

THE
TRIAL
OF
JOSEPH POWELL,
THE
Fortune-Teller,

At the Sessions-House, Clerkenwell, October 31, 1807;

TAKEN IN SHORT-HAND

BY MR. GURNEY:

WITH

AN APPENDIX AND NOTES,

CONTAINING VARIOUS

ORIGINAL LETTERS AND OTHER DOCUMENTS

REFERRED TO IN THE TRIAL.

BY THE SOCIETY FOR THE SUPPRESSION OF VICE.

The LAWS are good; but they are eluded by the Lower Classes, and set at nought by the Higher. The LAWS are good; but they are fallen into contempt, and require the Zeal, the Activity, the Discretion of such a SOCIETY as this, TO RENOVATE THEIR VIGOUR. *Bishop of LANDÁFF's Sermon.*

LONDON: 1808.

Printed for F. and C. RIVINGTON, St. Paul's Churchyard; W. J. and J. RICHARDSON, Cornhill; J. BUTTERWORTH, Fleet Street; J. HATCHARD, Piccadilly; J. J. STOCKDALE, Pall-Mall; and J. WALKER, Strand.

[Price One Shilling.]

THE HISTORY OF THE REFORMATION OF AFRICA

BY THE REV. J. H. COLEMAN, M.A.,
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

LONDON: S. COXWELL, Printer, Little Queen Street.
[Price One Shilling.]

THE
T R I A L
OF
JOSEPH POWELL,
THE
FORTUNE-TELLER.

Sessions-House, Elerkeniwell, 31st October 1807.

THE KING *versus* JOSEPH POWELL.

Burden 9-11-41
THE Conviction of the Defendant, as a rogue and vagabond, by Thomas Leach, Esq. was given in and read.

Mr. CONST (Counsel for the Prosecution) then addressed the Chairman, as follows:—"Sir, This is a case in which the Defendant has been already convicted by a Magistrate, under the Vagrant Act, at the instance of Mr. Blair; who, I cannot help saying, has been rather harshly treated by some of the public prints, for becoming the Prosecutor of this man; and I have no doubt that when the evidence has been heard, the Court will think he deserves the thanks of the public for what he has done. [See Note I.]

"The circumstances of this case are exactly similar to what have been before the Court on two former occasions, when this man has been the subject of conviction and of punishment; notwithstanding which, he has each time returned to his former practices, and gone on precisely in the same way.

“ But the Court must be informed that he has not confined himself merely to that trifling and ludicrous kind of traffic, which has been said in the newspapers to be the subject of prosecution by Mr. Blair; for you will find by the papers which were taken in his possession, [Note II.] that in his attempts to impose on credulous persons, he has been the instrument of greater mischief than is generally supposed: for, beside those common ridiculous pretended calculations of nativities, and a nonsensical index to them, on which he corresponds with different persons, you will find that he has had a much larger intercourse with the world; that he has been the means of encouraging servants and other persons, by pretended calculations, to hazard their last shilling in lotteries, little goes, and other inferior species of gambling; [Note III.] the evil consequences of which, I am sure, I need not point out to any Magistrate here, as each of you must have seen a number of those persons called upon in this Court to answer for their misdeeds, in the manner of obtaining that money which they were so induced to mis-spend.

“ You will find that this gentleman, though not of a very juvenile appearance, [Note IV.] has also other objects by which he fleeces the ignorant, and at the same time promotes his own pleasure; you will see some copies of letters in the hand-writing of the Defendant, importing that application had been made to him by women who were inclined to have children. [Note V.] One of his letters in particular seems to have been addressed to a female, not of the lowest class, (who stated herself to be married, and who wished to be informed whether she should have any children;) and the copy of this letter answers, that she is certainly destined to have children if she takes the means, but not by her husband; *that it must be by some other person*; that he shall be happy himself to be that person, and that he has no doubt their endeavours will be propitious to the object she has at heart. He then goes on to invite her to come the next day, when he promises to have

his place clear, as well for comfort as safety. I should not have thought, from the appearance of this gentleman, that he had written such a letter, but the fact will be established by the hand-writing. You will find that he has his prices from half a crown to five guineas: [Note VI.] but so strong was his atrocious propensity on this occasion, that he tells the lady if she agrees to his proposal, that he will give her as much information as he should charge another person five guineas for; but that he will remit the five guineas in her case! [Note VII.] Whether this interview took place is not ascertained; but I am sure the Court will endeavour to stop such iniquitous practices.

“One is apt to smile at these kind of prophecies, because we think nobody can be so weak as to believe in things so ridiculous: but in this great town the dominion of folly is so strong and so extensive, that there is hardly any thing too silly or too gross not to impose on some individuals.

“The hand-bill of this man [Note VIII.] (of which we find more than ten thousand have been printed by one of his printers in the last summer months) being left at the house of Mr. Blair, with his maid-servant, it happened to be placed where Mr. Blair saw it; and having seen it, he thought it not an improper opportunity to ascertain whether this Astrologer would pretend to do what the bill stated. He therefore let his man-servant go with a letter, making inquiries concerning his fellow-servant; and paid the defendant half a crown, when the defendant gave him a sort of nativity, which will be produced. There is a good deal of it for the money; for he states the whole destiny which was to await the young woman, respecting whom it was obtained, the person she was to marry, the children she was to have, the countries into which she was to travel, and the lucky and unlucky years of her life. After the servant had received this, he withdrew, and immediately introduced a constable; who took the defendant into

custody, and also secured those papers of which I have given you one or two samples.

