WORLD

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# NELLIE BLY AS A MESMERIST.

## THE STRANGE AND AWFUL EXPERIENCE OF A CERTAIN MR. GRAY.

**He Consents to Allow the Learner of Mesmerism to Practise on Him and Undergoes Horrible Torture—The Professor Believes Nellie Bly to be a Kind of Feminine Fiend—How She Got Even with Him—Secrets of the Black Art.**

FOR what car fare costs, added to the price of a shave, I can become one of the greatest mesmerisers in the world. This is how I know. An advertisement in a Sunday newspaper a week or so ago attracted my attention. Under the name of "Mesmer" the advertiser offered to teach the art of mesmerism, with satisfactory tests at the completion of the lessons. In a day or two I had exchanged letters with "Mesmer" and had received his price for lessons and minute directions how to reach his place of residence. "From 3 to 6 or 7 to 9 I can see you any day," he wrote, so without advising him I went to Brooklyn. I found his home, No. 227 Court street, to be about fifteen minutes' ride from the bridge. His name was Thompson and his place was on the top floor, rather bare and uninviting. His big wife was the only one at home, so I agreed to climb three flights of stairs again. The next day a little girl of six let me in and took me to her papa.

Mr. Thompson, besides being tall and thin, had long gray hair, combed back from his long, pale face. His eyes were a sharp black. A drooping mustache covered his mouth completely. "Do I think you can learn to mesmerise?" he repeated, in answer to my question. "Yes, I assure you I can make you a first-class operator. My price is $10 in advance and $10 with the final test. What is the test? Well, after I give you two lessons I get a subject and allow you to operate on him. If you mesmerise him you are perfect in the art."

"I am afraid I cannot learn, and then I shall have given my money to no purpose," I urged.

"Oh, you can't help but learn," he reassured me. "I can see that you will make a splendid operator. Everybody does who learns from me. I impart to them some of my power, which, I think, some are born with. I've had men come to me and say that they understood mesmerism perfectly, but could not operate. Yet after a few lessons they could operate as well as I can. I am also a clairvoyant," he went on. "I'll teach you that after you learn mesmerism. It is very easy. One can soon learn how to throw one's self into a trance. There is lots of money in it for a clever person."

After making him guarantee that he would make a good operator of me I paid him the $10 fee and began my first lesson. He sat down on a sofa, facing me, and told me to do everything just as he did.

### HOW IT IS DONE.

"When you tell your subject to sit down see that he gets an easy position, for he has to sit perfectly still for ten minutes. Always see that he does not cross his knees or wear overshoes. Why? Because it detracts from the influence you get over him. I want first to tell you always to say 'please' to your subjects and have a command in your voice. Repeat what I say and watch every word closely. 'Now, sir, please put the right thumb on the left pulse, press hard enough to feel the beating and think only of that.' All right; you did that well.

"The first lesson is to teach you to get control of the muscular power. In the second lesson I teach you mental control. When you have the man in this position, with the right thumb on the left pulse, you put close his eyes, so, making a pass with your right hand down in front of his face, the finger-tips almost touching him. You say: 'Now, sir, please close your eyes.' When you once get a man's eyes closed so that he is unable to open them you can have him in your power."

"When you have the subject's eyes closed," he continued, going back to the lesson, "and he thinks of nothing but the pulse beatings, you go up to him about three times in ten minutes and make passes over him, three passes each time, in this way." He got up and, bringing his arms above my head, passed his hands slowly before my face close without touching. The movement was made as though he was sweeping some invisible thing from before my face. Then he told me to make the passes over him. I did so until it was done to his satisfaction.

"After the ten minutes have passed you take the subject's hands and place them gently one on each knee. Then with your left hand you take his and run your thumb close up between the joints of the little and ring finger and press very hard.

"What do you do that for?" I asked.

"I don't always tell, but I don't mind telling you. There is a nerve called the nerve of sensation between those fingers. You press hard on it and it communicates with the brain. At the same time you place the fingers of your right hand on the subject's head, and with the right thumb you press hard directly between the eyebrows. Then you are touching and controlling the organ of individuality. The nerve in the hand and this nerve connect, and this places the man in your power. While holding him so you say firmly, 'Now, sir, I am going to make you so that you can't open your eyes. Try hard! Open your eyes! Try hard!' and then he cannot open his eyes. After you remove your hold you snap your fingers close to his

### IN CASE OF FAILURE.

"Yes; but what if he does open his eyes when I say he can't?" I urged.

"Well, then you try it over."

"Yes; but he might open his eyes every time, and I wouldn't like that."

