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From:

Richard Ryan, *Dramatic Table Talk: Or, Scenes, Situations, & Adventures, Serious & Comic, in Theatrical History & Biography*, Vol. 3 (London: John Knight & Henry Lacky, 1830), 69-74.

In the year 1749, the facetious Duke of Montague played off upon the good people of our Metropolis, a hoax so remarkable, that it has ever since been referred to, as a proof of human credulity. - This Nobleman being in company with some friends, the conversation turned on public curiosity, when the Duke said that it went so far, that if a person advertised that he would creep into a quart bottle, he would procure an audience. Some of the company could not believe this possible; a wager was the result, and the Duke, in order to decide it, cause the following advertisement to be put in all the papers.

- 1) At the New Theatre in the Hay-Market, on Monday next, the 16th instant, to be seen, a person who performs the several most surprising things following, viz. first, he takes a common walking-cane from any of the spectators, and thereon plays the music of every instrument now in use, and likewise sings to surprising perfections. Secondly, he presents you with a common wine bottle, which any of the spectators may first examine; this bottle is placed on a table in the middle of the stage, and he (without any equivocation) goes into it in sight of all the spectators, and sings in it; during his stay in the bottle any person may handle it, and see plainly that it does not exceed a common tavern bottle.

Those on stage or in the boxes may come in masked habits (if agreeable to them); and the performer (if desired) will inform them who they are.

Stage 7s 6d., boxes 5s., pit 3s., gallery 2s.

To begin at half an hour after six o'clock.

Tickets to be had at the Theater.

The performance continues about two hours and a half.

N.B. If any gentleman or lady, after the above performance (either singly or in company, in or out of mask,) are desirous of seeing a representation of any deceased person, such as a husband or wife, sister or brother, or any intimate friend of either sex, (upon making a gratuity to the performer) shall be gratified by seeing and conversing with them for some minutes, as if alive; likewise, (if desired) he will tell you the most secret thoughts in your past life; and give you a full view of persons who have injured you, whether dead or alive.

For those gentlemen and ladies who are desirous of seeing this last part, there is a private room provided.

These performances have been seen by most of the crowned heads of Asia, Africa, and Europe, and never appeared public any where but once; but will wait at any of their houses, and perform as above, for five pounds each time.

There will be a proper guard to keep the house in due decorum.

The following advertisement was also published at the same time, which one would have thought sufficient to prevent the other having any effect.

**2) *Lately arrived from Italy.***

Signor Capisello Jumpedo, a surprising dwarf, no taller than a common tavern tobacco pile who can perform many wonderful quilibres on the slack or tight rope: likewise he'll transform his body in above ten thousand different shapes, and postures; and after he has diverted the spectators two hours and a half, he will open his mouth wide and jump down his own throat. He being the most wonderfullest wonder of wonders as ever the world wondered at, would be willing to join in performance with that wonderful musician on Monday next, in the Haymarket.

He is to be spoke with at the Black Raven, in Golden Lane, every day, from seven to twelve, and from twelve all day long.

The bait, however, took even better than could be expected. The play-house was crowded with Dukes, Duchesses, Lords, Ladies, and all ranks and degrees to witness the bottle conjuror. Of the result, we quote the following account from the journals of the times.

- 3) Last night (viz. Monday the 16th,) the much expected drama of "The Bottle Conjuror," at the New Theatre in the Haymarket, ended in the tragicomical manner following. Curiosity had drawn together prodigious numbers. About seven, the Theatre being lighted up, without so much as a single fiddle to keep the audience in good humor, many grew impatient. Immediately followed a chorus of catcalls, heightened by loud vociferations, and beating with sticks; when a fellow came from behind the curtain, and blowing, said, that if the performer did not appear, the money should be returned; at the same time a wag crying out from the pit, that if the ladies and gentlemen would give double prices the conjurer would get into a pint bottle. Presently a young gentleman in one of the boxes seized a lighted candle and threw it on the stage. This served as the charge for sound to battle. Upon this the greater part of the audience made the best of their way out of the Theatre; some losing a cloak, others a hat, others a wig, and swords also. One party, however, staid in the house, in order to demolish the inside, when the mob breaking in, they tore up the benches, broke to pieces the scenes, pulled down the boxes; in short, dismantled the Theatre entirely, carrying away the particulars above mentioned into the street, where they made a mighty bonfire; the curtain being housed on a pole by way of a flag. A large party of guards were sent for, but come time enough only to warm themselves round the fire. We hear of no other disaster than a young nobleman's chin being hurt, occasioned by his fall into the pit with part of one of the boxes, which he had forced out with his foot. 'Tis though the conjurer vanished away with the bank. concerning the ceasing of miracles, are greatly disappointed by the conjurer's non-appearance in the bottle; they imagining that his jumping into it would have been the most convincing proof possible, that miracles are not yet ceased.**

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Several advertisements were printed afterwards, some serious, some comical, relating to this whimsical affair; among the rest was the following, which we hope may be a means of curing such humors of the future.

“This is to inform the public, that notwithstanding the great abuse that has been put upon the gentry, there is now in town a man, who, instead of creeping into a quart of pint bottle, will change himself into a rattle; which he hopes will please both young and old. If this person meets with encouragement to this advertisement, he will then acquaint the gentry where and when he performs.”

The reason assign in another humorous advertisement, for the conjurer’s not going into the quart bottle was, that, after traveling all the taverns, not one could be found due measure.