

The New York World
November 11, 1888

Exposed by Nellie Bly

A Swindling Magnetic "Doctor" Caught at His Tricks

He Has Advertised to Give a Big Free Exhibition To-Night, but "The World's" Active Reporter Discovered Him Just in Time—His Ingeniously Secreted Electric Wires by Which He Demonstrates his "Personal Magnetism"—A Long Criminal Career in Half a Dozen Big Cities—Convicted of Forgery at New Orleans—His Brilliant Advertising Schemes.

BROOKLYN ATHENAEUM

Cor. Atlantic ave. and Clinton st., Brooklyn

ON SUNDAY EVENING, NOV. 11

Admission Free.

Orchestra in attendance. Doors open at 7.30 P.M.

Commence at 8

THE PUBLIC IN GENERAL IS CORDIALLY INVITED. The AFFLICTED and CHRONIC CRIPPLES are especially invited.

No objectionable persons or children admitted to this REFINED lecture and exhibition.

PROF. ERNEST DE BLANC

The Famous Chevalier Electrician of Paris.

Will exhibit HIS SKILL and TREAT THE AFFLICTED FREE on the stage.

IN VIEW OF THE AUDIENCE.

Specialist: Chronic Diseases, Deformity, Paralysis, Rheumatism, Consumption, Dyspepsis, Fits, Catarrh, Neuralgia, Nervous Diseases, Blindness, Deafness, Diseases of Indiscretion, and

FEMALE DISEASES THREATENED SUCCESSFULLY.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL GUARANTEED IN ALL CASES.

PATIENTS DESIRING TO BE TREATED BY MEDICINE OR SURGERY ARE NOT ACCEPTED FOR TREATMENT.

NO CORRESPONDENCE ANSWERED UNLESS POST STAMP INCLOSED.

Prof. Ernest de Blanc, in order to establish his fame among the WEALTHY CLASS, as well as Working Class Patients, would TREAT FREE a WEALTHY LADY AFFLICTED WITH ANY OF THE ABOVE DISEASES. On application state nature of the case, if MARRIED, SPINSTER, WIDOW and AGE.

CIRCULARS MAILED FREE to any part of the United States.

OFFICE CONSULTATION FREE.

Daily from 8.30 A.M. to 3 P.M. and 6 to 8.30 P.M. Sunday, 9 A.M. to 3 P.M.

Prof. Ernest de Blanc is now permanently located at No. 84 Ashland place, near Fulton st.,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

I made up my mind to call on this remarkable person, as the advertisement seemed to bear on its face the evidence of fraud. Friday was a bad day for thin boots and Friday night was worse. I had had a long and tiresome day, but I could not rest until I investigated the schemes of the magnetic doctor.

“What will you charge to take me to No. 84 Ashland place?” I asked a cabby, who was leaning against his coupe as if asleep.

“Two dollars,” he said, straightening up.

THE “DOCTOR” AT HOME.

We arrived at Ashland place in a little more than ten minutes. The street, like the night, was dark and dreary. From what I could distinguish I decided that it was a residence street and a respectable neighborhood.

After much hunting about in the darkness I found the right number and, pulling the bell, asked the man who opened the door if I was right.

“Zees is 84,” replied the man, stepping inside the door as the driver returned to me.

“Good evening, good evening,” said the man, as he held the door open for me to enter; “I was just about to close my house.”

“Are you Doctor Ernest De Blanc?” I asked, entering the parlor.

“Yes, lady,” he replied, with a pleasing accent. A woman, of medium height, with dark eyes and hair, flitted noiselessly out of sight.

“I saw your advertisement in the papers,” I said, “and as I am tired taking medicine I concluded to come and try your treatments; you advertise ‘no medicine given.’”

“That is right,” he said, with a most agreeable smile. “I give no medicine. I cure entirely wizout zat.”

“How do you treat patients?” I asked.

“Wiz personal magnetism, wiz animal electricity,” he said, spreading out his hands, palms upward, and slightly elevating his shoulders. “Ze electricity all comes from me—from my body, I transmit it to ze patient. I give him treatments. I always cure him.”

“Have you been here long?” I asked innocently.

“No. You see my house is yet not in good order,” he said, with a sweep of his hands. “I have just moved in. What is wrong with you?”

“I am suffering from sick headaches,” I utter plaintively.

“Ah! Are they frequent?”

“Yes, every week at the very least, and I am very stupid while they last.”

“How long do they last?”

“Usually twenty-four hours at a time.”

“Will you come here until I examine you?”

He stepped beneath the chandelier and I went to him. With both hands he pulled the lid of my eye down easily and examined it with a look which rivaled an owl’s—in solemnity at least.

“Ah!” he said, with a great deal of force. “Ah!” I must test your blood. It is greatly impoverished. Remove your rubbers, please, and your gloves.”