"You must not try him more than three times. If you do not have him under the influence the third time, say 'You are partially under the influence, and at another sitting I can mesmerize you.' Be sure to add a remark about his strong will power. This has the effect of making him more susceptible to your influence the next time."

"Why cannot he open his eyes when I say 'Try hard?'"

"Because you are pressing hard on the organ of individuality. When you say 'Try hard,' which you must always do, he makes a great effort and tries to open his eyes by raising his brows. Your thumb prevents him. If he simply tried to unclose his eyes, which he would do if you did not urge him to 'try hard,' he would have no difficulty in so doing. When you remove your hand and say 'All right,' he quits trying hard and opens his eyes. Once you have done this you have the man in your power. I have sewed together with a needle whole rows of people while they were in this state."

"Beautiful!" I exclaimed, pleased with the idea which brought a vision to me of sewing all objectionable people on one thread. "Can I sew people?" "Yes; I will teach you that. Now, you know how to control the muscular movements and you can make the subject do just as you please, and he can't help himself. You have merely to catch his eye. 'Now, sir, please look at me.' He looks. Hold up your right index finger and move it. He will do the same. Say: 'Faster, sir, faster. Now, sir, you can't stop' and you suddenly stop and point your finger at him. He can't stop, but keeps on until you snap your fingers and repeat, 'All right, sir.'"

"Yes; but what if he can stop?" I urged. "The flesh was willing, but the spirit was very weak.

"Then you will have to try him again."

### THE MENTAL POWERS.

The next evening found me ready for another lesson. In this I was to learn the art of controlling the mental faculties of another. Did I learn? Well, just see what a wonderful test-show I had. "These are very precious secrets," he said, "and "These are very precious secrets," (referring to the one who so the young girl" (referring to the one who accompanied me) "had better go somewhere and wait for you."

"To control the mental powers you tell the subject to stand up and face you. You take his hand in the same way as when you closed his eyes, then passing your open hand close to his face, letting it rest for a second before his eyes, you say, 'Now, sir, I am going to take away your name.' Of course you have asked him previously what his name is. You remove your hand and you say, 'Now, sir, what is your name?' and he can't tell you. Ha, ha!"

"Can't he?" I said, dubiously. "What would you do if he could?"

"Try it over. If you want to give an exhibition for your friends I can get you all the subjects you want for a car fare and a shave."

"Can you really?" I asked, innocently. "That would be lovely. How can you get them?"

"Oh, I have a number of young men you can operate on, and they are glad to do it for a car fare and a shave. Then, you know, you generally have a supper. I used to give parlor entertainments at a house in Twenty-third street. I once mesmerized the wife of the editor of the *Scientific American* there. It made a big excitement."

"Will you give me the addresses of your subjects?"

"When you have given the final test I will," he replied, warily. "One is a young travelling man and another is in a store over in the city."

### THE TEST.

The young woman and I arrived a little late the next evening, but fully prepared for the donkey party. Mr. Thompson looked like a valentine, attired in a "swallow-tail" coat of the cut of forty years ago. He greeted us with a triumphant smile.

"Ah, ladies, let me introduce you to Mr. Gray," he said, as I began in a business-like way to take off my hat and coat.

"He is my subject?" I asked, and after their affirmative reply turned to Mr. Gray and said: "Are you ready to be butchered?"

### MAKING PASSES ON HER SUBJECT.

I knew that this subject was going to be mesmerized, even if I did not touch him. I immediately decided to do things contrary to what I had been taught and to prove to myself that the subject was shamming. Consequently I merely took hold of his hand and did not press the nerve, as instructed, and placed my right hand on his brow—without any pressure, however.

"Now, sir, you can't open your eyes. Try hard! Open your eyes! Try hard!" I said.

The subject pulled and twisted and jerked at his eyes, which still remained closed. I snapped my fingers, called "All right!" and he opened his eyes, rubbed them, and, like the angelic heroine in the novel coming out of a sham fainting fit, exclaimed: "Where am I? What were you doing with me?"

I told him to sit on a chair and, after making passes over him, I told him he was unable to get up. He squirmed all around, but he sat there. I placed his hand on the wall and made passes over it and he pulled and twisted, apparently unable to release himself. Then I ran him all over the

### HE COULD NOT PULL HIS HAND AWAY.

room, sometimes on his knees, then bent double and again straining his neck to view my finger as it was held above my head. Mr. Thompson protested that I was not treating the subject fairly, but I said that if he were mesmerized he could not feel it, and kept on. At last, when his face grew red from the violent exercise, I rested my hand on the edge of the piano. He put his head close down beside it. I jerked my hand quickly away and left him standing there.

