

SOME OLD TIME CONJURERS.

BY HENRY RIDGELY EVANS.

I LOVE to read about the old-time conjurers, the contemporaries of Robert-Houdin, or his immediate successors. Literature on the subject is very sparse indeed. In his memoirs, Houdin gives us a few thumbnail sketches of his rivals in the mystic art, and then dismisses them with a kindly, *Valc*. He has something to say about Bosco's personal appearance and performances, but makes no mention of the romantic incidents in the great magician's career. I shall try in this paper to sketch the lives of some of these men, basing my information on rare *brochures* contained in the Ellison Library, and from information picked up by Mr. Harry Houdini in Europe. The great encyclopedic dictionary of Larousse—a monument of French erudition—contains something about Philippe, Robin and Comte. Mr. Ellis Stanyon, a conjurer of London, and author of several valuable little treatises on magic, has kindly furnished me with interesting data: the files of old newspapers in the British Museum, and the Library of Congress have also been drawn upon. Let us begin with

COMTE.

Louis Apollinaire Comte was a magician of great skill, a mimic and ventriloquist. He was born in Geneva, Switzerland, June 22, 1788, and died at Rueil, France, November 25, 1850. On one occasion he was denounced by some superstitious Swiss peasants as a sorcerer, set upon and beaten with clubs, and was about to be thrown into a lime kiln. His ventriloquial powers saved his life. He caused demoniacal voices to proceed from the kiln, whereupon his tormenters fled from the spot in affright, imagining that they were addressed by the Powers of Darkness.

When summoned to appear before Louis XVIII, at the palace of the Tuilleries, Comte arranged a clever mystification to amuse

his royal patron. During the course of the entertainment he requested the king to select a card from a pack. By his address, he caused the monarch to draw the king of hearts. Placing the card in a pistol, Comte fired it at a bouquet of flowers on a table, declaring that the pasteboard would appear in the bouquet. Immediately, a bust of the king was seen among the flowers.

"What does this mean?" said Louis XVIII, with a sarcastic smile. "I fancy, sir, your trick has not ended as you stated."

"I beg your Majesty's pardon," Comte replied, with a profound bow. "I have quite kept my promise. I pledged myself that the king of hearts should appear in that bouquet of flowers, and I appeal to all Frenchmen whether that bust does not represent *the king of all hearts.*"

The experiment was applauded to the echo by those present. The *Royal Journal* of the 20th of December, 1814, thus describes the affair:

"The whole audience exclaimed in reply to M. Comte, 'We recognize him—it is he—the king of all hearts! the beloved of the French—of the whole universe—Louis XVIII, the august great-grandson of Henri Quatre?'"

"The king, much affected by these warm acclamations, complimented M. Comte on his skill.

"'It would be a pity,' he said to him, 'to order such a talented sorcerer to be burnt alive. You have caused us too much pleasure for us to cause you pain. Live many years, for yourself in the first place, and then for us.'"

Comte was an adept at the art of flattery. Perhaps all the while, he and the fickle courtiers of the Tuilleries were secretly laughing at the poor old Bourbon king, the scion of a race that had all but ruined France, and were wishing back from Elba that Thunderbolt of War—Napoleon the Great.

Comte was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honor by Louis Philippe.

PHILIPPE.

Philippe Talon was born at Alais, near Nimes (France). He carried on the trade of confectioner first in Paris, afterwards in Aberdeen, Scotland. Failing to make a success of the sugar business, he adopted conjuring as a profession, and was remarkably successful. He was assisted by a young Scotchman named Macalister, who on the stage appeared as a negro, "Domingo." Macalister, a clever mechanic, invented many of the best things in Philippe's rep-

ertoire. From some Chinese jugglers, Philippe learned the gold-fish trick and the Chinese rings. With these capital experiments added to his programme, he repaired to Paris, in 1841, and made a great hit. Habited like a Chinaman, he performed them in a scene called "A festival of a Palace in Nankin." The fish trick he ostentatiously named "Neptune's Basins, or the Gold Fish." The bowls of water containing the fish he produced from shawls while standing



HENRY ROBIN.

on a low table. He followed this with a production of rabbits, pigeons, ducks, chickens, etc.

ROBIN.

