hilarity, and convivial entertainments. Such entertainments were common among tragedians, and were always attended with amusing incidents. Two gentlemen of the London Theatre once rode for amusement, out to a country inn, and called for dinner. One of them was able to drink large quantities of ale, and having astonished the tapster by drinking numerous bumpers, a voice from his stomach cried out 'I'm drowning I'm drowning.' 'What, for mercy's sake, have you been swallowing,' said his companion. 'Oh, nothing but a little boy,' said the gentleman-wag. 'He is not quite digested yet, but will be soon.' He then pretended great pain in his stomach,—went out into the kitchen among the domestics, and stated that 'the little rascal, whom he swallowed, was kicking him to death,' while cries of 'help! help! I'm drowning, help!' from his stomach corroborated his fears. The scullion, the hostlers, and the whole family were in an

uproar. His enormous draughts of ale had prepared them to believe him superhuman. They talked of an arrest. As soon as that word was whispered, the two friends appeared alarmed, and called for their horses, which were reluctantly led up. Our hero had observed that his friend's horse shook his tail whenever he felt the spur. Telling his friend to apply the spur, when he spoke, after mounting he turned to his friend's horse saying 'Sirrah! you horse you! shake your tail!' The spur was applied at the instant, and the horse obeyed the mandate, shaking his tail furiously. The rustics were thunder struck, for they had not only suffered the wizard to dine in their inn, but what was worse, he had fled, and many a mother trembled lest her own prattling children should be devoured whole, by the monster.

But I have already exceeded my limits.

LETTER XIII.

Anecdotes of Ventriloquism continued.

A VENTRILOQUIST applied for passage on a French diligence, but was compelled, by the crowd of previous applicants, to take an outside seat. As it soon began to rain, he found himself in no very eligible situation, and used the following amusing expedient to effect a change of place. There happened to be no one but himself on the outside except the postilion, and he was too weary and too much in liquor to detect the roguery.

It was very dark soon after starting, and inside passengers began to be annoyed by the incessant cries of an infant on the outside, while the harsh lullaby of its Irish mother, tended not a little to increase the disturbance. The ladies began at last to sympathize, and the gentlemen to fret. The driver was urged to dismount the mother and the sick child, and leave them, but he only replied with oaths, and the old hag

commenced a furious Irish rejoinder. The gentlemen then tried to calm her by a few pence, and a promise of more if she would still the child, whereupon she made a vigorous effort to do so by repeated blows. She scolded, and the lady passengers were harassed with hearing her slap her infant's face, with no mercy. The little sufferer was heard to scream till its noise became intolerable. Then the mother was heard to threaten to throw the babe into the muddy road, and a splash was soon heard, and the infantile cries in the distance, as they receded from the spot.

The stage was stopped. The gentleman on the outside pretended to be intoxicated and asleep, and all concluded that the Irish mother had jumped off and fled, for she could not be found. Such sympathy was awakened, that, at the next change of horses, several of the passengers left the stage, and volunteered to return and find the murdered infant, and arrest the cruel mother. The postilion could not wait. The ventril-

oquist quietly obtained an inside seat, and at the end of his ride, published an account of his feat, for the edification of his compassionate fellow-passengers, who met with little success in their midnight search.

M. St. Gile or Gille, a ventriloquist, who flourished about seventy years ago, an intimate friend of M. de la Chapelle, sought for shelter from an approaching thunder storm under the roof of a convent, as he was returning home from a place where his business had carried him. Finding the whole community in mourning, he enquired the cause, and was told that one of their body had died lately, who was the ornament and delight of the whole fraternity. To pass away the time, he walked into the church, attended by some of the religious, who showed him the tomb of their deceased brother, and spoke feelingly of the scanty honors they had bestowed on his memory. Suddenly a voice was heard, apparently proceeding from the roof of the quire, lamenting the situation of the defunct in purgatory, and

reproaching the brotherhood with lukewarmness and want of zeal on his account. The friars, as soon as their astonishment was over, consulted together, and agreed to acquaint the rest of the community with this singular event, so interesting to them all. M. St. Gille, who was disposed to carry the joke still farther, dissuaded them from taking this step, telling them that they would be treated by their absent brethren as a set of fools and visionaries. He recommended to them, however, to call their whole community into church, where the ghost of their departed brother might probably reiterate his complaints. Accordingly all the friars, novices, lay brothers, and even the domestics of the convent were immediately collected together.

In a short time the voice from the roof renewed its lamentations and reproaches, and the whole convent fell on their faces and vowed a solemn reparation. As a first step they chanted an anthem in full choir, during the intervals of which, the ghost occasion-

ally expressed the comfort he received from their pious exercises and ejaculations in his behalf. When all was over, the prior entered into a serious conversation with the ventriloquist, and on the strength of what he had just heard, sagaciously inveighed against the incredulity of modern sceptics, and pretended philosophers, on the article of ghosts and apparitions. M. St. Gille thought it now high time to disabuse the good fathers. This proved, however, a difficult matter, and was only accomplished by repeating the experiment again before the whole audience. M. St. Gille was a grocer near Paris. A literary gentleman once called on him to witness the feats of which he had heard so much. Being seated with him, on the opposite side of a fire in a parlor, on the ground floor, and very attentively observing him, after half an hour's conversation, the stranger heard his name called on a sudden, in a voice that seemed to come from the roof of a house at a distance; and while he was pointing to the house from which the voice

seemed to proceed, it changed its direction, appearing to come from the floor, from a corner of the room. In short, this factitious voice played all around him, and seemed to proceed from any quarter, or distance, from which the ventriloquist chose to bring it.

LETTER XIV.

Ventriloquism, Anecdotes, &c.

A VERY able ventriloquist, Fity James, performed in England, about twenty years since, with great eclat. He personated various characters, in their appropriate dresses, and by a command of the muscles of the face, he could very much alter his appearance. He imitated many inanimate noises, and among others, the clattering of a Marline water-machine. He conversed with some statues, which replied to him; and also with some persons supposed to be in a room above. He gave the cry of a watchman

gradually approaching, and when the cry reached the window, Fity James opened it, and asked what time it was, and received an answer while the window was open. When the watchman proceeded with his cry, Fity James shut the window, and as he did so, the sound became weaker, and at last inaudible. He spoke with various voices, sometimes with six, which he could adopt and vary at will, and with so much rapidity, that he gave a democratic debate, long, confused, and impassioned, in a small closet, parted off, in the room. It seemed to proceed from a multitude of speakers, and an inaccurate observer might have thought that several talked at once.

He also pretended to draw a toothe, behind a screen, from the jaw of a country Esquire. The old man fretted and feared, and the instrument slipped, amid groans and execrations, while the whole company, represented to the ear as behind the screen, were heard alternately sympathizing and laughing.

M. Alexandre excited great interest in Europe within a few years, by his astonishing powers of voice, as well as by his success in representations. By means of dresses, curiously devised, he could pass behind a screen and appear on the other side to be an entirely different person. At one moment he was tall, thin, and melancholy, and at the next, after passing behind his screen, he appeared a very Falstaff in obesity and hilarity. He could readily imitate a mob, with its infinite variety of noise and vociferation. He could represent a drama, by his voice, behind a curtain. Another ventriloquist of France was visited by a committee of the Royal Academy of Sciences at Paris, in company with several persons of the highest rank. The real object of their visit was withheld from a lady of the party, who was falsely told that an aerial spirit had lately established itself in the neighborhood, and that the object of the assembly was to investigate the wonderful matter. When the party had sat down to dinner in the open air,

the spirit appeared to address the lady in a voice coming from over their heads; from the surface of the ground at a great distance, and from the surrounding trees. The lady, being thus addressed for more than two hours, was firmly persuaded that she had heard the voice of an aerial spirit, and for some time she could not be persuaded that it was a trick.

LETTER XV.

Ventriloquism. Anecdotes.