"Don't leave him in that position too long," urged Mr. Thompson, ever watchful for the subject's comfort.

"I do not intend to take him out of it until tomorrow," I replied firmly. Mr. Thompson looked at me in surprise, and his wife, who had been witnessing the performance through a half-opened door, entered the room.

"Poor fellow! It's too bad to keep him in that position so long."

"Oh, you know," I said sweetly, "he can't feel uncomfortable so long as he is mesmerized. I'll be back to-morrow evening to bring him out."

### HAVING FUN WITH A SUBJECT.

After a great deal of urging, Mr. Thompson suggested that I would have more fun to make my subject see things, so I consented to remove him from his cramped position. A sigh of relief swept through the room when I changed my resolution. Then we went through another sham performance, in which I made him see snakes, pretty girls and rats. It would be tiresome to tell all the paces I put him through, but be assured I gave that young man more exercise than he would have had in breaking a bucking horse. Once I told him that he was Robert Ingersoll, and he began to address an imaginary audience. Then I made him try to imitate Bill Nye.

"Is there anything you can suggest?" asked Mr. Thompson.

"Yes, I will make him stand on his head," I answered.

"Oh, no; you must not do that," he answered, greatly alarmed, "he might hurt himself."

"Nonsense. As long as he is so thoroughly mesmerized he can't hurt himself," but Mr. Thompson urged me to put the young man into the cataleptic state, so I gave up my scheme of making him stand on his head and leaving him so.

I stood him up, put his feet close together, his hands by his sides and made several passes over him, while I whispered in his ear, "You're a block rigid." I gave him a gentle shove, and he fell back rigid into Mr. Thompson's arms, who lowered him to the floor.

"Now is he just like one dead?" I asked, as if I were frightened.

"Just exactly," was the reply.

"Could I do anything to him and he would not know?" I asked again.

"Yes; he is paralyzed—he is in the state of death."

I made a sudden movement and went down on my knees by the subject's side. My movements were noted with surprise and alarm. I placed my hand on his heart. "Why, his heart beats," I said, as I felt it throbbing.

"Yes," said Mr. Thompson, nervously, "of course his heart beats."

"But you said he would be just the same as dead. I can see him breath. No one would ever bury him for a dead man."

"Do you want to paralyze his heart?" he asked, sternly.

"Certainly," I replied. "I want to put him in the state you said could not be told from death. This is nothing like it."

"Do you want to kill the man?" said Mrs. Thompson, rushing like a tigress up to me.

### SHE DID NOT MIND KILLING HIM.

"Oh, I don't object in the least," I replied, coolly. "Will he stay in this position until I take him out?"

"Certainly," replied Mr. Thompson, making an effort to regain his courage. "No one can do anything with him but you."

"Very well," I said with quiet determination. "I intend to go home now and when I return, a week from to-night, if he is just as I left him I shall believe in mesmerism."

"Oh, no; we can't do that," said Mr. Thompson, but I was deaf to all pleadings and protests.

"I never saw any one act like you," yelled Mrs. Thompson. "That man has a wife and six children, and I won't be responsible to them. I believe you would like to kill a man. I won't have it—now! It's getting late; this has to stop."

I did not answer, but quietly amused myself by pulling the subject's hair and pinching his ears and nose. He stood it bravely, never for an instant moving. Once I moved away and he turned his eyes to see what I was doing.

"Strange to see a dead man move his eyes," I said with a laugh. Mr. Thompson said I was mistaken, and his wife kept up her growl about me.

"I guess I might as well sew him now," I remarked with quiet calm.

"Oh, you must not do that; you'll kill the man. What do you mean, anyhow?" yelled Mrs. Thompson, while her husband joined in urging me to desist.

"I might as well learn to sew men now," I said, taking a needle from my dress, which I had brought along for the purpose, and deliberatingly trying the point on my thumb-nail.

"I won't allow that to be done in my house," yelled the wife, and the little girl, seeing such a turmoil, began to cry. Even the young girl with me said I had better wait, but I was determined to test my subject.

"Say, miss, wouldn't you rather sew him when you have him singing?" asked my instructor, coaxingly. "It's much more effective."

By this time I had tried the point several times on the subject's ear, and observed a slight twitch every time. I had no desire to butcher him in cold blood. I knew if I ran it through the muscles of his ear he would be compelled to yell, but really my heart failed me, much as I despised him for his fraud. I stuck my needle back in my dress and, taking his head between my hands, thumped it up and down on the door. Again the young person protested.

"I have a final test to make," I said, and going to my coat I took from the pocket a small bottle I had brought along just for this purpose.