“I will not take up any more of the time of the Court: the case is too plain to be contradicted, and too bad to be defended. Such, being the fact, I would ask any reasonable man, whether Mr. Blair, instead of being reprobated for promoting this prosecution, does not deserve the thanks of society for removing a mischievous nuisance? And with respect to what is styled *cruelty* toward the defendant, it should be understood that the most lenient measures have been adopted to put an end to a practice which must not be endured: for in consequence of his two former convictions, he is liable now *to be transported*; whereas, he is proceeded against as if he had never before offended!

Evidence in support of the Conviction.

ANN MINTRIDGE sworn.

Examined by Mr. KNAPP.

Q. To whom are you servant?

A. Mr. Blair.

Q. He is a surgeon living in Great Russell Street, Bloomsbury?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you remember a paper being left at your master's house?

A. Yes.

Q. By whom was it given to you?

A. By a match-woman.

Q. Have you got that paper?

A. I have not.

Q. What did you do with it?

A. I laid it on the sideboard in the passage.

Q. Is that the paper you received?

A. Yes.

(It was read, as follows :)

“ SCIENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS.

“ A. B. Professor of the Sideral Science, No. 5, Sutton Street, Soho Square, teaches Astrology and calculating Nativities, with the most precise accuracy, at 2s. 6d. per lesson.

“ *Application to the courteous reader.*—Who will not praise and admire the glory of the sun and stars, and the frame of heaven, and not wish to know their influence and operations upon the earth? For fear of the ridicule of revilers and vilifiers of the science, who understand it not, and so deem it fraud and iniquity.

“ Oh happy world! If they did not a hundred thousand times more hurt by the baits of pleasure, honour, pride, authority, arrogance, extortion, envy, covetousness, and cruelty! and thereby make, or ruin themselves by grasping, and wantonness; and others by deception, craft, fraud, and villainy! but that is gilded over, and so such pass for good respectable people. Some may start and rave at this, but who can confute the truth of it?

“ Can any suppose that the stars, the celestial bodies, are designed for no other purpose than for us to look at heedlessly, as being of no worth, nor having any effect on us? Daily experience and the most learned of all ages have proved it, and testified it to us that they have, and in a great degree do, determine our fate; which I and all other professors have experienced and proved in thousands of different nativities. Who then, by means of such a noble inestimable science, would not wish for a precognition of the events of their most sanguine hopes and fears, which alternately alleviate or depress their minds? Is the praising and magnifying a work, a wrong to the workman? Is knowing, manifesting, and experiencing the power and operations of the created wronging or dishonouring the Creator? Though this be a persecuted science, yet, happy world! what blest a state

if nothing worse was practised in it ! No letters, unless post paid, will be taken in."

Mr. MAINWARING. Who gave her this ?

Mr. CONST. A match-woman.

Mr. MAINWARING. How do you connect this with the defendant ?

Mr. CONST. I will prove that, in consequence of this, a person went to the defendant.

THOMAS BARNES sworn.

Examined by Mr. CONST.

Q. You are servant to Mr. Blair, of Great Russell Street ?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you go with that paper to the house of Powell ?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. What passed between you, when you went there ? You asked of course for the person described ?

A. I was introduced to him : he told me he could give me a verbal answer then, but not a written answer till to-morrow.

Q. An answer to what ?

A. An answer to a letter. I went to him and took a letter, requesting him to cast the nativity of my fellow-servant : he said he could not give it to me then, but he would give it me on the morrow.

Q. Did you shew him that paper you have got ?

A. Not the printed paper.

Q. What did you say to him ?

A. I delivered the letter, of which his Worship has got a copy. I said I was the person who wrote that letter, and that I wanted an answer to it. He told me he could give me a verbal answer then ; but I requested a written one, which he desired me to call for to-morrow.

Q. You delivered him that letter ?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Was that the letter, or a copy of it ?

A. The identical letter. [Note IX.]

Q. Did you go the next day?

A. I did, about nine or ten o'clock.

Q. What happened then?

A. I was shewn into the front room up one pair of stairs, and was informed he was engaged with some females in the back room: bye and bye he came out, and threw a letter on the bed. I said, "I suppose that is for me:" he returned and came out shortly after, and said, "I will read it to you." I answered, "I am in a hurry, and suppose you are the same." I then delivered to him a half-crown, on which my master had put his initials. I went down immediately after, and brought up the constable.

Mr. MAINWARING. He had seen you before?

A. Yes.

Q. Had you much conversation with him before?

A. Very little.

Q. How long were you with him?

A. About ten minutes. I told him the age of the female I came to consult him about, and the time she was born, as near as I could.

(The Astrologer's Paper read, as follows:)

"Born, Monday Sept^r 11th 1786 $\frac{1}{2}$ pst. 10. night."