Robin, the celebrated prestidigitateur, was born in Holland about 1805, and died in Paris in 1874. His little theatre on the Boulevard du Temple was the scene of some of the finest exhibitions of conjuring. Robin was a man of considerable attainments in the

science of optics. He revived Robertson's ghost show with immense success, adding to it the latest effects, such as Pepper's illusions. When the Davenport Brothers, pretended spiritualists, came to Paris, Robin duplicated all their tricks at his theatre. He did much to discredit the charlatans. About 1869 he gave up his theatre, and became the proprietor of a hotel on the Boulevard Mazas. For several years he conducted a journal called the *Almanach illustré de Cagliostro*. He is the author of two works on magic: *Histoire des spectres vivants et impalpables*, and *Secrets de la physique amusante*, Paris, 1864.

BOSCO.

I look again into the magic mirror of the past. Who is this portly figure enveloped in a be-frogged military cloak? He has the mobile visage of an Italian. There is an air of pomposity about him. His eyes are bold and piercing. He has something of the appearance of a Russian nobleman, or general under the Empire. Ah, that is the renowned Bosco, the conjurer!

Bartolomeo Bosco had an adventurous career. He was born in Turin, Italy, January 11, 1793. He came of a noble family of Piedmont. At the age of nineteen he was one of the victims caught in the meshes of the great military drag-net of Napoleon I, that fisher for men. In other words, he became "food for powder" in the Russian campaign of the Emperor of France. He was a fusilier in the 11th infantry of the line. At the battle of Borodino, in an encounter with Cossacks, Bosco was badly wounded in the side by a lance, and fell upon the ground. A son of the Cossack lancer who had wounded him, dismounted and began to rifle his pockets. Like all soldiers on a campaign, Bosco carried his fortune with him. It did not amount to very much: a watch, a keepsake from a sweetheart, a few gold pieces, a tobacco pouch, etc. Fearing to receive the *coup de grace* from his enemy, he pretended to be dead. But on realizing that if he were robbed of his money he would be left destitute in the world, he put his abilities as a conjurer to work and dexterously picked the Cossack's pocket of a well-filled purse. It was a case of Greek meeting Greek. The Russian, grumbling, perhaps, at the paucity of his ill-gotten plunder, finally mounted his horse and rode away after his comrades, to discover later on that he had been *done* and by a corpse. Later in the day Bosco was picked up from the battlefield by the Russian medical corps, and his wounds treated. He was sent a captive to Siberia, near the town of Tobolsk. His talent for *escamotage* served him well. The long winter evenings of his captiv-

ity when the snow lay deep upon the earth, and the wind howled about the prison walls, were spent by him either amusing his jailors or his fellow-soldiers. He sometimes gave exhibitions of his skill before the high officials of the place, thereby picking up considerable money. He spent his earnings generously upon his poorer brethren.



BOSCO.

(From a rare engraving in the possession of Dr. Saram R. Ellison, New York City.)

Finally, in April, 1814, he was released. He returned to Italy, to the great delight of his friends, and became a professional conjurer. Bosco was a wonderful performer of the cup-and-ball trick. He also possessed great skill with cards and coins. He traveled all over

Europe. He gave an exhibition before Marie Louise, the widow of Napoleon I, on the 27th of April, 1836. His sonorous, bizarre name has become a byword in France for deception, whether in conjuring or politics. The statesman Thiers was called the "Bosco of the Tribune." Many of Bartolomeo Bosco's imitators assumed his cognomen. At the present day there is a French magician touring the music halls of Europe, who calls himself Bosco. The original Bosco, like Alexander Herrmann, was in the habit of advertising himself by giving impromptu exhibitions of his skill in cafés, stage coaches, hotels, etc. He was wonderfully clever at this. A Parisian newspaper thus announced one of his entertainments: "The famous Bosco, who can conjure away a house as easily as a nutmeg, is about to give his performances at Paris, in which some miraculous tricks will be executed." This illusion to the nutmeg has reference to the magician's cup-and-ball trick; nutmegs frequently being used instead of cork balls. Houdin describes Bosco's stage as follows:

"I entered the little theatre and took my seat. According to the idea I had formed of a magician's laboratory, I expected to find myself before a curtain whose large folds, when withdrawn, would display before my dazzled eyes a brilliant stage ornamented with apparatus worthy of the celebrity announced; but my illusions on this subject soon faded away.

"A curtain had been considered superfluous, and the stage was open. Before me was a long three-storied sideboard, entirely covered with black serge. This lugubrious buffet was adorned with a number of wax candles, among which glistened the apparatus. At the topmost point of this strange *étagère* was a death's-head, much surprised, I have no doubt, at finding itself at such a festival, and it quite produced the effect of a funeral service.