ABOUT the year 1818, a ventriloquist made his appearance in Edinburgh and many other towns in Scotland. He imitated successfully the voice of a squeaking child, and made it appear to come from whatever place he chose, from the pockets of the company, from a wooden doll with which he held many spirited conversations, from a hat, from under a wineglass, or out of any person's foot or hand. When the voice seemed to come from

beneath a glass or hat, it was dull, as sounds confined always are, and what evinced his dexterity was, that when the glass was raised from the table, during the time of his speaking, words and syllables which he uttered were afterwards fuller and sharper, in consequence, one would have thought, of the air's being readmitted to the speaker within. This part of the experiment failed, however, when the management of the glass was committed to any one of the company at a distance. The same man imitated the tones of a scolding old woman, disturbed by a person demanding a shelter in her house from a storm at an unreasonable hour. But the tones of the old woman were not given with any great accuracy. He was unsuccessful also in attempting to imitate the tone of a fretting child, for the voice was much too masculine and heavy.

He performed a feat, however, in passing a fishmarket which is well worth recording. A large company of purchasers were surrounding a poor woman's stall when our hero

came up, and observing a very large fish, asked the price of it, and when it was caught. The vender named her price, and informed him that it came from the water alive on the day before.

A creaking voice was immediately heard from the mouth of the fish, saying 'you lie, you old hag, you know I have been out of water this three days.' It is needless to add that the honest weldame was completely nonplused, and the bystanders were filled with wonder, at an apparently miraculous conviction of a woman whom they had hitherto regarded as honest.

One Thomas Britton, a coal-man in London of some notoriety, was one day passing along the street, when a voice from over his head warned him that he 'must prepare to die,' and that he would soon die, most assuredly. The ventriloquist probably meant no harm, but he was too true in his prediction. The same principle of human nature which operates in the death-dooming prayers of

savage necromancers, soon brought the poor coal-man to the grave.

M. Compte, Royal physician in Paris, has produced more surprising effects than any other ventriloquist of our day. Gifted by nature with great imitative powers, and a powerful voice, he became able to articulate distinctly with no visible appearance of speaking. By his great skill, he carried the deception so far in many cases, that witnesses have supposed the voice to be a reality, coming from whatever spot he chose, and that there was no trickery about it. Not content with deceiving mankind, he cheated the very brutes into this belief. Having been intimate with Dr. Montagrés, he called at his house, sometime after his death, and imitated the learned physician's voice in the presence of his dog. The dog was intoxicated with pleasure at hearing his name called by his dead master, and ran about the house, the garden, and the grounds in pursuit of Montagrés, howling piteously if a gate or door obstructed his search.

Among the numerous jokes of this able ventriloquist, I will give one in the words of Chappioniér. 'Being called as a witness at the 'Hall of Justice,' M. Compte went there at 9 o'clock in the morning, as directed in the summons. Having remained with the other witnesses about three quarters of an hour before the court had assembled, and seeing that the others were many of them tired of waiting, while no one appeared to know him, he went to the door and pretended to speak to the constable. He enquired of him whether they should be called on soon? A voice from without was immediately heard to answer, 'No sir, the trial is put off till afternoon, and you all have time to go and get your dinners.' At these words, all the witnesses, completely deceived, profiting by the permission, left the house. But a short time after, the real constable came to call them before the court, and as they were missing; they were all fined for non-attendance.

Upon their return, the witnesses, being informed of what had happened during their

absence presented their case to the court, declaring (at the same time pointing out Compte) that it was that gentleman to whom the constable had stated that the trial was postponed for an hour. The King's attorney, suspecting some trick of the ventriloquist, summed the fines into one of ten francs and assessed it upon M. Compte, as a lesson to him, never to joke again with justice.

L E T T E R X V I .

Ventriloquism. Anecdotes, &c.

ONE Charles, a foreigner, was visited by large numbers of our population a few years since, at his exhibitions, and was for some time regarded as an extraordinary ventriloquist. Your pupils have very probably heard of this man, and the following story, if they have not heard it, will be not a little interesting.

Soon after he first landed at New York, he observed a black fellow in the yard of his

hotel, preparing to kill a large turtle. The turtle was suspended by its hinder legs, that it might make no resistance, and that on cutting off its head, the blood might run more freely, which is regarded as highly important in preparing turtle-soup. The negro was whetting his knife, and the turtle's long neck was stretched out to reconnoitre; Charles stood near the spot looking on, and was not then suspected of being a ventriloquist. Soon the negro advanced towards the head. It drew back. He still advanced with his huge knife firmly grasped, and every nerve braced, for an exhibition of his bravery. But he threw down his knife, and ran away horror-struck, when the poor animal seemed to cry out in agony, 'Mercy! Mercy! You'll hurt. Do n't kill me.' The few domestics were equally astonished; but as the kettles were boiling for the soup, and as it was getting late, they at last prevailed upon the poor fellow to advance again to the fatal work. The turtle was by this time thoroughly tired of its situation, and greeted him with

a pretty fierce shake of its bony head, and with yawning jaws, while all the group, were again astounded by a direful story, from the turtle's mouth, of its history and woes. Charles now conveyed himself away, but it became necessary to employ another hand to slay the loquacious turtle, for neither the negro nor a single other servant could be persuaded to approach, what they verily believed to be a demon in turtle-shape, or a turtle possessed and bewitched.

One Phillips, also has been attended by very considerable success in this country, in his exhibitions of ventriloquism. He called a number of years since upon a gentleman in Connecticut, of the legal profession, and expressed a desire to meet some of the more respectable people in the place, for the purpose of illustrating the subject. The gentleman was quite disposed to be merry at the idea, stating that he had always regarded the art as a mere humbug, to catch idle people's money. Soon, while engaged in conversation with Phillips, he was highly ex-

asperated, as he moved his chair, to hear a cat yelp out, as if injured by his movement. He said nothing, however, until puss began to mew most piteously from under a book-case in a corner of the room. He then opened the door, and tried to drive her out, she continued mewling, and at last vanished. The man of law, was no longer incredulous.

A certain performer of great skill, now living in New England, is said to have once taken revenge, for an insult, in a very amusing manner. He was impeded, in a narrow road by a large load of hay, and the driver refused to turn aside, to let his wagon pass, at the same time cursing him outrageously.

They went on slowly together until they reached a cluster of houses, where a company of men were standing before a store. Then, all at once, a crying was heard, as of a little child, calling for his mother, and the ventriloquist succeeded in making them think that the driver of the load of hay had smuggled a boy, and hid him under his load,

as he said he had heard him cry for miles. Curiosity and indignation was excited, and the load of hay was pitched off on the spot. The Ventriloquist meanwhile rode on.

LETTER XVII.

Ventriloquism. Anecdotes, &c.

I HAVE mentioned that ventriloquism might have existed in the rudest ages. Capt. Lyon found ventriloquists, of no mean skill, among the Igloolik Esquimaux.* He states that there is much rivalry among the practitioners of the art. They do not expose each other's secrets, and their exhibitions derive great importance among the natives, because they occur but rarely. I will copy a narrative of such an exhibition from Lyon's account, in his own words. 'Among our Igloolik acquaintance were two female, and a few male wizards of whom the principal was Toole-

* Private Journal of Capt. G. F. Lyon. Lond. 1824. p. 308, 361.

mak. This personage was cunning and intelligent, and whether professionally, or from skill in the chase, but perhaps from both reasons, was considered by all the tribe as a man of importance. As I invariably paid great deference to his opinion on all subjects connected with his calling, he freely communicated to me his superior knowledge, and did not scruple to allow of my being present at his interviews with his Tornga, or patron Spirit. In consequence of this, I took an early opportunity of requesting my friend to exhibit his skill in my cabin. His old wife was with him, and by much flattery, and an accidental display of a knife and some beads, she assisted me in obtaining my request. All light excluded, the sorcerer began chanting to his wife with great vehemence, and she in return answered by singing '*Amanaya.*' This was not discontinued on her part during the whole ceremony. As far as I could hear, he afterward began turning himself rapidly round, and in a loud, powerful voice, vociferated for Tornga with great

impatience, at the same time blowing and snorting like a walrus. His noise, impatience, and agitation increased every moment, and he at length seated himself on the floor, varying his tones and making a rustling with his clothes. Suddenly the voice seemed smothered, and was so managed as to sound as if retreating beneath the deck, each moment becoming more distant, and ultimately giving the idea of being many feet below the cabin, when it ceased entirely. His wife now, in answer to my queries, very seriously told me that he had dived under water, and that he would send up Tornga. Accordingly, in about half a minute, a distant blowing was heard, very slowly approaching, and a voice, which differed from that I first heard, was at times mingled with the blowing until at length both sounds became distinct, and the old woman informed me that Tornga was come to answer my questions. I accordingly asked several questions of the sagacious spirit, to each of which enquiries I received an answer by two loud claps on the deck,

which I was given to understand were favorable.'

