

Strange Illusions.

THE TWO ILLUSIONISTS WHO ARE ASTONISHING LONDON—THE DAVENPORT BROTHERS SURPASSED.

Two illusionists, Maskelyne and Cooke, are spoken of in the London papers as persons who have been for some years past astonishing provincial audiences by the cleverness of their deceptions, and who have lately created so much perplexity in the minds of visitors to the Crystal Palace, have now transferred their amusing entertainment to the St. James Hall, where their curious feats will be found well worthy the attention of all engaged in testing the extent to which the evidence of the senses may be trusted. When a cabinet, raised above the floor to exclude the possibility of traps, is carefully examined by the scrutinizers who choose to come forward upon the platform, and a large box, being subjected to the same rigid investigation, is carefully corded and sealed in the presence of the spectators, by any person who volunteers to officiate on the occasion, this ordinary means of baffling the vigilance of observers would appear to be treated with supreme disdain. Yet, even under these strict conditions, Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke contrive to effect the most astonishing changes. When G. A. Cooke, as a sailor, is locked in the cabinet he vanishes, and when the doors are again opened he appears as a gorilla. When the gorilla is put into the box, and his place of confinement seems as secure as cords and a lock and key can make it, a few seconds suffice to show the insecurity of the fastenings, for on the next examination nothing is found but the sack in which he was tied. In like manner, when Mr. J. N. Maskelyne, as a Gloucestershire butcher, is inclosed in the cabinet to encounter the monster, an investigation made almost immediately afterward shows the interior of the structure to be apparently empty, two persons being disposed of by a process which is certainly calculated to pique the curiosity of those even most familiar with optical illusions. The rapidity with which these changes and disappearances are effected implies the attainment of singular dexterity on the part of the chief performers, who fairly enough invite the closest attention and even suffer entire strangers to stand close to the cabinet in which the mystifying metamorphoses are completed. A shrewd guess may be made at the secret involved in the construction of both the cabinet and the box; but the remarkable ingenuity with which the plan of operation is concealed, shows a marked advance on those mechanical contrivances hitherto employed for similar purposes. In a few observations preliminary to a portion of the entertainment purporting to be an imitative display of the physical manifestations of modern spiritualism, Mr. Maskelyne sensibly declines giving an opinion as to the reality of the phenomena ascribed to supramundane sources, but merely professes to show how some of the scenes said to be thus produced can be simulated by simple trickery. The neatest feat accomplished by Mr. Maskelyne is one introduced into this country years ago by a prestidigitator named Signor Blitz, and which is so difficult of attainment that only two persons since that period have ever performed it in public. By the swift movement of the fingers half a dozen china dessert plates are made to execute a quadrille and go singly and collectively through a variety of curious evolutions. The dexterity of manipulations displayed in this really elegant accomplishment shows the unexpected extent to which the fingers can be educated, and those who like to apply to a practicable purpose the lesson thus gained may find that the patience and perseverance enabling an entertainer to secure at will the capering of crockery, may possibly endow a business man with the more valuable facility of writing separate letters with both hands at the same time.—Ex.

Alexander Grumble, an idiot in the Georgetown poor-house, while feeding a vicious mule, was thrown to the floor by the animal and stamped to death. The brute began to bite and chew the flesh of his dying victim, and only desisted when attacked by several persons who heard the strange noise in the stable.

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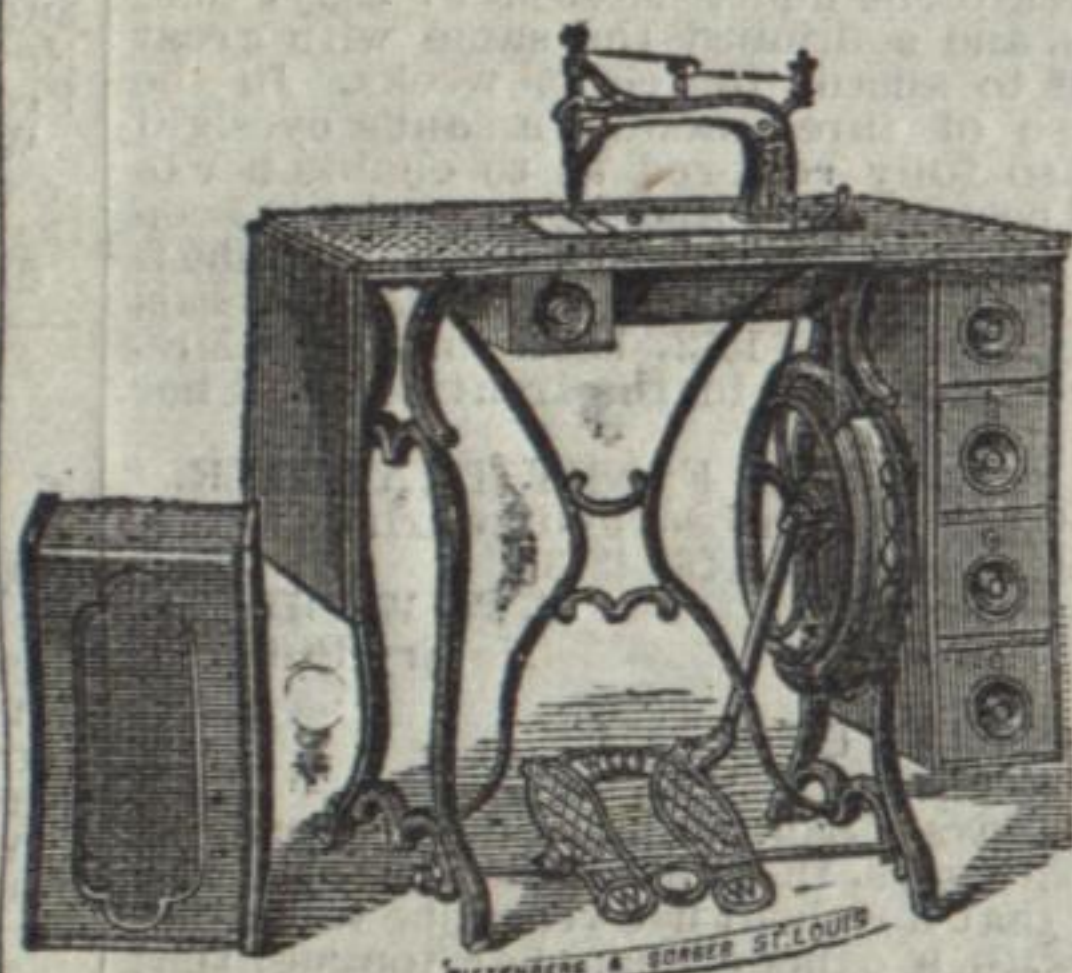
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