"Att this nativity the sign Cancer ascends the horizon the Moon Lady thereof—the planet the native is born under—She is applyin to the Body of Jupiter and best aspect of the Sun and Mercnry, the planet Saturn is in great strength and in best aspect to Mars—this shews the Native to be of middle stature, fleshey round face, fair complexion good humoured, mild temper, and winning disposition, obliging, not injurious, gaining respect from those she converses with, also careful, industrious and fortunate, and generally enjoying a good state of health, but subject to some pain sickness or knawing of her stomach or Bowels but not much prejudiced

thereby. The State of the Sun and Mercury makes the Native fortunate in age.

“ OF RICHES.

“ For that blessed part there is no doubt but the Native will accumulate enough to make herself comfortable and happy, and have some to lay by, and that she will be encreasing in wealth gradually to her lives end. She will sometime gain something by death, but the most gain will be by means of her industry and business; about her 24—36—and 48. years will be vere prosperous fortunate parts of her life, and the time of her settling in business is in her 24th year, possibly it may be before; her 27 and 28 years, will be very good happy successful years to her, and having some change in her business and affairs for the best, and so continue doing well; about 41 will be another time of advancement in circumstances and business and favour and gain by means of friends, but you will be rob'd at times by women.

“ OF MARRIAGE.

“ From the position of the Significators, thereof there is no doubt but what the Native will marry. The Person she will have is rather tall. Slender, well, proportioned body, dark or black hair no clear complexion, a long face, a most ingenious person, a good wit, a prying fancy, capable of attaining divers languages and rare accomplishments, he is of some light easy clean business and fortunate. The time for Marriage to take place is in her 22d. or 23d year or not till her 27th year—about 7 years after marriage she will be dangerously ill.

“ OF CHILDREN.

“ From a fruitful sign ascending Venus in a fruitful sign and the Moon going to the Body of Jupiter there is no doubt but what the Native will have Children, it is likely for them to be vital, good and to do well.

“ OF TRAVELLING.

“ It is likely for the Native to travel, and for travelling to

be safe and agreeable—towards any part is good—but North East.

“ The remaining part of this year will be mostly agreeable and successful to her.” [Note X.]

Q. That is what he delivered to you for your half-crown?

A. Yes, it was.

Q. Then he was taken into custody?

A. Yes, he was.

GEORGE WOOD sworn.

Examined by Mr. KNAPP.

Q. You are one of the Police Officers of Hatton Street Office?

A. Yes.

Q. You are a constable?

A. Yes.

Q. You know Mr. Powell, I believe?

A. Not before I took him into custody.

Q. You apprehended him?

A. Yes.

Q. When?

A. On the 16th of October.

Q. Did you search his house?

A. Yes.

Q. What have you got there?

A. Plenty of every thing. Scientific books and papers.

Q. What did he say for himself?

A. He seemed very much alarmed, and asked for mercy.

Here are his bills.

Mr. STRALING. They are the counterpart of the one delivered to the servant.

Mr. KNAPP. Q. Did you find any half-crown upon him?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Can you produce it?

(The Witness produced it.)

Q. (To Barnes.) Look at that half-crown, and tell me whether it is the one you gave Powell?

A. Yes, it is.

Q. That is the one you received from your master?

A. Yes.

Mr. ARIS sworn.

Examined by Mr. KNAPP.

Q. Do you know Mr. Powell?

A. Yes.

Q. Have you had him before as a vagrant?

A. Yes; twice convicted.

(The Witness produced the register, containing the two former convictions, in 1798 and 1802.) [Note XI.]

Mr. MAINWARING. Mr. Powell, what have you to say for yourself?

Prisoner. I am exceedingly sorry for what I have done; I had no manner of ways or means to do for myself, and my wife and child: we were in the greatest distress; and I did not know what to do to support existence, until I could get work to earn a little money. I have now been promised constant employment; I have no objection at all to work; and I have many people to testify that I have worked for them. I have worked in gardens; I have cleaned house; I have cleaned windows; I have beat carpets; I have scoured rooms; I have done any thing I could get to do; but I could not get a living. I shall be much obliged to you if you can spare me this once; I will do any thing before I will do this again. But, if you had seen us in our distress, you would have pitied us. There are married respectable people who know the truth of what I say; there is one Mrs. Hills I have worked for, and have cleaned house for her like a charwoman.

Mr. MAINWARING. What way of life were you brought up to?

Prisoner. Nothing: I was, in gentleman's service; I offered to sweep the street after the dung-cart; but they would not take me, because, they said, I was not able to stand the work. There is nothing I would not do for a livelihood. I hope your Worships will pardon me this time; I will never be driven to this by any distress whatever again: next month I shall have constant employment, which has been promised me. This is the real state of the case.

Mr. MAINWARING. You are brought here in the most merciful manner you could be; for if you had been brought here, as you very properly might have been, with two former convictions for the same offence attaching to you, you would have been in a very lamentable situation; for the Court, in justice to the public, would have been called upon to pass a very dreadful sentence upon you.

Prisoner. God forbid!

Mr. MAINWARING. You laid yourself open to that; but by the mercy of those who have brought you here, you stand at the bar as if you were but for the first time an offender. You yourself know, this is not the case; but, from your conduct you appear to be so incorrigible, that there is no hope of your amendment. As to what you state, that you could do nothing else, that is what every rogue who goes about the town may say:—"I could get nothing to do, and therefore I was obliged to pick that gentleman's pocket; or, I was obliged to knock down that poor woman, and take from her what she had." You have no want of words, and you have plenty of ingenuity, and surely you might get into something: however, whether you can or not, you must not continue this employment.