A very hollow yet powerful voice, certainly much differing from that of Toolemak, now chanted for sometime, and a strange jumble of hisses, groans, shouts and gabblings like a Turkey succeeded in rapid order. The old woman sang with increasing energy, and as I took it for granted that this was all intended to astonish the Kabloona, (or White stranger,) I cried repeatedly that I was much afraid. This, as I expected, added fuel to the fire, until the poor immortal, exhausted by its own might, asked leave to retire.

The voice gradually sank from our hearing as at first, and a very indistinct hissing succeeded. In its advance, it sounded like the tone produced by the wind on the bass chord of an Aolian harp. This was soon changed into a rapid hiss, like that of a rocket, and Toolemak, with a yell, announced his return. I had held my breath at the first distant hissing and twice exhausted myself, yet our conjurer did not once

respire, and even his returning and powerful yell was uttered without a previous stop, or inspiration of air.

Light being admitted, our wizard, as might be expected, was in a profuse perspiration, and certainly much exhausted by his exertions, which had continued for at least half an hour. We now observed a couple of bunches, each consisting of two stripes of white deer skin and a long piece of sinew, attached to the back of his coat. These we had not seen before, and were informed 'that they had been sewn on by Tornga, while below!'

Capt. Lyon witnessed another of Toolemak's exhibitions, which lasted an hour and a half. He did not once appear to move, and Capt. Lyon could not perceive that he drew breath, though sitting very near him, so great was his skill in concealment.

LETTER XVIII.

Ventriloquism Explained.

THE various performers with whom I have met, have concurred in saying that the sounds emanate from their own mouths, but many of them have regarded their power as something extraordinary, and hold the common belief that there is a natural peculiarity in the structure of their organs. The very name of the art takes its rise from this supposition, it being commonly regarded as speaking from the stomach, ('Venter,' stomach, and 'loquor,' to speak.) The art has seldom been practised by any but persons of the lower classes of society, and as it does not afford any advantages to repay the time spent in acquiring it, it is likely to continue among the illiterate, if not banished from existence.

One performer, (once a merchant's clerk,) states that he was behind the counter in boyhood, and while making strange noises, for

mere sport, with his mouth, he was surprised to see a person who stood near, go to the door, to see who made the noise. He kept his skill a secret, until he discovered that his sounds could be made to arise from any quarter. After this discovery, he was lured by a prospect of great gain to exhibit himself as a ventriloquist, and as his age advanced, he discovered a great increase in his 'wonderful power of ventriloquism.' He stated it as his firm belief, that his success had nothing to do with experience, being wholly a '*lusus naturae*' in his internal organs. He said that he spoke 'in his stomach,' and that he was compelled to omit supping before performing, 'that his stomach might speak more freely.' Another performer says in reply to several queries: 'I have always had the power of deceiving as to the source of sound, and I feel that I can speak from my stomach. I feel the movement of separate vocal organs below my breast. I have practised the art for thirty years, and have never learned any thing more than I

knew the first time I tried it, except that I have every year applied my powers to new imitations. My commencing as a ventriloquist arose from an accidental effort in mere childhood.' A gentleman of considerable skill in the art, who has never, however, exhibited his powers beyond the circle of his personal friends, told me, that his practice has been the result, so far as he can remember, of his plays when a boy. He was in the habit of uniting some troughs, which his father used for conveying water, and after speaking in the end of one trough, the sound was carried round to the end of the most remote. At first he supposed that he had discovered the great secret of ventriloquism. But on hearing a ventriloquist perform, he saw that no such means were employed, for the performer was regardless of the place in which he should exhibit, and could even do it in the open air. This aroused him to use his every effort to discover what organs were employed in ventriloquism, and he at length discovered that he could make sounds, appa-



rently in his stomach. Not being very well acquainted with the vocal organs, he could not decide with much certainty, but he supposed that he was gifted in some extraordinary manner by nature, and that the practice of the art was to be acquired only by the few who were thus gifted.

I not long ago requested a ventriloquist to give me a brief outline of his history as a performer. He forwarded an immediate reply, from which I make the following extract.

‘My dear sir. I am very willing to contribute what little I am able towards undeceiving a generous public, who have been so often and so grossly imposed upon by jugglers. In compliance with your request, I have come to the determination of giving you a few incidents of my life, in regard to the subject, which, if you think proper, you are at liberty to mention in connection with your lectures, although I should, of course, decline allowing you to give my name.

I had naturally a considerable talent for imitation, and at the age of eight years,

could imitate, very successfully, several animals, as the squealing of the pig, the bark of the dog, and the notes of birds.

At the age of nine years, I heard the celebrated P.— perform, and was peculiarly struck with the power which he had of throwing his voice into any part of the room. I immediately set my organs to work, for the purpose of imitating him, and in a short time so far succeeded, as to be able completely to deceive my companions as to the source of my sounds. While playing 'hide and seek,' I would often throw my voice in another direction from that where I was. I could throw sounds at any time by concealing my face, which I was always obliged to do, for I could not then pronounce a word without moving my lips. That difficulty, however, I in a short time overcame, and could pronounce almost any word quite distinctly without moving a muscle of my face.

Among other pranks, resulting from my disposition to be roguish, though not more disposed to be so than boys commonly are,

at sixteen I frightened my father's hired man by my skill.

On a dark and stormy evening in November. I spoke at some length of ghosts and hob-goblins. Occasionally our hardy husbandman would turn his eyes to the windows, against which the storm was pouring its fury, and then he would hug more closely the corner of the fireplace. I then altered my voice so that it appeared to be at the outside door, and said, 'Let me in Reuben, you wretch, I'm in great distress.' Reuben, upon hearing this, immediately looked at the door, in utter consternation, but dared not open it. I pretended to be as much frightened as he was, and continually exerted myself to keep his attention fixed upon the door. The same words were repeatedly uttered, and Reuben was too much alarmed to keep his seat. I then urged him to open the door, which he did, after much persuasion, finding no one there. I slept on the lower story, and early the next morning, slipped out of my bed-room, through a win-

dow, and stationed myself at the outside door, patiently waiting for Reuben to come down. He had to pass near the door, and when I heard him approach, I again cried out, 'Reuben, let me in,' &c, at the same time lifting the latch lightly several times, and immediately ran to my window, entered my bed, and pretended sleep. He came to my room, shook me awake, (as he supposed,) and told me of the awful voice. He became a firm believer in witch-craft.

I afterwards sent my companions in different directions, by exerting this power. I cannot say exactly where my voice is formed in ventriloquising, but I think in my mouth and throat. I do not think that I, or any other ventriloquist, have any peculiar organs. And I think that by practice, any one may acquire the art.'

LETTER XIX.

Ventriloquism Explained.

ANOTHER gentleman who has taken much interest in natural magic, sent me a long and interesting detail in regard to his experience, when I was first attempting to collect facts respecting ventriloquism. I transcribe a part of this also, as it cannot fail to interest your pupils.

‘Dear sir. I received your note, &c. I have never publicly exhibited my powers of ventriloquism, but have often amused my friends and created a hearty laugh by the success of my deceptions in sound. I discovered the secret of the ventriloquist when quite young, not being more than nine or ten years of age. In my boyish plays, for the purpose of deceiving my companions as to the direction of sound, I was accustomed to speak in my hat, and in my hands, formed like a square box. Soon I found that I had the power of altering the direction of sound

with my voice alone, unaided by hands, or hat, and, by frequent practice, attained the power to some good degree of perfection. After this, my foolish pranks were almost innumerable. I have taken a book or paper, and retired to read in my mother's kitchen. There the maid-servant has often been annoyed by my tricks. She would now leave her work in speechless wonder, as a startling groan arose, wild, and terrific, from behind her back; now she would listen in pallid fear, as a scream died away in mournful whisperings, and at last she would resume her courage and ask me 'did you not hear it?' when my false and wicked negative would increase her fright.