### A HORRIBLE TEST.

"What is it?" asked Thompson, eyeing me in a frightened manner.

"Assafœtida," I replied, shortly.

"What is that?" he asked in a hushed whisper, as the color left his face. I turned to my subject, who had stopped singing, and saw him watching me intently.

With deliberation I pulled the cork from the bottle. The odor of the beastly stuff filled the room, sickening even me. I slowly poured about two tablespoonfuls into a glass. Placing one hand on the shoulder of my subject and holding the glass outstretched in my right hand I said, in a most determined and solemn voice:

"This, Mr. Thompson, is the terrible drug known to scientists as assafœtida. It is composed by mixing several deadly drugs together. You notice its odor? (I was almost choked and the young girl was buried in her handkerchief up to her eyes.) Well, if this man is mesmerized and I give him this drug, it can do him no harm; if he is not?"

"What will it do?" asked Mr. Thompson, as I made the impressive pause.

"What will it do?" I repeated, as I shrugged my shoulder slightly. "Well, if he is not mesmerized the effects will be fatal."

The door burst open as he sank limp and helpless into a chair, and Mrs. Thompson came in like a detained tornado. "Don't let her give it to him," she yelled excitedly.

"I won't," he answered in a shaking voice, trying to re-assert himself. "I can't allow my subjects to be treated in this manner." But he continued to sit there gazing at me in a helpless, bewildered way. A quiet reigned for a moment and the subject began to sing, which he had left off when I was relating my fairy tale about assafœtida.

"Would you take that drug?" asked Mr. Thompson of me in an insinuating manner.

"This fatal drug? (The subject quieted his song to listen.) No, sir; nothing on earth could compel me to. This drug? Assafœtida? Why, if I were bound hand and foot I would die before I would swallow it."

Mr. Thompson again became limp and helpless, but Mrs. Thompson sprang at me like a tigress.

"What sort of a woman are you, anyhow? You would do anything. Give me that poison," and she made a rush for the bottle. I quietly took both bottle and glass in my hand, remarking that the deadly (?) drug was my property. I looked at my subject and he quickly turned his eyes from me and began to sing. "When I'm dead let Tom go free; papa, promise this to me." I smiled slightly and resumed my dramatic discourse.

"Now, Mr. Thompson, this man's life is in your hands. If you say he is mesmerized, I will give him this terrible drug—(Little Eva's song is cut short)—and, if you have told me an untruth, then he will die."

"Stop," he pleaded. (Little Eva's song is resumed.) Turning to his wife he asked sadly, "Did you ever hear of assafœtida?"

"Yes, I have, but I don't know what it is. Don't allow her to give it to him. She would murder; she will do anything. What are you?" she cried, turning to me. "Have you no feeling?"

I made no reply, but gently held the glass close to my subject's nose. He moved his head from side to side to escape the odor. The room was filled with it and I felt that I must soon close the scene or smother.

"Your decision, Mr. Thompson. I can wait no longer," I said impatiently. The man was more than I bargained for and the young girl whispered: "I can't stand this smell. Give it to him and let's go."

"Won't you just taste it?" pleaded Mr. Thompson.

"Taste assafœtida?" I asked in surprise. "Mr. Thompson, it is easily seen that you don't know anything about the fatal drug you speak of. (Singing ceases.) I tell you honestly I would die before I would allow any one to give it to me."

"You'll be responsible for his death," he almost sobbed.

"Oh, no; on you rests the responsibility. I do not ask you to tell me if this man is playing the fraud or not. I merely show you this fatal drug—assafœtida—and tell you its effect. If Mr. Gray is mesmerized it will not hurt him; if he is not it will kill him. (The singing ceases in a little quaver and he pretends to strange the imaginary strings on the banjo. He is past singing.) "Shall I give it, Mr. Thompson? Yes or no?" and I held the glass out as a handkerchief is held at an execution.

"No," he gasped. I had conquered. I snapped my fingers lightly in disgust and Mr. Gray dropped the cane and flung himself on the sofa.

"I want take any drugs, only what is mixed and given by a physician," he said.

"I laughed, satisfied with my test. Here was my subject, who was supposed to have been unconscious, disclosing the fact that he knew what we had been talking about. Mr. Thompson was unable to speak so Mr. Gray continued: "I'll stand anything but drugs or burning."

"Mr. Gray, I admire your nerve. I have all evening, else I should have been rougher with you."

Mr. Thompson refused to give me the names and addresses of any of his subjects. He did not even ask for the $10 to be given after the satisfactory test.

NELLIE BLY.