"In front of the stage, and near the spectators, was a table covered by a brown cloth, reaching to the ground, on which five brass cups were symmetrically arranged. Finally, above this table hung a copper ball, which strangely excited my curiosity.

"For the life of me I could not imagine what this was for, so I determined to wait till Bosco came to explain it. The silvery sound of a small bell put an end to my reverie, and Bosco appeared upon the stage.

"The artiste wore a little black velvet jacket, fastened round the waist by a leathern belt of the same color. His sleeves were excessively short, and displayed a handsome arm. He had on loose black trousers, ornamented at the bottom with a ruche of lace, and a large

white collar round his neck. This strange attire bore considerable resemblance to the classical costume of the Scapins in our plays.

"After making a majestic bow to his audience, the celebrated conjurer walked silently and with measured steps up to the famous copper ball. After convincing himself it was solidly hung, he took up his wand, which he wiped with a white handkerchief, as if to re-



HOUDINI AT THE GRAVE OF BOSCO.

(From a photograph in the possession of Dr. Saram R. Ellison,
New York City.)

move any foreign influence; then, with imperturbable gravity, he struck the ball thrice with it, pronouncing, amid the most solemn silence, this imperious sentence: *Spiriti mei infernali, obedite.*

"I, like a simpleton, scarce breathed in my expectation of some

miraculous result, but it was only an innocent pleasantry, a simple introduction to the performance with the cups."

After many wanderings Bartolomeo Bosco laid down his magic wand forever in Dresden, March 2, 1862; he lies buried in a cemetery just outside of that city. Mr. Harry Houdini, the American conjurer, discovered his grave on October 23, 1903. Upon the tombstone is carved the insignia of Bosco's profession—a cup-and-ball, and a wand. They are surmounted by a wreath of laurel. Says Mr. Houdini: "I found the head of the wand missing. Looking into the tall grass nearby I found the broken tip." This he presented to Dr. Saram R. Ellison, of New York. Bosco's tombstone bears the following inscription: *Ice répose le célèbre Bartolomeo Bosco: Né à Turin le 11 Janvier 1793; decede à Dresden, le 2 Mars, 1862.*

ANDERSON.

One of the most celebrated English magicians was John Henry Anderson, the far-famed "Wizard of the North." He was born in Aberdeenshire, Scotland. Early in 1840 he came to London, and made a hit at the Strand Theatre with his gun trick and other illusions. Besides being a conjurer, Anderson was a clever actor, and often appeared in melodrama. He displayed a great collection of apparatus, which he described as "a most gorgeous and costly apparatus of solid silver, the mysterious mechanical construction of which is upon a secret principle, hitherto unknown in Europe." He claimed to have been the inventor of the gun trick, but this was not so, as Torrini and others exhibited it on the Continent in the latter part of the 18th century. All that Anderson did was to invent his own peculiar method of working the illusion. "The extraordinary mystery of the trick," he said, "is not effected by the aid of any accomplice, or by inserting a tube in the muzzle of the gun, or by other conceivable devices (as the public frequently, and in some instances, correctly imagine), but any gentleman may really load the gun in the usual manner, inserting, himself, a *marked real leaden ball!* The gun being then fired off at the Wizard, he will instantly produce and exhibit the same bullet in his hand." The bullet, however, was not a genuine leaden ball, but one composed of an amalgam of tin foil and quicksilver, which is as heavy as lead, but is broken into bits and dispersed in firing. He once played at a private engagement at the Winter Palace, St. Petersburg, before the Czar Nicholas and a brilliant audience of Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses. His exhibition of second sight was a remarkable one.

Return from Elba." It was of gigantic size. Houdin describes it and other advertising schemes as follows:

"In the foreground Anderson was seen affecting the attitude of the great man; above his head fluttered an enormous banner, bearing the words 'The Wonder of the World,' while, behind him, and somewhat lost in the shade, the Emperor of Russia and several other monarchs stood in a respectful posture. As in the original picture, the fanatic admirers of the Wizard embraced his knees, while an immense crowd received him triumphantly. In the distance could be seen the equestrian statue of the Iron Duke, who, hat in hand, bowed before him, the Great Wizard; and, lastly, the very dome of St. Paul's bent towards him most humbly.

"At the bottom was the inscription,

"RETURN OF THE NAPOLEON OF NECROMANCY."

"Regarded seriously, this picture would be found a puff in very bad taste; but, as a caricature, it is excessively comic. Besides, it had the double result of making the London public laugh, and bringing a great number of shillings into the skillful puffer's pockets.