I cannot even now, avoid a smile as I look back and see her run to the closet to drive away the cat, when no cat was there, while at the same time, a tremendous caterwauling would arise from the cellar. Armed with a broom, she would hasten to stop the noise, but of course, return disappointed, I well remember her exclamation, one evening, when,

after searching the cellar, she returned in despair, saying as she reached the top of the stairs. *There, I do declare, I believe the house is haunted with fairy cats.*' At another time I imitated the cries of a child crying in a chamber. Up stairs she ran to pacify the sufferer, when she found the babe asleep, and motionless. When I was a little older, I took into my head to frighten some neighbors, in an adjoining house, and sheltered myself—now under a window in some shrubbery—now in a box in the yard, or in some secluded corner, and groaned, and made unearthly noises, and hollow laughs, as if of fiends carousing. I was not aware of the criminality of the conduct, at that time, for I did it for mere sport, and I was afraid of what I deserved, a whipping, if I related my pranks. The house was supposed to be an abode of demons.* The inmates relinquished their claim to it, and the wind or a creaking

* See note A. in Appendix for further hints respecting such impressions as to haunted houses, &c.

door has since confirmed its fame as 'haunted.' After relating numerous other incidents, he continues: 'I might cite numerous examples to show the great power of ventriloquism,' &c. He then expresses it as his candid opinion that 'the art has no particular formation of the organs of speech, but as it is imitative, may be easily acquired by any one, especially in early childhood.' He says 'I think thus from experience, having myself often instructed others for amusement, and have never met with a failure. The sound does not proceed from the stomach, but is really formed in the throat and mouth. The whole art depends upon the power of the performer to form a sound corresponding to that which is to be represented, while, as it is formed within the mouth, and behind the teeth, the volume of sound is compressed, and emitted obliquely. It is necessary that the judgment of the hearer be deceived. An echo from a wall, or any obstruction, greatly tends to produce this illusion. I know a gentleman who has perfected himself so far as to sing 'Auld Lang Syne,' with a clear

and full voice, without moving his lips.' He regards the whole art, however, as trivial in practical importance, in which opinion I heartily concur. For the views of other performers I would refer to the remarks of Encyclopedias. I have preferred to consult living ventriloquists myself, as I am compelled to distrust some of the 'confessions' which have appeared in print, on account of their high coloring.

LETTER XX.

Ventriloquism Explained.

PHILOSOPHERS of different ages have entertained widely different opinions as to the practice of the art, and the source of deception. Some place that source in the performer, some in the place of exhibition, and some in the hearer. I have mentioned Hippocrates. He regarded it as a voice formed by certain organs concealed in the abdomen.

Of course he regarded it as almost miraculous.*

Rolandus, adopting the same opinion, mentions, that, if the mediastinum, which is naturally a single membrane, be divided into two parts, the speech will seem to come out of the breast. Mr. John Gough† has attempted to explain the phenomena of this art, by reference to the theory of Echoes. The following is a summary of his views. He observes, in general, that a sudden change of direction in sound will be perceived, when the original communication is interrupted, provided there be a sensible echo. He conceives that our knowledge of sound does not depend upon the impulse of the ear, but upon other facts. The change of direction will be acknowledged by any person who has had occasion to walk along a valley, intercepted by buildings, when bells were ringing in it.

* See Hippocrates, Tom. V. de Epidem.

† Manchester Memoirs, Vol. V. part 2. page 622. London, 1802.

For the sound of the bells, instead of arriving constantly at the ears of the person so situated, in its true direction, is frequently reflected in a short time from two or three different places. These deceptions are, in many cases, so much diversified by the interposition of fresh objects, that the steeple appears to perform the part (in the hearer's judgment) of an expert ventriloquist on a theatre, the extent of which is adapted to its own powers, and not to the powers of the human voice. The similarity of effect, which connects this phenomenon with ventriloquism, convinced Mr. Gough, whenever he heard it, that what we know to be the cause in one instance, is also the cause in the other. The echo reaches the ear while the original sound is intercepted by accident in the case of the bells, but by art in the case of the ventriloquist. In order to point out the cause of the amusing tricks of ventriloquism more clearly, he endeavors to describe certain circumstances that take place in the act of speaking, because the skill of the ventriloquist, seems to him to consist in a peculiar

management of them. Articulation, he says, is the art of modifying the sounds of the larynx, by the assistance of the cavity of the mouth, the tongue, the teeth, and the lips. The different vibrations which are excited by the joint operation of the several organs in action, pass along the bones and cartilages, from the parts in motion, to the external teguments of the head, face, neck, and chest. From these he supposes that a succession of similar vibrations is imparted to the contiguous air. He regards the whole upper part of the speaker's body, as an extensive seat of sound, contrary to the popular opinion, which supposes the passage of the voice to be confined to the mouth.

When an orator addresses an audience in a lofty room, his voice is reflected from every point of the apartment. All his hearers become sensible of this, by the compressed noise, which fills up every pause in his discourse, although every one knows the true place of the speaker, because his voice is the prevailing sound at the time. But what

would follow, if it were possible to prevent his words from reaching any one of his audience? He supposes that a complete case of ventriloquism would follow, and that the person, so circumstanced, would transport the orator, in his own mind, to the place of the principal echo, which would be the prevailing sound at the instant. This he must do, for human judgment is compelled by experience to regard the speaker as inseparable from his voice. The occurrence in question would be produced by the same concurring causes, which make a peal of bells, situated in a valley, appear to the traveller to change places, through the intervention of echoes. It is the business of the ventriloquist to amuse his admirers, as Gough supposes, by practising tricks resembling the foregoing delusion. As the ear is well skilled by experience in detecting the source of sound, he allows that the performer must be very skilful in the management of echoes, to produce this effect. He must be able to make the pulses, or vibrations of sound, constituting his

words, strike the heads of his hearers in lines which do not come directly from him to them. He must, therefore, know how to disguise the true direction of sound, because that artifice will give him opportunity to substitute almost any echo, in room of his own voice.

Gough supposes that the reason why people are not generally ventriloquists is, that their sounds flow out in all directions, from the whole upper part of the body, while the master of ventriloquism has the power of confining his voice to a particular direction. Mr. Gough illustrates this fanciful position, by examples, drawn from the performance of a bungling ventriloquist.

LETTER XXI.

Ventriloquism Explained. Philosophers' views.

MR. DUGALD Stewart doubts the fact, that ventriloquists can bring the voice from within. He cannot see what aid could be derived from so extraordinary a power. He states

that imagination, aided by high powers of imitation, will fully account for all the phenomena of ventriloquism. He, however, quotes a remark made to him by a performer, which strongly opposes his own theory. The remark was, 'that the art would have reached perfection, if it were only possible to speak distinctly, without any movement of the lips.'

M. de la Chappelle* advances the opinion, that the factitious voice of the ventriloquist does not proceed from the stomach, but is formed in the inner parts of the throat, and mouth. He states that the art does not depend upon any peculiar structure of the organs, but upon skill acquired by practice. He thinks it may be acquired by any person, who is ardently desirous of obtaining it, and who is patient enough to persevere in his efforts. The judgments we form concerning the relative distance of bodies, by means of the senses mutually assisting each other,

* See 'Le Ventriloque' by Chappelle, published in Paris, in 1772.

seem to be entirely founded on experience.* We, therefore, pass immediately from the sign to the thing signified; at least, we do not perceive any intervening steps. Hence he supposes it to follow, that a man may, though in the same room with another, so modify the organs of speech, as he sets them in motion, that faintness, tone, body, and every other sensible quality of voice, will be perfectly counterfeited. For instance, a sound nearly resembling a voice from an opposite house, would produce a perfect illusion, if the suspicions of the hearer were not excited. He refers to the deceptions thus practised on the organ, with even moderate skill in the performer.