GEORGE WOOD. The Prisoner speaks about his wife and family: the letters in Mr. Blair's possession prove that he has three or four wives!

Prisoner. I had a wife, who is dead. [Note XII.]

Mr. MAINWARING. The Court order this man to be committed for six months. Do not come here again ; if you do, it will be the last time ; for you will certainly be transported.

Prisoner. I hope the Court will let me have the books which were taken from me.

Mr. STIRLING. No ; you had them before ; you promised then that you would not use them any more.

Prisoner. They are not my own.

Mr. STIRLING. You cannot have them.

Mr. KNAPP. I hope the Court are of opinion that Mr. Blair has not acted improperly.

Mr. MAINWARING. So far from it, they think that he is deserving of the thanks of the public for what he has done.
[Note XIII.]

APPENDIX AND NOTES.

PAGE 3, Note I. To obviate the ill effects of the gross misrepresentations which have been industriously circulated by different newspapers, respecting the case of Joseph Powell, as well as to remove the odium that has been cast on one of the members of "The Society for the Suppression of Vice," who was instrumental in apprehending this offender, it has been deemed an act of justice by the Society to publish an authentic account of the circumstances connected with this prosecution. And, for that purpose, Mr. Blair was requested to put the Society's Secretary in possession of such books, papers, and other documents as had fallen into his hands, relative to this business; together with the abusive letters, &c. which had been sent to him by various persons, who strenuously defended the cause of Powell!

From these ample materials, the Society are enabled to demonstrate the extensive evil of this man's practices, and to vindicate the prosecution before an impartial world, who will now see how much they are indebted to the exertions of Mr. Blair. The letters and other manuscripts (selected from a large bundle) which have chiefly furnished the contents of the following pages, were produced in Court, at the Clerkenwell Sessions; but, in order to save time, as the proofs of guilt were sufficiently clear from the bare testimony of the witnesses, it was not deemed necessary to read many of them during the trial. The facts here disclosed must tend, in a very striking manner, to open the eyes of those unguarded females, who had been induced to hazard their reputation by consulting so vicious an impostor: and it is hoped, that this development of facts may contribute to undeceive the common people, respecting the real character of "Fortune Tellers."

Page 4, Note II. The papers alluded to by the Learned Counsel, consist, First, of various original drafts and copies of letters, sent by Powell to his correspondents, most of whom were females; Secondly, numerous memorandums,

purporting to be the dreams of different individuals, especially concerning lottery tickets: Thirdly, consultations with the defendant, respecting the destiny and future events of the several persons who addressed him: Fourthly, the amatory epistles and correspondence of certain women whom Powell calls his *wives*: Fifthly, letters reproaching him of seduction and misconduct towards one Ann N m; who appears to have assumed the name of Powell, and kept up a correspondence with her pretended husband until the 10th of October last, being the day when this impostor was taken before the Magistrates in Hatton Street. The printed books found in his possession were mostly Almanacks, astronomical tables, and the publication of Mr. Brothers, the *pseudo-prophet*, with large quantities of printed lottery numbers, &c.

Page 4, Note III. One of the chief sources of profit to this impostor, seems to have been the sale of "lucky numbers" in the lottery. It is really surprising to observe, what a vast variety of memorandums he had relating to this subject. The evils attendant on the state-lottery must be very great indeed, among the lower classes of mankind; and it is much to be wished that means could be soon devised of abolishing this species of legal gambling. We shall here add one specimen of the letters found among Powell's papers on the lottery.

"SIR,

April 12th, 1807.

"I received your and thank you for you well wishing but I was so very unfortunate in the two last Lotteries that I never more will have any thing to do with it as I was so much hurt by it and as I am a widdow and cannot afford to loose the little I have to support me I was oblinded to debar myself from many things that I wanted through being so very unluckey I write to let you know as I will not trouble you to send any more Should I hereafter have any thing to do with it I will let you know but at present I cannot get money to spare to try

"your well wisher

"E K"

Page 4, Note IV. The newspapers described Powell as a very "aged" man; but he acknowledges that he is now only forty-nine years old, and it is asserted on good authority that he has been thirty years practising as an astrologer!

Page 4, Note V. In nearly all the answers given to persons whose nativities were cast, he pretends to communicate the information, whether or not they would have children. It is

easy to conceive how this kind of information may affect the minds of credulous young persons.

Page 5, Note VI. In answer to a letter, dated September 15th, 1807, from a lady (whose name we conceal) residing near Holborn, making inquiry as to the terms on which Powell would cast her nativity; he writes, "As your letter have every appearance of being real, I let you know my terms: for speaking is, as you saw in the bill, 2s. 6d. But for casting of a nativity, that is of different price, from $\frac{1}{2}$ a G. to 5 Guineas; for there is a vast of difference in telling and in calculating, little or much, in part or in full: for one guinea, most particulars; times of good or evil haptening you, would be brought up exactly to the time of haptening-through life. What we call general judgment, without calculation, I writes from 3 to 5^s. This is the plainest account I can give you of my terms."