"When Anderson is about to leave a town where he has exhausted all his resources, and has nothing more to hope, he still contrives to make one more enormous haul.

"He orders from the first jeweller in the town a silver vase, worth twenty or twenty-five pounds; he hires, for one evening only, the largest theatre or room in the town, and announces that in the Wizard's parting performance the spectators will compete to make the best pun.

"The silver vase is to be the prize of the victor.

"A jury is chosen among the chief people of the town to decide with the public on the merits of each pun.

"It is agreed that they will applaud if they think a pun good; they will say nothing to a passable one, but groan at a bad one.

"The room is always crowded, for people come less to see the performance, which they know by heart, than to display their wit publicly. Each makes his jest, and receives a greeting more or less favorable; and, lastly, the vase is decreed to the cleverest among them.

"Any other than Anderson would be satisfied with the enormous receipts his performance produces; but the Great Wizard of the North has not finished yet. Before the audience leaves the house he states that a short-hand writer had been hired by him to

take down all the puns, and that they will be published as a Miscellany.

"As each spectator who has made a joke likes to see it in print, he purchases a copy of the book for a shilling. An idea of the number of these copies may be formed from the number of puns they contain. I have one of these books in my possession, printed in Glasgow in 1850, in which there are 1001 of these facetiæ."

Anderson died in 1865, having made and lost several fortunes.

Other conjurers of this period are Jacobs, Döbler, Frikell, Dr. Lynn, and the elder Herrmann. Frikell was born in 1818, at Scopio, a village of Finland. He performed entirely without apparatus, which was a decided novelty at that time. He gave his first entertainment in London in 1851.

STODARE.

Colonel Stodare is remarkable as the exhibitor of the far-famed Sphinx illusion, a masterpiece of its kind.

I summon now from the shades the spirit of Colonel Stodare. All hail, thou mystic with the military title! Colonel Stodare, however, never smelt powder, nor directed the manœuvres of a regiment of red-coats. His title was self-assumed, to bedazzle the English public. He never wielded any weapon save a wooden wand, tipped with ivory. But he did that to perfection. His real name was Alfred Inglis. Little or nothing is known of his early life and education. His first appearance was at the Egyptian Hall, London, on Easter Monday, April 17, 1865, when he introduced for the first time in England those celebrated illusions of Hindostan: the "Mango Tree" and the "Indian Basket." It was on the occasion of his 200th consecutive representation at the aforesaid hall that Stodare introduced the "Sphinx" trick, which at once attracted crowds. On Tuesday evening, November 21, 1865, he had the honor to appear before Queen Victoria, at Windsor Castle on the occasion of the birthday of H. R. II. the Princess Royal, afterwards the Empress Frederick of Germany. Stodare died of consumption in 1866. He wrote two small treatises on magic: "The Art of Magic" (1865), and "Stodare's Fly-Notes" (1867).

I come now to discuss his "Sphinx," which has formed the basis of nearly all tricks performed by the aid of looking glasses. Alfred Thompson, the well-known theatrical manager and raconteur, of London, some twenty years ago in the *New York Journal* related the history of the illusion, and how like an up-to-date Oedipus he penetrated its secret.