The baron de Mengen, a German nobleman, possessed the art in a very high degree, and his account of himself favors the views of M. de la Chapelle, by whom it is given at some length.

An anonymous philosophical writer, says,

* This is Reid's opinion. See Reid's Inquiry into the Human Mind.

in regard to ventriloquism, that, 'as we cannot refer sound to external causes, until taught by experience, we do not always, even with the aid of experience, connect sound with its place and distance. It is only by an association of place with sound, that the latter becomes an indication of the former. This being admitted, he states, that nothing is requisite, for a man to become an expert ventriloquist, but a delicate ear, flexibility of speech, and a long practice of those rules, which repeated trials would enable him to discover. A delicate ear perceives every difference which a change of place produces in the same sound. Now if a person, possessed of such an ear, have sufficient command over his organs of speech to produce, by them, a sound similar, in all respects, to another proceeding from any distant object, it is evident that all who hear him will suppose the sound to proceed from that distant object.'

It is stated in one of the European Encyclopedias, that 'it is not possible for the most

expert ventriloquist, to speak in the usual tones of conversation, and, at the same time, to make the sound appear to come from a distance, for his own tones must be already familiar to his hearers, and must, therefore, be associated by them with his place, his figure, and his person.'

Dr. Arnott* supposes that 'the secret of the ventriloquist consists wholly in the power of speaking while drawing in breath.' This can be done by any one, with very little practice, and Arnott regards the illusion, which may be produced in this way, as amply sufficient to produce ventriloquism.

The author of the Article Ventriloquism, in Nicholson's British Encyclopedia, says, that it 'consists merely in imitation of sounds, as they occur in nature, accompanied by appropriate action. The action must be of such a description, as may best concur in leading the minds of observers to favor the decep-

* See Arnott's physics. Art. on Human Voice; and Nature of Sound.

tion. He then remarks with great force upon the conditions of such performances, and upon the ease with which they are carried through.'

LETTER XXII.

Ventriloquism. Philosophers' views.

M. RICHERAND* at first supposed that a great part of the air thrown out by expiration did not pass out by the mouth and nostrils, but was swallowed and carried into the stomach, and that it was here reflected and caused a perfect echo in the digestive canal.' But after having made numerous observations upon a celebrated performer, he was 'convinced that the name *ventriloquism* was not at all appropriate, but that the whole of its mechanism consists in breathing slowly, while the artist governs the muscles of his chest at will, and restrains the epiglottis by

*See, *Nouv. Elémens de Physiologie*, Paris, 1804.

his tongue, the end of which is not protruded beyond his teeth.' Dr. Good * remarks, 'It is certain that hitherto no satisfactory explanation has been offered, of this singular phenomenon, and I shall, therefore, take leave to suggest, that it is possibly of a much simpler character than has usually been apprehended, that the entire range of its imitative power is confined to the larynx alone, and that the art itself consists in a close attention to the almost infinite variety of tones, articulations and inflections, which the larynx is capable of producing in its own region, when long and dexterously practised upon, and a skilful modification of these effects into mimic speech, passed, for the most part, and whenever necessary, through the cavity of the nostrils, instead of through the mouth. The parrot,' he adds, 'in imitating human language, employs the larynx, and nothing else; as does the mocking bird, the most perfect ventriloquist in nature, in imitating cries and intonations of all kinds.' He ingeniously ad-

* See Book of Nature, Art. 'Voice and Language.'

duces many facts in relation to the wonderful power of the larynx, some of which I may have occasion to refer to hereafter, in treating of the same thing.

Dr. Brewster states* that 'uncertainty, with respect to the direction of sound, is the foundation of the art of ventriloquism. If we place ten men in a row, at such a distance from us that they are included in an angle, within which we cannot judge of the direction of sound, and if, in a calm day, each of them speak in succession, we shall not be able with closed eyes, to determine from which of the ten men any of the sounds proceeds, and we shall be incapable of perceiving that there is any difference in the direction of the sounds emitted by the two outermost. If a man and a child are placed within the same angle, and if the man speaks with the accent of a child, without any corresponding motion of his mouth and face, we shall necessarily believe that the voice comes

* See 'Letters on Natural Magic,' New York, Harper's Fam. Lib. Ed. 1832, p. 157.

from the child : nay, if the child is so distant from the man, that the voice actually appears to us to come from the man, we shall still continue in the belief that the child is the speaker, and this conviction would acquire additional strength if the child favored the deception by accommodating its features and gestures to the words spoken by the man. So powerful indeed is the influence of this deception, that if a jackass, placed near the man, were to shake its head responsive to the words uttered by his neighbor, and to open his mouth at the same time, we would rather believe that the ass spoke, than that the sounds proceeded from a person whose mouth was shut, and the muscles of whose face were in perfect repose. If our imagination were even directed to a marble statue, or a lump of inanimate matter of any kind, as the source from which we were to expect the sound to issue, we would still be deceived, and would refer the sounds even to these lifeless objects. The illusion would

be greatly promoted, if the voice were totally different in its tone and character from that of the man from whom it really comes; and if he occasionally speak in his own full and measured voice, the belief will be irresistible that the assumed voice proceeds from the quadruped, or from the inanimate object.'

Chapponier says, 'the sounds of ventriloquists seem to come from the stomach. Anatomy proves, however, that they have no organs of speech different from other men. They produce their deadened and seemingly distant sounds, by suppressing the voice, and speaking, as it were, in the throat. The performance is therefore exhausting.'

LETTER XXIII.

Ventriloquism. The Author's Views.

AFTER having given the views of others so much at large, you may think me guilty of setting your pupils an example of arro-

gance, if I proceed to offer my own, unless I can clearly show that what has been said by such learned men, is wholly erroneous. I shall not attempt to do this; for I do not believe it. They seem to have each discovered a single truth respecting ventriloquism, and to have supposed *this single truth* to be *the whole truth*, in regard to it. Each author whom I have quoted, seems to me to have done as the philosopher would do, who, when examining the organs of speech, should suppose, because the lips are used in speaking, that *they only* are used, while in fact they only assist the movements of the other organs. Thus, one regards the *larynx* as the sole source of ventriloquism,—another says, the ‘speaking while *inhaling the breath* explains the phenomenon,’—and others regard it as *mere imitation*.

As I before remarked, the practice of ventriloquism has generally been confined to illiterate persons, and in consequence, most who have written respecting it, have not spoken from experience.

You must allow me the liberty of speaking freely of my own experiments, in illustrating the position I shall take, as I have relied upon them principally in forming my theory, and have employed my own organs to test the theories of others. And I feel some confidence in the correctness of my views, from the fact that I have been able to explain them to others, who have put them in practice, with considerable success, and with very little effort. I gave your pupils an outline of my efforts to acquire the necessary skill, when delivering my lecture. I will hastily glance at it again, however, as it may serve to illustrate my future remarks.

I was very curious respecting magic in my earliest childhood, as I have before suggested. In endeavoring to learn the cause of this inclination of my mind, I have traced it back, I believe, to a trick, played upon me by a mate, whose deception I detected upon the spot. From that time I *searched till I found out*, almost every trick which I met with.—I was once walking through an entry,

attempting to mew like a cat, when my father suddenly met me. He was utterly opposed to nonsense of every form, and I feared a reprimand if he should find that I had made the mewling. Accordingly I turned to the cellar-door, which I was passing, and, as I opened it, mewed louder. He thought there was a cat in the cellar, and wondered how it came there. After this the cellar was greatly haunted with the noise of cats, and, as a puss actually happened to be there several times when I tried the trick, I believe that up to this day, I have not been suspected of that deception. Occasional praise for my vocal imitations excited me to efforts to increase my skill, and besides being able to crow, bark, mew, &c., I soon learned to imitate the voices of different members of the family. My father was in the daily habit of employing a few leisure hours over a carpenter's bench, in a chamber, fitted up for his amusement as a work-shop, which was situated at the top of a flight of stairs, leading to the kitchen. At such times, my services were often called

for to turn the crank of his grindstone, or otherwise to assist him, and his voice, at the top of the stairs, pronouncing my name, was a signal at which every domestic hastened to find me. Taking advantage of these circumstances, I once placed myself at the door of his shop-room, and pronounced my own name, imitating his voice. When I heard the whole family on the alert in search of myself, they supposing that my father wanted me, my delight was inexpressible; not because I desired to give them trouble, but, because I justly regarded the incident as a proof of my imitative powers.