Page 5, Note VII. The infamous letter which was referred to by Mr. Const, and which was handed up to the Magistrates, with several others, in the hand-writing of Joseph Powell, is as follows:

"I have looked into the Rules of Astrology, In respect to procreation of Children. And from the State of the Planets at your Birth; I find no doubt but what you may have Children—*But it must be by some other Person.* I should like to be that one, to enjoy that pleasure with you. And I doubt not but what we should—make an increase, I wish this proposal may be as desirable to you as to me. If you will agree to it—and will appoint any time, This day or tomorrow to Come here, I will have the place Clear to ourselves or meet you at another place. *If you agree to what is here proposed, I will completely calculate your Nativity, and do as much as I would for five Guineas.*"

Page 5, Note VIII. Ten thousand copies of Powell's hand-bill were printed in the summer of 1807, by Mr. Barfield, of Wardour Street; but, it appears from different copies of the bill, that various other printers were employed. We may infer, from the great number of these hand-bills circulated, how extensively this man's name was likely to be known: and it seems, from one of his letters written to a female, that he must have been very successful in obtaining money; for he says to her, "You keeps yourself from preferment and me from doing myself any good. I loose the getting of *two hundred a year at least*, by distraction about you."

Page 9, Note IX. As it has been supposed, without

reason, that the letter which Thomas Barnes wrote to the Astrologer was calculated to deceive any other person, and that it was therefore laying an unfair trap for him, we have thought proper to subjoin a literal copy of that letter; from which the reader will perceive it to have been just such a one as naturally arose from the perusal of the Fortune-teller's advertisement: and he probably received many other letters nearly similar.

" To A. B. No. 5, Sutton Street, Soho Square.

" SIR,

Oct. 8, 1807.

" I have this morning received your printed paper, on 'Sciential Instructions by A. B.', which was left at my master's house; and beg to be informed if you can certainly foretel whether or not my fellow-servant is likely to be happy, if she marries a young man who pays his addresses to her? I beg the favour of an early answer, and desire to know what will be your charge for resolving the above question."

Page 11, Note X. Most of the papers found in Powell's possession, and appearing to be answers to persons desiring to have "their nativities cast," are of a similar kind to the one sold to Thomas Barnes: but it often happens, that they contain very dismal prophecies of what would take place in future years, and sometimes even pretending to foretel the death of different individuals! Such kinds of predictions are calculated to produce irreparable mischief, not only to the deluded people who may be thereby induced to regulate their conduct according to the supposed facts communicated by the fortune-teller, but also may be productive of dreadful evils to whole families and connexions allied to them. Some of the applications to Powell require information respecting the death of parents; and, without doubt, unthinking or ill-instructed children might be tempted to act very improperly, in consequence of the answers they receive to such interrogatories. How probable it is, that young and giddy persons may be prompted by the flattering representations of an impostor, to take indiscreet steps in life, leading to the most awful and ruinous consequences!

Page 12, Note XI. The warrants of commitments, &c. on former occasions, shewed that Powell had been imprisoned for the same offence (of fortune-telling) from the 17th of September to the 13th of October 1798, and also from the 15th

of January to the 1st of July 1802; which being the case, he was treated with extreme lenity, this third time of conviction, in not having been prosecuted with the utmost rigour of the law. The lenity of his treatment is besides still more apparent, when it is considered that nearly the whole course of his life had been a system of deception, and that he told a series of direct falsehoods during his late examination at the Police Office in Hatton Street.

Page 13, Note XII. It is worthy of observation, that the prisoner at the Clerkenwell Sessions pleaded first of all the distressed state of his "*wife and child*," as an excuse for his mal-practices; but that, being afterwards brought into a dilemma by the allegation of George Wood, (one of the witnesses,) he declared "*his wife was dead*." If we can rely on his own deposition, given to Mr. Aris, jun. while he remained in the House of Correction, prior to this last trial, the said wife "had been dead about nine years, and was buried in St. Pancras churchyard;" two children, which he had by her, being wholly provided for, "by his brother and sister near the Spotted Dog, at Hammersmith." He also said, that he belonged to St. Ann's parish, Soho. In opposition, however, to these several statements, we shall here lay before our readers the Astrologer's first representation to the Magistrates in Hatton Street, as it was inserted in "The Times" of October 12th, 1807; viz. "The wretched prisoner, who stood motionless and self-convicted, exhibited a picture of wretchedness from which the genius of *Praxiteles* would not have disdained to sketch a statue of *Ill Luck*. Never did soothsayer seem less a favourite of the Fates! Never was astrologer consigned to the influence of the stars less propitious! Aged, tall, meagre, ragged, filthy, and careworn, his squalid looks expressed the various features of want and sorrow. Every line of his countenance seemed a furrow of grief and anguish; and, his eyes gushing with tears, in faint and trembling accents, he addressed the Magistrate. He acknowledged the truth of the charge against him; but he said nothing, save want and the miseries of a *wretched family*, could have driven him to adopt such a mode of procuring them food. If he was able to labour, he would gladly even sweep the streets, to obtain them food, but he was too feeble to gain employment, even in that way; he had tried every other, within the scope of his capacity, but in vain.

"He could not dig, to beg he was ashamed."