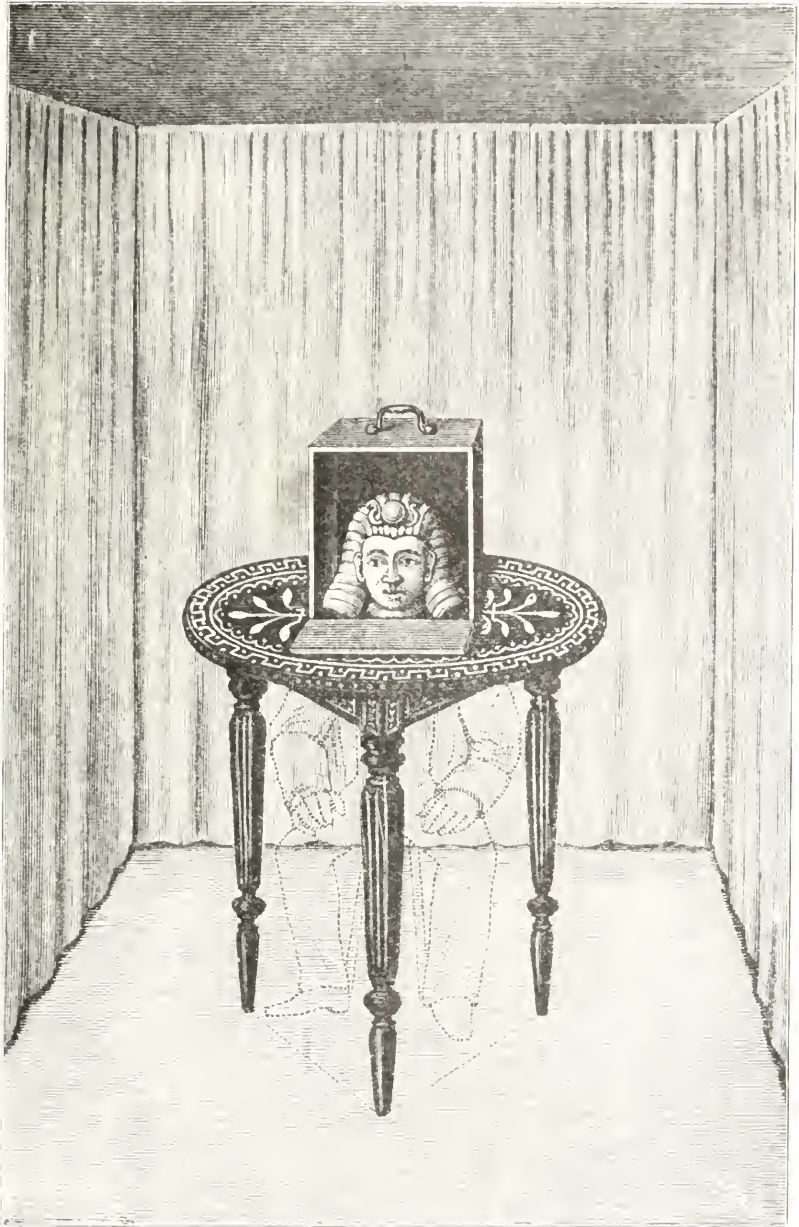
"I remember the first time I ever saw the curious ocular illusion known as the Sphinx Table. As I took an interest in all illusions which could be adapted to stage effects, and had heard from adepts that the new illusion was not only a marvel but absolutely undetectable, I attended the first performance of the resuscitated Sphinx, first performed at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, London, by a wizard calling himself Colonel Stodare. This clever trick was really invented by a young man named Thomas Tobin, who assisted Pep-



COLONEL STODARE.

per at the Polytechnic institution in Regent street, to whose genius the well-used ghost illusion also owed its invention.

"I was well in front and not too near, and after the usual rabbits had disappeared out of hats and become watches and the various pocket handkerchiefs had been turned into bouquets of flowers, the novelty was introduced as a climax and the sight-seeing public had a wonder to exercise its mind on for months to come. On



THE SPHINX ILLUSION.

(From the English edition of Hoffmann's *Magic*. London, 1877.)

the stage not far from the footlights was a three-legged table on the top of which was spread a small velvet cover with a border of gold fringe hanging over four inches. No room for a drawer beneath the table and clear space under and between the legs as far as the back of the stage. Simply three attenuated legs and a flat top covered with velvet. On a side table near the proscenium stood a handsome plush-covered box about a foot square. The lid, unlocked by Stodare, was opened on the side facing the spectators. In the box was seen the head of the Sphinx; a life-size head of a handsome Egyptian wearing the typical striped head-piece, and a collar-ette round the severed neck; for there was nothing but a head on a short neck in the box. The eyes were closed and the long eye-lashes fell on the cheek, which glowed with vital blood. Closing the lid for a moment, Stodare carried the box, by a handle on either side, from the table to the three-legged table and set it down in the center.

"Now understand, there was a simple unadulterated table without drawer or places of concealment. You could see beneath it and note the hangings on the wall beyond. The thickness of the table with the bottom of the box upon it could not have been two inches in all. Stodare reopened the box, which had never quitted our sight, and as the lid fell forward the Sphinx, still there, slept the sleep of thousands of years—but only to wake at the voice of the wizard. The splendid, calm, majestic eyes opened at command. I had no doubt, even before the lips opened and the voice spoke in measured, rhythmic tones, that the head was human and not made of wax; but the more I looked and the more I calculated, the farther was I from a solution of the first mystery I had witnessed since I commenced the study of modern magic.