LETTER XXI.

Ventriloquism. The Author's Views.

ON one occasion I stood in an entry adjoining my mother's parlor, where a sister was plying her needle alone, and commenced a dialogue between myself, and my absent mother, whose voice I counterfeited. My sister was not exactly satisfied with my state-

ments, respecting herself, and hastened to explain the matter, and when no mother appeared with me, my sister's blank astonishment afforded me much sport. My continued exertions, when out of school, to perfect myself in imitation, at length became obnoxious to the family, and I was threatened with castigation, or some other punishment, 'if I did not stop filling the house with cats and dogs, parrots and ghosts.' I was at this age fond of the curious, and peculiarly desirous of being successful as a declaimer. I do not know that the word *ventriloquism*, however was at that time known in my vocabulary. It certainly was not known to me except as a wonderful power, which I supposed to arise from strange organs of speech. And as I grew up into advanced boyhood, I came to regard all my little stock of skill as an imitator useless, and even despicable. My attention was wholly absorbed in my studies, and I saw no use for such powers, in the active duties of life. But I still desired to make what progress I could in speaking,

and was led, in consequence, to pay attention to the expression of the passions, with the aid of the treatises of Scott, Sheriden and others.

I found it easy to represent fear, joy, sorrow, &c., with my countenance, with some degree of accuracy. In several instances I carried my experiments in expressing passions, among my intimate friends, so far, as to seriously alarm them. I accidentally discovered that, holding the breath slightly (still breathing a little,) would produce paleness, and soon after, in a friend's room, fell, turning pale, and thus sent him out for some water to rouse me, from what he regarded as a fainting fit. I also discovered that holding my breath for a long time, while the lungs were full of air would produce redness of face, and that Scott's directions for delineating despair produced a terrible aspect. I once at this period was so unfortunate as to excite one of my college classmates to a high degree of anger. We met by accident, alone, in one of the public

rooms. He instantly locked the door, remaining with me, and holding the key in his hand. He was the strongest, and boiling with rage. I tried to reason with him upon his folly. But he would not hear. I thought a moment, and began to look pale, and stagger.—My hands twitched; I ‘ghastly smiled;’ I shook; I groaned; and my poor frightened classmate dropped his key, ran to the window, opened it, cried ‘help! help!’ and trembled like a death-doomed criminal upon the scaffold. Meanwhile I raved, picked up the key, groaned again, and unlocked the door, and escaped from a probable contest, of doubtful termination.

You probably know that I spent some time in your delightful avocation. My pupils were intelligent; and the appearance of a contemptible ventriloquist, in the neighborhood of my school, led me to investigate the subject, in order to give them an explanation of his art. And I soon began to suspect that ventriloquism was nothing very wonderful, I first practised in my chamber a few ex-

periments, then, before a friend or two, repeated them, and at last became certain as to the matter, by trying all manner of vocal imitations to test the principles; for I saw that there was no satisfactory delineation of them, offered by physiological writers, and therefore I doubted their explanation. I deceived families even. One instance of this I have already given.* I also deceived in sportive moments, brutes; making cows run from place to place, at the lowing of their penned calves, making cats creep to a corner in search of mice, and rats, whose squeaking notes they had distinctly heard, while a scratching on the back of my chair, and the direction of my countenance aided the illusion.

Scarcely any incident has ever amused me more than seeing a cat attempt to fight her own shadow, in a mirror, suddenly presented to her while she heard, at the same time, an imitation of the caterwaul of her imaginary antagonist. I have since out of mere

*See page, 72.

curiosity, procured and read such of the standard treatises on the subject as I have met with, and although the duties of my present situation, give me little time for such frivolities I find myself able to counterfeit, with a little practice of my voice, the sounds of the hen, chicken, cock, crow, cuckoo, blue-jay, and bee; the squirrel, pig, dog, horse, bull, and lion; the clock, grindstone, bugle, thunder, and an almost infinite variety of animate and inanimate sounds.

LETTER XXV.

The Author's Views.

I MENTIONED having seen ventriloquism taught. This has been repeatedly done, and I have never failed to find others able to produce the illusion, though with different degrees of success, on account of natural varieties of voice and tact. I have never myself regarded it as of sufficient importance to warrant devoting much time to it. My

only object in paying attention to it has been to satisfy myself and friends as to its nature and principles. I need not mention the process by which others have acquired it more than simply to say, that it was taught by inculcating practically the rules and principles of the art, as I am about to state them.

My definition of ventriloquism is—*The art of deceiving as to the source of sounds, and of imitating sounds.* Both deception and imitation are necessary to the successful practice of the performer.

You will observe that I do not confine the Ventriloquist to the use of his voice alone. The organs of utterance may do much, but would be impossible to succeed perfectly *in directing sound* without the aid of the *countenance, and gestures.* Whatever the juggler may say to the contrary, no man, unaided by these, or by *circumstances, can throw sounds* so that they shall seem to proceed from other bodies (except before and behind.) To do this would be a miracle, to *seem to do it* is a very simple trick, which is performed

by accident often, and which every child can perform with a little practice. Who has not observed the frequency of such illusions, when intently occupied, and suddenly interrupted? We are reading perhaps, or writing, or working, and some echo, or other fortuitous circumstance directs our attention to the very opposite side to that at which the speaker stands; and we look there, expecting to see him.

Let a man stand in a room, in which there is but one door, and let that be directly before him. Now if another should slip into the room and pass to the back side of it unobserved, and then speak, any one would be led instinctively to look first to the door, for the speaker.

In order to produce this deception, four qualifications are requisite in the ventriloquist, viz. *Ingenuity*, (to enable him to take advantage of circumstances.) *Knowledge of human nature*, (to guide him in regard to the credulity and feelings of his audience.) *Knowledge of natural language*, (to enable

him to look as if he himself supposed his sounds to proceed from another body ; and lastly, *Ability to speak with the lips motionless*, (in order to appear silent, to the audience, when speaking.) All the anecdotes I have related, afford examples of ingenuity in the adaptation of the trick to existing circumstances. His knowledge of human nature led the French ventriloquist, upon the diligence, to know that the cries of an infant must produce sensation among the passengers, and especially the ladies, within. Brabant made no small use of natural language, when he pretended such astonishment at the mention of his name, before the mother, and friends of his lady-love, and in the presence of old Cornu. And M. St. Gille had occasion to employ his skill in speaking without moving his lips, when, in the presence of friars, lay-brothers, and menials, in the chapel of the monastery, he was subjected to the scrutiny of the whole company, where the slightest movement of his lips, or of the muscles of his face, would have led to his detection.

Ingenuity must of course be a natural gift. *Knowledge of human nature* must be acquired by close observation. *To understand Natural Language*, it is necessary to employ long study and practice. *

Practice only is necessary to enable any one to *speak with motionless lips*. A mirror must be used at first to detect the motion, and the letters b, p, m, must be omitted: or changed into d, t, n, and a rough catching of the breath must be given for f, and v.

Such omissions and transpositions are scarcely perceptible in rapid utterance.

I have often made them in conversation, merely to see if they would be noticed, and have been greatly surprised to find upon enquiry, that individuals present had not perceived the consequent indistinctness. It only remains for me to treat of the art of vocal imitation, which I will attempt in my next letter, with a description of the organs of utterance.

* I would refer your pupils, on this point, to Scott, and Sheridan, and to Siddon's letters on dramatic action.

LETTER XXVI.

Ventriloquism. The Author's Views.