And even if begging, either by private solicitation, or open in the streets, could promise him a casual resource in the charity of the passing crowd, he was afraid he should thereby incur prosecution as a rogue and vagabond, and be consigned to imprisonment in Bridewell. *Parish settlement he had none*: and what was to be done with a miserable *lunatic* wife, (for the *moon* was still worse to him than the *stars*,) and *three naked famishing children*? He had no choice between *famine, theft, or imposture*. His miserable wife, he feared, was even now roaming and raving through the streets, her disorder aggravated by his misfortunes, and his wretched children without raiment or food. To him, death would be a welcome relief from a burthen of existence, tolerable only in the hope of being able to afford, by some means, a wretched subsistence to his family."

The reporter in THE TIMES says "*the Magistrates were obviously affected by this scene,*" but "*that they felt themselves obliged to commit the prisoner;*" as if it were not an act of the most manifest propriety and duty to commit him for trial! This artful and false statement was not only calculated to excite the commiseration of an humane public, in behalf of a poor man so apparently "*persecuted into the toils of justice,*" as it has since been called; but was likely to bring down a heavy torrent of abuse upon the individual who, from patriotic feelings, caused Powell to be apprehended. And this, in fact, has actually been the consequence of such a flagrant misrepresentation in the newspaper alluded to! The account was copied from "*The Times*" into a number of other daily prints, as well as the Sunday papers: and to some of these were annexed, the most virulent and insulting observations, intended to expose the prosecutor to the contempt and indignation of every humane reader; so that the effects which ensued, partly from Powell's own mis-statements, but much more from the glosses and errors of the first reporter in "*The Times*," were of a very unpleasant nature to the gentleman in question. But this was not all: for it was represented, without any pretence whatever, that the prosecutor acted from the first under the influence, and with the concurrence, of the "*Society for the Suppression of Vice*;" and hence the well-known Editors of several journals, whose spirit has always been adverse to its laudable designs, took occasion to write, that "*the Society which so dextrously entrapped the poor Astrologer Powell, seems determined to have a monopoly of imposture, and to suffer no*

fraud to flourish but its own." This ill-founded and indecent language was even transcribed into some of the provincial papers, which seemed to vie with The "*Morning Chronicle*," The "*News*," and The "*Statesman*," in coarseness and malignity! Nay, so bitter and unreasonable was the clamour excited on this occasion, that after the details of the trial had been published in five or six of the daily prints, certain persons persevered in casting still further obloquy on the gentleman who had caused Powell to be apprehended.

Page 14, Note XIII. It might have been expected, after the Magistrates, at a solemn trial of this impostor, had declared Mr. Blair to be "*deserving of the thanks of the public for what he had done*," that no individual could be so audacious as to throw out any subsequent reflections on that gentleman for bringing the prisoner to the bar of justice! Yet, as we have said, the result was far otherwise; so that it appeared to be incumbent on "the Society for the Suppression of Vice," to lay before the world some indubitable proofs of the prisoner's guilt, exclusive of what had transpired through the medium of the newspapers. And, this has been deemed the more necessary, because an uncommon deal of pains have been since taken to bring the Society into discredit, for aiding and abetting one of its members in the prosecution.

The truth is, that the Society did co-operate with Mr. Blair in prosecuting Powell; though it had nothing at all to do in first apprehending and convicting him on the 10th of October. The Society, aware of the misrepresentations employed to deceive the public, thought proper to engage learned Counsel, in order that the real facts and importance of this case might be made known, which otherwise could not have been done so effectually.

If more attention has been excited about this man than could have been foreseen, or than his case seemed to merit; this must be attributed to the hue-and-cry raised by his adherents, against those who carried on the prosecution. For, the most violent and unprecedented clamour has certainly been raised on this occasion, beyond what the Society had any idea of; and which can only be explained, by supposing that it was regarded as a fit opportunity for holding up the Institution to general odium. The public, however, will now judge whether or not the Society is entitled to commendation for its proceedings in this affair.

The reader will have observed, towards the conclusion of Powell's trial at the Sessions-house, that an allusion was made

to "his wife and family;" and that GEORGE WOOD the constable said, "*the letters in Mr. Blair's possession prove that he has three or four wives:*" upon which Powell replied, that "*he had a wife, who is dead.*" None of the Magistrates in court made any inquiry into the ground of George Wood's allegation; but it is one which ought to be set in its true light, on account of those persons who considered Powell as an object of compassion rather than of reprehension.

The pretended wife, whom Powell described as insane, when he was examined by the Magistrates in Hatton Street Police Office, is named Elizabeth W n. She has a child about four years old, which Powell maintained indeed, but which he fathers upon another man, William M ll; for in one of his recent letters to the parent of Ann N m, he says, "I was never married. 'Tis true I have a woman with me and she has a Child by Somebody, It is most reasonable to Suppose by M ll, as he likes my Choice so well, as to seduce Nancy from me he is the most like to have trafficked with the other, and most unhappy and distractedly I am Situated with the other. by being out of her mind, for which I was most happy when Nancy took to me; for I should certainly never have thought of her. Nancy have often advised me to put her in the workhouse, which I should, or have put her by herself, if Nancy had Continued with me."

This Ann N m wrote to Powell in her proper name till a short time before he was apprehended; when she addressed him as her husband, and styled herself his "ever affectionate and loving wife, A. Powell."