"The whole apparatus was in full light, not only of gas, but of a calcium directed on to the wondrous face while the box was open. Until the close of the exhibition I sat there dumbfounded and positively unable to answer the Sphinx enigma before me. Just before the conclusion I happened to rise in my seat, so certain I felt that some unexpected detail might disclose the whole secret to me; and in a moment the whole illusion was swept away. I saw where the body was concealed. I knew the trick and I went away perfectly happy at being the only one in London, besides the inventors, who could have reproduced the marvelous sorcery elsewhere. And the whole affair was given away for lack of a silk handkerchief. As I stood up, my eye caught, hovering between two of the table legs,

the marks of two fingers, such marks as may be often seen on a mirror when the light falls at a certain angle upon it.

"Those two finger marks, though close to the carpet, gave me the key to the riddle of the Sphinx. In my mental photograph I saw the confederate kneeling behind the table, his head passing through superposed apertures, one in the top of the table, the other in the bottom of the box. The figure was concealed from view by two mirrors of pure silver plated-glass, set at such an angle as to reflect either side of the room (on the stage) in such a way that what to the eye was evidently the back of the same room seen beneath and beyond the table, was really only a reproduction of those sides visible in the mirrors between the legs of the table.

"This Sphinx was the sensation of London for weeks following, and having occasion to go to Paris a few days later, I offered the secret to Robert Houdin's successor, Hamilton, who, however, refused my terms until he knew the trick. This delay of his was much regretted by him, for some other speculator produced the secret some three months later and made a colossal sensation in Paris with his 'Decapité Parlant.'

"In the same year I introduced the illusion for the first time on the stage in the celebrated spectacle of 'Babil and Bijou' at Covent Garden Theatre. In the ballet of 'The Seasons' Mlle. Henriette Dor, one of the most poetical dancers ever seen, appeared as the White Rose, and I designed a large rose bud on its stalk, which, coming up through the bed of summer flowers, blossomed wide until from its open petals the beautiful Dor rose up, apparently materializing as she issued from the calix on the stalk. The ballet was so arranged in groups around three sides (not in front) as to aid the deception by their adjusted reflection in the mirrors.

"Practically it was the same trick—two mirrors at a right angle and a trap door. This curious trick was never improved on. It was added to and altered at the Polytechnic, where, among other adaptations of the same principle, was shown an animated tableau of Sir Joshua Reynold's famous cherubs. 'Three cherubs' heads appeared in a moonlit sky, floating, and sang in sweet child voices the verses of an anthem.

"Curiously enough I met the original Sphinx not three years ago in the person of a business manager who had been Stodare's agent, and only three months back one of those very cherubs in Mr. Fred Solomon, the comedian, who was then a chorister at the Chapel Royal, and who was threatened with all sorts of tortures if he let the cat or the cherub out of the bag."

Stodare's powers as a ventriloquist enhanced the effect of his Sphinx trick. In carrying the closed box which contained the Sphinx, from the table to the footlights, he was enabled by his ventriloquial powers to apparently cause the head to speak. Finally, on opening the box, the head was found to have disappeared altogether, a heap of ashes having taken its place. The story told about the ancient head and the *mise-en-scène* of the trick were well calculated to impress the spectators and inspire them with awe.

The inventor of the Sphinx, Mr. Tobin, sold the secret to M. Tabrich, of Paris, the proprietor of a wax-works exhibition on the Boulevard de la Madeleine. Tabrich called his collection of figures the *Musée Français*. Impressed with the success of Madam Tussand's "Chamber of Horrors," in connection with her wax-work exhibition, in London, Tabrich transformed the "Talking Head" into the "Decapitated Speaking," and surrounded it with a *mise-en-scène* calculated to strike terror in the mind of the observer. Underneath his museum was a damp and mouldy cellar, which he fitted up for the exhibition. The visitor was conducted down a stairway, dimly lighted by a couple of antique lamps suspended from the vaulted roof. When he reached the bottom he was suddenly confronted with a group of wax figures, representing a scene under the Inquisition. Every detail of a torture chamber was given, such as is described by Hugo in his *Notre Dame de Paris*. The cowed emissaries of the Holy Office were depicted in the act of putting a wretched victim to the torture. The light from a flambeau, held by one of the figures, illumined the ghastly scene. In this uncertain light everything was horribly majestic. Pushing onward and turning to the right, "the spectator passed through a dimly-lighted corridor, and found himself in front of a balustrade, breast-high, which extended across the entrance of a narrow recess. In the middle of this gloomy cellar, the floor of which was carpeted with musty straw, was seen a table, on which rested a human head, leaning slightly to one side, and apparently asleep. On being addressed by the exhibitor the head raised itself, opened its eyes, and related its own history, including the details of its decapitation, after which it replied, in various languages, to questions put by those present."