WITHOUT extensive powers of imitation, the four qualifications which I have suggested would enable a man to throw sounds, by taking advantage of circumstances, and exciting his hearer's imagination. But the power of imitation adds greatly to his ability to deceive in this way. All children possess this power to some extent. By it we learn to talk, to walk, to read, to write, to sing by rule, &c. Trial proves that it may triumph over almost all discouragements. Many suppose that they have no ear for music, and cannot therefore learn to sing. But whoever saw the person, who *wished to learn to sing*, and who *tried to learn to sing*, and failed? Let a man try perseveringly, and he will find out how to imitate almost any sound. Few do this, because few make the attempt. And many who can imitate sounds well, know nothing of the principles by which

it is done. So thousands are able to use oral language, who are, nevertheless, entirely ignorant of the manner in which they employ their organs in speaking.

The surest method of learning to produce imitations, would probably be, to make sounds as nearly like those intended as possible, and do it better and better, by repeated trials.— For instance, in trying to *bark*, let a man first hear the sound of the dog—then say ‘*oo-uh*’ or ‘*wuh*,’ till he mimics the dog perfectly. To mock the *cat*, let him say ‘*mew*,’ or, as in the caterwaul, ‘*e-ā-ah-au-o-u*’ ‘*e-ah-u*,’ ‘*e-ē-ē-ā-ā-ah-u*, *e-ā-ah-u*,’ &c., with a full, shrill, falsetto voice. To imitate the *turkey-cock*, let him say, ‘*pe-pe-pe-pa-pe-pe-pa-pe-pa-pe-m-gobble-oble-oble-oble-oble-oble*.’ To tick like a *clock*, let him ‘click’ with his tongue; or do it by suction, near the roots of his tongue, with his mouth shut. To imitate very distant, scarcely audible *thunder*, let him make a low rumbling, heavily, in his throat, with the mouth shut.

Every effort to manage the voice must be

favorable to progress in learning to speak well, and, were I in your place, I should encourage my pupils to make occasional experiments in imitations, especially, such as are applicable to reading* and speaking. The kinds of imitation requisite in ventriloquising, are, 1. imitation of distance in sound: and 2. imitation of voices differing from that of the speaker; and imitation of the tones of brutes, and of dead sounds, (as that of the saw, &c.) It will be important to take some notice of the organs of utterance, before proceeding to consider these two classes of imitations separately. This inquiry is the more important, on account of its connexion with impediments in speaking. It is extremely easy to imitate stutterers, lispers, and persons afflicted with nasal twang, &c., and it is an axiom in regard to speech, that one man must, almost infallibly, place his organs in

* The principles of vocal imitation are all embraced, so far as they relate to reading and speaking, in Porter's Rhetorical Reader, under the heads of inflection and modulation.

the same relative position with those of another, in making sounds exactly like his. This enables any one to detect the cause of a friend's impediment with ease.* It is this axiom which guides the mimic in 'taking off' the voice, tones, or singing of others, in pantomime. And if parents and teachers but knew it, this simple fact would be of great service in learning children to pronounce difficult letters.†

We employ in speaking, two distinct sets of organs—those of speech, and of sound. The organs of speech are the lips, teeth, tongue, palate, and nostrils. With these we *articulate* sounds.

The vowels are formed with the mouth open, by changes in the position of the tongue, &c. *B, p, and m*, are formed by the lips; *d, t, s, &c.*, by the tongue and upper teeth; *k, l, r, &c.*, by the tongue and

* See Appendix, Note B.

† See Hall's Lectures to Female Teachers. Boston, 1832, page 146.

palate: *m*, *n*, and *ng*, require that the sound should pass through the nostrils, while *f* and *v*, are formed by the under lip and upper teeth.* The organs of sound are the lungs, the trachea or windpipe, the larynx, the glottis, and the epiglottis.†

The lungs may be compared to the bellows of the organ. By their action, the air necessary for sound is set in motion; the trachea, or windpipe, conveys this air to the larynx, acting as a mere pipe. The larynx is the upper part of the windpipe, supplied with muscles and tendons to act upon the glottis. The glottis may be compared to the reed of a wind-instrument, with this difference, that it is capable of variations in form and tension which produce the change of note, formed on other wind instruments

* See Walker's Treatise on 'The principles of English pronunciation,' contained in his octavo Dictionary. Also, Rush, on voice.

† See Herries on voice for a minute description of these; also Paxton's Edition of Paley's Natural Theology, with plates.

by the finger-holes, and keys. The epiglottis is a lid, situated at the roots of the tongue to prevent injury to the glottis in swallowing, and to stop the passage of the breath. For a clear view of these interesting organs, I must refer to an anatomical preparation, which would, at a glance, give a clearer idea of them than I could possibly give on paper.

LETTER XXVII.

Ventriloquism. The Author's views.

The Epiglottis and the glottis are the more essential organs of sound, and may be made to answer in lieu of the organs of speech. Good relies on this fact alone in his explanation of ventriloquism, quoting numerous authors to support him. The Emperor Justin,* states that he saw old men 'complain-

* Con. Tit. de Off. Praet.

ing after their tongues were cut out.' Honorious,* the Vandal king, cut out the tongues of some, 'who still were able to talk.' In 1683, Tulpus † found, at Wesop, in Holland, 'a man who could not only speak, but could articulate distinctly those consonants and words, which seem to depend upon the tip of the tongue for their pronunciation. This case is the more worthy of attention, because the man had been so horribly mutilated by the Turks, during their irruption into Austria, that he could not swallow the slightest food without the aid of his finger in thrusting it into the esophagus.' The University of Sallmer in France, ‡ officially authenticates the story of a boy eight years old, who had lost his tongue by small-pox, but could still speak. Margaret Cutting, of Wickham-Market, in Suffolk, Eng-

* Phil. Trans. 1742, and '47. Abridg. Vol. 8, p. 586—vol. 9, p. 375.

† Tulpii Obsere. Medicae. Amsterdam.

‡ Ephêmerides Germanicae, vol. 3.

land, when only four years old, lost her tongue, with the uvula, by a cancer. She still could talk, however, as Dr. Parsons asserts in the *Philosophical Transactions*, and could also 'sing to admiration,' and wondered what use others had for their tongues in speaking. The Royal Society in London, had the girl brought thither for their examination, and were personally convinced of the fact.* Lord Monboddo affirms that 'all natural cries are from the throat and larynx,' and therefore he assumes that all the first languages were spoken in the throat, for they were quite guttural! Hence he argues that the organs of speech were of little use originally.†

It is with the larynx that most imitations of brute-sounds are made, though assisted by the organs of speech.

But the most curious and essential imi-

* *Study of Med.* vol. 1, Edit. 1, p. 499. Other examples of this phenomenon are there given.

† *Origin and Progress of Language*, vol. 1, chap. 6. Vol. 3, chap. 4.

tation in practising ventriloquism is that of relative distance. This has reference to loudness,* distinctness, pitch and quality of sound. As a voice approaches or recedes, it grows louder or fainter, more or less distinct, higher or lower, and more clear, or more dead. A receding person, is crying 'Fire;' you hear less and less sound; soon *f*, then *r*, is lost, as you hear only the prolonged sound of *i*. If he is ascending or descending a hill, or other elevation his voice will appear to slightly vary in pitch. If a wall, a house, or grove intercept his voice before reaching you, the reverberation will give it a dead sound. All these facts must be known by the ventriloquist, practically if not scientifically, and then he must imitate the varied sound. Let one of your lads hear a receding hound, and imitate its cry, and he will have an idea of my meaning at once.

A most singular voice (as that used to

* See Appendix Note C.

represent the 'drowning boy' page 73) may be produced by straining the muscles of the lungs, and abdomen, violently with compression of the throat. It is a kind of grunt, that which generally accompanies the stretching of the arms in drowsiness. One may easily speak with this grunting voice, and, as it certainly seems to come from below the throat this kind of voice must have given stomach-speaking, or ventriloquism, its name.

Imitation of different human voices only requires an accurate observations of peculiarities of pitch, roughness or smoothness, habit as to slowness or rapidity, and peculiar use of the four inflections,* the latter especially.

Other imitations require certain distortions of mouth to be learned only by experiment.