Another of the women, whom he lately wrote to in the most animated language, is called Sarah B n; to whom there are letters addressed at different places of residence; in one of which he calls her his "heavenly soul of sweetness til death;" and in another he subscribes himself, "My dear Wife, your most faithful and most unhappy Husband, Joseph Powell." These letters, and some others were returned from the Post Office, as his "Dearest Lovely Sally" could not be found.

A fourth wife, or at least a woman intended to be so called, writes to Powell thus: "Dear Sir, having been afflicted with illness was obliged to Pledge all the Best of my Cloaths and Could not think of Going to Live with you as a wife until I have got them again." Whether or no she afterwards lived with him, does not appear from the papers in

in hand; but she offers, nevertheless, to visit him; and "endeavour to make herself agreeable."

Most of the amorous epistles above mentioned, with many more, were written in 1806 and 1807; so that Powell's circumstances were not such as to preclude his constant attentions to the other sex, notwithstanding his plea of poverty when he was last apprehended.

Consideration for the individuals implicated, prevents the publication of many letters, which throw light on the conduct and character of Powell; but it is manifest from some of them, that his intrigues have been very deep and numerous.

In one of his epistles addressed to a gentleman who lamented the loss of his daughter, and written in April 1807, Powell says: "I saw her the 22d day of January, and found that she went of with the person that I suspected, Namely William M ll, he has a Wife and Child now living—he took Nancy from me, expecting she had 1500*l.* for her fortune." "If she would forsake that man, I would make her Comfortable for it is in my power." In answer to this, the girl's father, residing in Sussex, writes (April 18, 1807) that he knows Powell has "a wife now living and family. Let them," he adds, "be your constant care; trouble yourself no farther, in sending me old news of an unfortunate Daughter." From another letter it seems Powell applied to this gentleman for money; to which he rejoins, "All I know of your person, character, profession, or abilities, is that you sign your name *Joseph Powell!* and had your second letter treated on the same subject as the first, i. e. wishing me to advance you money, Fortune-telling, &c. you would have waited a great while for an answer. As for the great kindness you express my daughter has received from you, such as *Guineas, Clothes, &c.* I recommend you to the all-seeing God for a reward, if you have advanced any thing beyond the idea of getting your own ends served."

It is evident, both from Powell's own letters and from the replies made to them, that he was very liberal towards the young woman here alluded to, although she unexpectedly went away from him, and associated with William M ll. Powell, in a letter to her father, writes that he "treated her with every indulgence that a fond and tender Husband could do;" and declares, "when she was with him she had a comfortable house to herself, good things to appear in, and four or five guineas in her pocket." His subscription in a letter

to her was, "Your truly sorrowful and afflicted. most fond and ever Loving Husband til Death."

From a letter addressed to Powell on the 11th of April 1807, respecting this female, after she had left him, it appears that the person who caused her to go away was on that account accused by Powell of "seducing her." That writer complains of his "severe loss" in consequence of Powell's management and sale of the lottery numbers, and then reports thus: "With respect to seduction, put your hand before your mouth, and never once let it be named by you; reflect how many you have been dying for! the various deaths you have been ready to undergo for them, or, in other words, if not for them, for *lust*. I should be glad to ask, what I had to seduce, that was not already done? On the contrary, (through God's help,) I have prevented an unprotected girl from being added to the number of unhappy prostitutes on the town, and stopt her from going headlong to Hell and destruction; and have been the instigation of reconciling her to her parents, and her parents to her, and acted the part of a father by her instead of a villain."

There is reason, however, to doubt whether she was restored to her parents, because this same woman kept up a correspondence with Powell afterwards, and in several of her last letters to him she signs herself HIS WIFE! So that Powell seems to have succeeded in decoying her back to him, and concerted measures for getting rid of the INSANE WIFE, not long before his apprehension on the 10th of October.

In one of his exculpatory epistles to William M. . . . ll, the prisoner answers to a charge alledged against him, of "having prepared and drenched N with various things to make her miscarry."

But it is time to drop the present subject, and proceed to another; only first suggesting, that the original papers by which these facts are proved, will be carefully preserved by the Secretary of the "Society for the Suppression of Vice," so that the authenticity of this statement may be fully vindicated. It has now been sufficiently evinced that the offender is not entitled to that interference which was exerted in his favour, prior to his final commitment; and that the Editors of different journals, who still continue to appear in his behalf, must be considered as encouraging an offence, completely substantiated in a court of justice, and the direct tendency of which is most injurious to society!

Few persons are sufficiently aware of the artifices and falsehoods by which that class of impostors, called Fortune-tellers, are accustomed to dupe the credulous part of mankind, and the baneful influence which these pretenders exercise upon the public morals. They not only profess to answer all sorts of ridiculous and unimportant questions; but they so far impose on the lower orders of the community, as to make them believe lying predictions even upon subjects intimately connected with their personal conduct and welfare. They not only flatter the harmless wishes and hopes of the giddy or the young; but pretend to foretell the most weighty events, and dare to point out the line of life in which individuals are likely to gratify their peculiar taste. And the secret manner in which these astrological deceivers carry on their traffic is, too generally, such as to elude the notice and detection of common observers, or at least of those who more particularly watch over and protect the public morals.