One day a party of young men, presumably medical students, out for a lark, and having imbibed a little too freely of *vin ordinaire* or *cognac*, began shooting pellets at the head in order to test whether it had entirely lost all sensation. The Decapitated One, in his wrath, abused them soundly, in an argot that savored more of modern Paris than the days of the Inquisition. This affair got noised

abroad, and gay young boulevardiers made up regular parties to go and shoot bread pellets at the head; this amusement they called "pop-gun practice." Some of these pellets, not so well *bred* (pardon the pun) as others, struck certain portions of the table, which were apparently *open*, but from which they rebounded, clearly indicating that the supposed vacant space was really a sheet of looking-glass. Mr. Tabrich then put a close-meshed wire grating between the spectators and their victim, but alas, the secret of the Inquisition was disclosed, and the palmy days of the *Musée Français* were over. Says Houdin: "The cause of Mr. Tabrich's failure was the same that brought disaster to the Brothers Davenport. Too great confidence in the Parisian public led both parties to offer what, after all, were but ingenious conjuring tricks, as supernatural phenomena."

BLITZ.

Signor Antonio Blitz was born June 21, 1810, in a little village of Moravia. At an early age he picked up, unknown to anyone, "a few adroit tricks from certain gypsies, who visited his native town." He began to exhibit these feats for the amusement of himself and friends. He made his professional debut at Hamburg when but thirteen years of age, and was known to the public as the "mysterious boy." His first appearance in this country was at the Music Hall, Broadway, New York. He had many imitators. Not less than thirteen people traveled the United States using his name, circulating a verbatim copy of his handbill and advertisement—"not only assuming to be the *original* Blitz, but in many instances claiming to be a son or nephew." "I have been," says Blitz, in his memoirs, *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle*, (Hartford, Conn., 1871), "in constant receipt of bills of their contracting, for, not content with taking my name, they have not even honor enough to pay their debts." The thirteen imposters exhibited under the following and other names:

Signor Blitz.

Signor Blitz, Jr.

Signor Blitz, The Original.

Signor Blitz's Son.

Signor Blitz's Nephew.

Signor Blitz, The Wonderful.

Signor Blitz, The Great.

Signor Blitz, The Unrivalled.

Signor Blitz, The Mysterious.

Signor Blitz, By Purchase.
Signor Blitz, The Great Original.

Blitz was not only a magician, but a ventriloquist and trainer of birds. He relates an amusing encounter with the great but eccentric genius, the Italian violinist, Paganini, whose romantic life is known to all lovers of music. The adventure took place in the city of Glasgow, Scotland, where Paganini was giving concerts. Says Blitz: "He, (Paganini) was tall and awkward looking, cadaverous in features, ungainly in form, with long black hair, said to be very wealthy, and characterized as extremely penurious. No instance was ever known of his contributing a penny to the distressed, or to a benevolent institution. One morning I called and found him quietly seated in his room alone. After conversing with him a short time I noticed his violin case lying upon the table, when suddenly the cry of a child issued from therein.

"'Who is that?' said Paganini, quickly looking around.
"It is *me*, with the babe," answered a womanly voice.
"My God! what is this?" inquired the astonished violinist.
"You well know," plaintively answered the woman, at the same time the infant again commenced crying.
"We know you are a bad woman," vehemently declared the excited man.
"And did you not make me so, you old Italian fiddler?"

Facsimile Reproduction of the Programme of Signor Blitz.

Mrs. Thornhill.

As announced BY BENEFIT to the Ladies, & Gentlemen of Haverly, & District, & the Parties to General has the Pleasure to inform them that,

SIGNOR BLITZ,

has kindly offered his WONDERFUL PERFORMANCES (For this Night only) in Aid of the receipt of that Evening. He will go through some 20 tricks of ART & MAGIC which has not yet been performed by him since his appearance in this part of the country. He will also on this occasion introduce the CELEBRATED G. W. TRICKS, &c. &c. Gentlemen being allowed to bring their own FOWLING PIECE, & other, & BALL, &c. &c. at any part of his Show.

The Licensed,

Pottery Theatre. (SWAN INN) Haverly.

On Tuesday Evening, AUG. 10th. 1830.

The Performance this Evening will commence with

SIGNOR BLITZ,

FROM MORAVIA

Professor of

MECHANISM & METAMORPHORISE,
FROM THE THEATRES ROYAL, LONDON,

THAUMATURGICS;

And Many other Performances too numerous to insert.

In the Course of the Evening, SIGNOR BLITZ, Will Command any Article to Fly at the Rate of 500. Miles a Minute!