* Of these every teacher and pupil should be master. Walker's system is defective as he makes *himself* or rather his taste his guide. Our common school books which pretend to teach them are most of them very inaccurate. Nature, as exhibited in *universal conversation* should be the standard of Inflection. See Rhetorical Reader.

Thus, breathing in and out harshly, with the tip of the tongue placed against the top of the palate, or roof of the mouth imitates the saw. Hissing or whistling with the tongue, placing it behind the teeth, imitates the chicken, the canary bird, &c., and buzzing with the lips almost closed, imitates the humble-bee. I have now given an outline of my views on this interesting subject; and both yourself and your pupils will perhaps unite with me in rejoicing, that, while no Providential circumstance has interrupted the course of my letters, they are at last concluded.

But I cannot close without warning your pupils against the injurious tendency of mimicry, especially when used personally. While I would encourage them to try experiments, in hours of amusement, with their vocal organs, I would urge them never to carry these imitations so far as to diminish their own self-respect, or to lower them in the estimation of others. Let improvement in the power of speech be the only object of such efforts. Caricatures of the oddities of others, are

always a breach of Christian politeness; always indicate, and cherish a frivolity worse than puerile; and often create animosities which prove fruitful sources of misery through life, while none can calculate their soul-destroying influence beyond the grave.

I am, in conclusion,
yours, &c.

THE AUTHOR.

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I am, in conclusion,
 Yours, &c.

The Author

[The following text is extremely faint and illegible, appearing to be a series of lines of text, possibly a dedication or a list of names.]

APPENDIX.

NOTE A. (See p. 62. also 106.)

It is very extensively believed among the lower classes that *ghosts do appear* at times, even in our day, and an appeal is often made, by the supporters of this opinion, to ghostly legends, and to the imposing exhibitions of papal ceremonies, at which ghosts are often presented.

A mother, whose children had been frightened by such narrations, from the mouth of a hired domestic, suggested to the author that a few remarks upon *ghosts &c.*, might be valuable, in connection with this work.

Dr. Brownlee states that a young lady in Glasgow, (who was present at a grand Catholic celebration, and saw ghosts moving back and forward, upon the stage,) caught what they called a spirit, as it passed near her, and carried it home, unobserved by the priests. It proved to be an image of starched cloth, car-

ried about by a small crab. A wire or string confined the poor crab to the stage. The priests informed their deluded people that these puppets were *souls in purgatory*, come up to earth, to supplicate charity. Scott * has given many interesting anecdotes respecting ghosts, which appeared in Europe, and proved to be mere images, phantasms, or real men. Not a few have appeared among our own citizens.

A certain inland village in Massachusetts, had been for years visited, in May, by a huge ghost, seen every moonlight night near a wood. An old deacon saw it, one evening, as he rode past the wood. He was greatly startled, but boldly determined to face the monster. He did so, and thereby faced a *ghostly looking bush, covered with white flowers!*

A young man solemnly declared, a few years since, that he had seen a ghost clothed in white, pass through a rail-fence without stooping, and afterwards wander in a pasture. It was found upon enquiry that he was right. An old woman had lost her cow, and was out

* See his 'Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft,' a work, which every youth should read.

looking for her, with a sheet over her head to prevent injury to her health. She had thoughtlessly used a sheet for a shawl, and finding a pair of bars down, was able to 'pass through without stooping,' as he said.

A man who resided near Litchfield, Conn. went, in his youth, on Saturday evening, to play cards in a house said to be *haunted*. Soon, a knocking was heard—the door opened—a tall white figure appeared lying on the ground with his feet at the door; the card-players fled. The tall figure was found afterwards to have been an image prepared and placed there by a wag, to frighten the gamblers.

In South Hadley, Mass. some men who were passing the grave-yard heard a groaning. A funeral was to be attended on the morrow, and the grave had been dug. They followed the groans, and traced them to the grave! They looked in, and saw *a something white there!* They did not flee, but on examination found a *poor sheep* which had broken its leg in falling into the grave.

In East-Hartford, Conn. a moaning, like that of an infant, was heard for years, proceeding apparently from a hollow spot in the

ground, where, rumor said, a murdered child had been buried. A gentleman heard the cry distinctly, one windy night, and followed it. It grew louder and louder as he drew near the spot! It seemed to come from the ground at first,—but he soon traced it to a sliver in a fence near by, which creaked in the wind. He tore off the sliver, and the moaning was never heard again.

Two gentlemen in a town in the western part of New York state, purchased a small house, (formerly tenanted by a very impious man) and converted it into a work-shop. But an awful murmur was often heard there, and the workmen's hearts failed them. A rumor soon came that the murmur proceeded from a murdered ghost whose bones must lie buried near the house. So great an excitement was created by this suggestion that the cellar, garden, hearth, &c., were *dug up* and *searched*, but all in vain. The murmur continued; but was eventually traced to *chimney-swallows*, chattering in their nest!

Who can doubt but that all other cases *might be explained*, if all the circumstances were known?

In regard to singular, and seemingly prophetic dreams, reference may be made to Abercrombie, Macknish,* and other writers. Such coincidences between dreams and events must be considered accidental, rather than instances of 'second sight.'

A statement appeared lately in numerous papers respecting a female of 19, at Springfield, Mass., who would often rise, dress, and work, while asleep. She could see with her eyes shut, and even with a bandage over them. Macknish gives a similar case,† and Abercrombie also gives several. Rather than to suppose this to have been miraculous, I am inclined to ascribe it to intensity of sensibility in the optic nerve, or to animal magnetism, or some other natural cause.‡ Every chemical

* See Abercrombie on the Intellectual Powers, Art. 'Dreams,' and Macknish's Phil. of Sleep, Glasgow, 1830. p. 50. to p. 225.

† See page 174, (case of G. Davies.)

‡ The undulatory theory of light, as explained by Whewell, in No. 3d of the Bridgewater Treatises, p. 105, may perhaps render this phenomenon less marvellous.

student knows that galvanism will, in proper circumstances, render flesh transparent. Thus her eye-lids might have been so, through nervous excitement, in some way as yet unknown. The witnesses in the case are too numerous, and too respectable to allow us to doubt the facts. I have since been informed that her wonderful powers have vanished, with the restoration of her health.

NOTE B. (See p. 139.)

Stuttering,* lispings and other natural faults are often caused by neglect or ignorance on the part of teachers. The art of curing stuttering is founded on the principles of imitation and articulation, as the Analysis, and the following cases may serve to show.

A child was unable to speak certain letters, as b, p, d, &c., and as he grew into boyhood, was mortified at his indistinct utterance. This trouble increased, and he began to hesitate, then to stammer when those letters occurred,

* See Analysis of Rhet. Delivery, p. 32.

and at seventeen was a confirmed stutterer. At this age, he was shown how to place his tongue, and other organs, in uttering those sounds, and was soon wholly relieved.

A little boy replied to a stranger, who was beckoning to him, '*I tant*' for '*I cant*.' The stranger said, 'Look into my mouth and see where I put my tongue to say *c*.' The boy did so, and was soon able, with the aid of his sisters, to speak *cant* distinctly. Had he not been thus taught in childhood, he would probably have been a *confirmed stutterer*.

NOTE C. (See p. 144.)

A musical amateur states that 'the advance and retreat of a Band of music may be represented very perfectly on the violin, by commencing with the loudest strain possible, and gradually diminishing the sound by pressing lighter and lighter upon the strings, until finally the sound is just heard in the distance. To render the imitation more perfect, the accented notes only ought to be touched while repre-

senting music at the distance, and as the band seems to approach, two or three strings may be used at once, with a gradual increase of pressure on them.

He further states, (what most have heard) that various instruments may be imitated upon the violin, as the flute, cymbal, Bagpipe, Trumpet, &c. The famous representation of the burning of Moscow, was probably accompanied in this way by a violin, in skillful hands.

The length of breath spoken of in the case of Toolemak, (see page 96) was probably an instance of speaking both when drawing in, and throwing out breath. Speech may thus be continued for half an hour or more, with ease, with no perceptible cessation, even for seconds, although without great practice two voices will be given, one as breath is drawn in, and the other as it is emitted.

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