It cannot be denied, that the direct tendency of these consultations and answers is to unsettle the minds of the ignorant, and to render them dissatisfied with their situation, by opening to their view prospects which never will be realized: nay, they tend to weaken the ties of family attachment, and reconcile persons to the expected death of a parent, who ought to have been regarded with filial affection! This will be evident to the reader, if we lay before him a few specimens of the questions whereon Powell and other Fortune-tellers have been consulted; the nature of which is ascertained, beyond the possibility of mistake, from the books and papers found in that man's possession, viz.

1. Whether father or mother will die first, and when?
2. Whether fortune or legacy will be left to the inquirer?
3. Whether the querist ought to marry, and whether husband and wife will agree?
4. The state of life, personal qualities, and pecuniary circumstances of the person who offers to marry?
5. Will the native have children?
6. Whether a certain voyage or journey will be profitable?
7. Whether an illness will be fatal or not?
8. What means such a dream?
9. Will the querist meet with any accident or bad consequence from a particular undertaking?
10. Can a thing lost or stolen be found, and where?

11. Will a certain evil, apprehended by the inquirer, take place ; or, will a certain good, hoped for, be attained ?
12. Will the querist enjoy health and long life ?
13. What time the native may expect some important change in his affairs ?
14. Should the inquirer remove from his habitation ?
15. Shall a person find another whom he seeks, and where ?
16. Is such an absent individual dead or alive ?
17. By what means can riches be had ?
18. Shall the querist find hidden treasure ?
19. Is such and such a report true ?
20. Is a neighbour's advice to be deemed good ?
21. Shall the querist build, buy, or hire a house ?
22. Is it right to stay or remove ?
23. Is a woman pregnant or not ; and if pregnant, whether with a male or female child ?
24. How to ——— a male or female child ?
25. Whether I shall win or lose at gaming ?
26. Whether the inquirer will be lucky in the lottery or in some particular adventure ?
27. Whether servant or lodger may be trusted ?
28. How to find a thief or fugitive ?
29. If a person ought to remain in his business or profession ?
30. What mystery or trade is best ?
31. Will the friends of the querist prove faithful ?
32. Hath he private enemies, and who are they ?
33. Shall the prisoner or captive get free ?
34. Is the art of astrology certain and most indubitably true ?
35. How to obtain money due from a debtor ?
36. Whether or not I may lend money to such a one ?
37. How to choose a fit time for a journey, &c. ?
38. Will there be gain or loss by such a bargain ?
39. To elect a fit time for digging any mine ?
40. The fit time to buy cattle, hire a servant, visit any person, or make love to a woman, &c. ?
41. Whether the querist should fight a duel, or commence a law-suit ?
42. The proper time to make a will, so that it shall continue good to the end of one's life ?
43. How to gain an office, place of trust, or honour ?
44. How to ensure the favour of the king, or one in high power ?

45. The mode of obtaining a legacy by any person's will, intended to be made?

From the tenor of these, and many similar, inquiries, the Society presume it will be sufficiently obvious that "fortune-telling" is a crime of no small magnitude, attended with the most alarming and immoral consequences to the less enlightened part of the community. The Society for the Suppression of Vice has therefore the satisfaction to know that it has discharged a public duty in thus exposing the case of Powell; thereby shewing how the compassionate feelings of benevolent persons have been imposed upon, by fabricated tales of reluctant guilt, yielding to the pressure of family distress!

The Society further think it a duty they owe to themselves, to remind the public of the false and injurious impressions excited against their Institution, because of their interference in this affair. They take this opportunity of requesting the public to judge of them from their actual proceedings, rather than from the statements of persons who, being hostile to the Institution, but not finding any thing in its design, or its real conduct, which can subject it to just reproach, are perpetually endeavouring to raise unfounded prejudices against it; and *that*, not merely by general abuse; but also by circumstantial misrepresentation and absolute falsehood.

It cannot be expected of the Society to notice all the arts which are employed from time to time, to prejudice the public mind against them. But they trust that while they continue to adhere strictly to those objects, the vast importance of which has procured them such extensive encouragement and support, and the pursuit of which, by means of association, has been sanctioned by the highest legal authority, (as well as by the example of former times,) no arts will be able to deprive them of the good opinion of the public; without which they are well aware, that all their efforts will be ineffectual to stem that torrent of vice and licentiousness, which threatens to overwhelm whatever is most dear and valuable in civil society.

A CAUTION.

To put the public on its guard, it is necessary to mention a fact deserving of special attention, viz. That five written documents were ~~taken from the prisoner,~~ on the 22d of De-

October 1807; including a letter written by him, wherein he consults a certain individual,—concerning the SAFETY of printing hand-bills, of which copies were sent, for Powell's wife "to distribute to gentlefolks, and for him to pin one upon him."

The object of these hand-bills was to obtain money from "the humane and charitable," under a false account of the circumstances attending the apprehension of this incorrigible offender; and they were accompanied with instructions to his wife (but to which of his wives does not appear,) requiring her to tell a story he had fabricated, while she "every day" should frequent the "genteel streets," such as "St. James's, Pall Mall, Piccadilly, Charing Cross, Parliament Street," &c. &c. &c.

ADVERTISEMENT.

By a resolution of the Committee, passed after the greater part of this pamphlet had been printed, it was ordered not to be published or sold, but distributed gratis for the information only of the Police Magistrates and of such Gentlemen as are Members of the Society for the Suppression of Vice.

THE END.

S. GOSNELL, Printer, Little Queen Street.