THE SIGNOR WILL ALSO

Perform With THREE HANDS!

The Trials with

A Bushel of Rice, The Magnetic Die.

The Diving Bell; & Learned Half-Crowns.

To conclude with the

Gun Trick & the Dancing of five Dinner Plates,

A Dance by Miss Thornhill.

After which will be brought forward the interesting Melo-Drama, called

CLARI, The Maid of Milan.

Duke Viraldi — Mr Wood.

Belasco — Mr Thomas. Jordano — Mr C Thornhill. Nicolo — Mr Fisher

Concetta — Mr Thornhill. Miranda — Mrs Sherrill. Figo — Mr Wallace

Lari (the Maid of Milan) — Miss M Thornhill

CHARACTERS in THE EPISODE.

Moderato — Mr. Denton. Feligno — Mr Fisher.

Filippo — Mr Wood. Vangelio — Miss Thornhill

Wito — Mrs Thornhill. Lucia — Mrs Wood.

Private copy to Lady of Mr C Thornhill, at Mrs Grosses Well Street at the Lane.
To be sung at half past 7 o'Clock. For more particulars see the Bill. Is.
THE BAND WILL ATTEND IN UNIFORM.

PLAY BILL.

(From the collection of Mr. Ellis Stanyon, London, England.)

"After this there was apparently a commotion in the box, when Paganini became alarmed and was about to leave the room when I unmasked myself and explained that he had been a victim to the vagaries of ventriloquism; which, on hearing, delighted him prodigiously, and grasping me by the hand he exclaimed, 'Bravo, Signor! —bravo!'"

ALEXANDER.

Alexander Heimbürger was born December 4, 1819, in Germany. He performed under the *nom de theatre* of Herr Alexander. He toured Europe, North and South America with great success for a number of years, and retired to his native land with a large fortune. He is at present residing at Münster, an old man of eighty-four, with snow-white hair and beard, and bent over with age. He was long supposed to be dead by the fraternity of magicians, but Mr. H. Houdini, in his tour of Germany in 1903, discovered that he still lived, and his whereabouts. Alexander had many strange stories to relate of his adventures in America and other places. He was personally acquainted with Houdin, Frikell, Bosco, Anderson, Blitz, the original Bamburg of Amsterdam, etc. He performed several times at the White House before President Polk, and hobnobbed with Henry Clay, Webster and Calhoun. With letters from Polk he visited Brazil, and was admitted into the most aristocratic circles. On leaving New York in 1847 he was presented with a heavy gold medal, cast in the United States Mint at Washington. This medal has his portrait on one side, and on the reverse the following inscription:

"Presented to Herr Alexander as a token of esteem from his friends. New York, 1847."

Mr. Houdini writes as follows about the old magician (*Mahatma*, June, 1903): "He was a welcome guest at the Palace of the King of Brazil. He showed me letters to him from King Pedro II and his wife, dated Brazil, 1850. After an absence of ten years from his native country he returned, and married. He is blessed with six children, two sons and four daughters. One is in New York at the present time. While in New York, Alexander was approached by an illusionist named Orzini, who had a cabinet mystery. He was in hard circumstances and came to Alexander for assistance. The genial German gave him ten dollars. Orzini secured an engagement at the Park Theatre, but alas, only played one night, as his art did not suit, so he was closed after his first performance. Said Alexander to me, and the statement caused me in-

finite surprise: 'This Orzini was the man who threw the bomb at Napoleon III in Paris, trying to kill the Emperor, but was himself killed; also blowing up several bystanders, and wounding the horses of Napoleon's carriage. The reporters discovered that Orzini had just arrived from America, and in his lodgings they found some kind of a mysterious glass house, which must have been the Illu-



ALEXANDER HEIMBÜRGER.

sion Cabinet. In this affair Napoleon escaped with his life and a few scratches.' ”

This is a strange story. I am of the opinion that Herr Alexander is laboring under a mistake in trying to identify the illusionist Orzini with the celebrated revolutionist Orsini. In the first place, there is the different spelling of the names—*Orzini* and *Orsini*; but Mr. Houdini may have incorrectly reported Alexander in this respect. There is no record of Orsini having come to the

United States. Again, he was not killed in the attempted assassination of Napoleon III, in the rue Lepelletier, Paris, January 14, 1858. He was captured and suffered imprisonment, and was guillotined March 13, 1858. While in prison he wrote his memoirs.

Herr Alexander is the author of a work entitled *Der Moderne Zauberer* ("The Modern Magician").