While I obeyed orders he went out into the hall, and during his absence I will describe his rooms. The parlor, which I entered first from the hallway, is neatly but not luxuriously furnished. Everything is new. Long crimson portieres of flannel hide the back parlor from view. This was the room in which the examination took place, and bears the evidence of just coming out of a furniture store. It contains, besides several chairs, a desk and some sketches on the walls. The floor is carpeted, and lace curtains hang at the windows. In one corner, between the window and the mantel, is a red Brussels bed-lounge. In the midst of it lies a red Brussels rug, bound in gray. This rug is the only article in the two rooms that shows any evidence of wear, and from its appearance I should judge that it had been in the family for a long time.

THE DIAGNOSIS

Prof. De Blanc placed me on this rug and he stood before me. He touched my wrists and my cheek very daintily with the tips of his fingers.

“You will have to take off your shoes,” he said at last.

I sat down and unbuttoned my boot while he went out into the hall again and returned. I stuck my boot under a chair and went—two inches higher on one side than the other, thanks to Louis Quinze heels—hobbling across the room to my former position on the rug. The Professor returned and took my arm caressingly in his two hands. My arm tingled at every touch. He touched my face, my eyelids, and his fingers seemed almost to stick to my flesh, so strong was the sensation which communicated itself from him to me.

“It’s neuralgia,” he exclaimed triumphantly as he led me back to a chair. “A very bad case of neuralgia, and needs immediate treatment.”

“Are your treatments similar to this?” I asked.

“Yes, only more exhaustive; each treatment requires about fifteen minutes. You felt me?”

“Yes, very strongly,” I replied, still pretending innocence. “What was it?”

“That is my power—my personal electricity.”

“Does that electricity all come from you?” I asked.

“Oh, yes it does, it all comes from me—from my body,” he said, earnestly. “My cures are marvelous. I cure cripples who never walked; I make the blind see. I heal every known thing, and all by my personal magnetism. On Sunday night I will give a big exhibition at the Athenaeum, the aristocratic hall. There I will in public perform my miracles. I will make the paralyzed walk, the deaf hear, the dumb speak. There will be hundreds of reporters—who have never seen me but heard of me---there to write it up, and if you look in THE WORLD on Monday morning you will see a long account of my exhibition.”

I just thought if he looked in THE WORLD Sunday morning that he would see a long account of himself, but I held my peace.

“I have two assistants, surgeons from London,” he said; “and I have calls from thousands of people.”

“Where are you from?” I asked.

“I am from Paris,” he said, looking at me sharply and taking up the more decided accent which unconsciously he drops at times.

“You speak very good English for that,” I said slowly.

“Oh, I just come from Australia here,” he said, with a startled look. “I want to locate here.”

“How much will you charge to care me?” I asked at length.

“Ah, lady,” with a sweet smile and outward movement of the hands. “I will be honest with you. It ez a little case. I will then only charge you twenty-five dollar in advance for five treatments. After ze first one you have no more a headache.”

“How lovely it would be to be rid of these horrible aches,” I uttered, with a deep sigh.

“Do ze head aches ever; did you ever have fits?” he asked.

“No, but you can’t know how many times I have felt that I would have them,” I replied, choking a laugh.

“Ah, ze headaches should make you fear an inflammation of ze brain. It ez threatened,” he said. He was working for the \$25 in advance, and I knew it.

“What security have I that you will cure me if I give you the money?” I asked.

“I give you a written paper that I will cure you.”

“But if you don’t” I urged.

“But I say I will. And when I am so sure of my own power you should not be afraid to trust it,” he said very sweetly, but I was not convinced.

THE SWINDLER’S CAREER

Prof. Ernest De Blanc, as he calls himself, is about five feet four and a half inches in height. He is of rather heavy build—that is, he is not thin. His black eyes are mounted with rather heavy eyebrows. His hair, black in color, grows very thick on the head and is slightly parted in the centre, and his nose is flat. His hands are large and he wore a standing collar, a white waistcoat and black coat and trousers. He talks with a French accent, which is not so marked when he forgets himself.

Ernest De Blanc has not half as much personal electricity as my cat, “Tippecanoe,” has on a cold night. I knew his little scheme the moment he took me into his little parlor. It’s the most simple thing imaginable. There is an electric battery concealed in the back hall, and a nickel-plated spring at the door by which he turns the electricity off and on. In the much worn rug which lies by the bed lounge are some connecting wires, very badly concealed, I must say. The rug is bound with rubber to make it non-conductive, to prevent the electricity from being transmitted to anything else. The rug is divided directly in the centre with a broad band of rubber. Very well, so far. Electricity is positive and negative. The Professor stands the patient on the side of the rug charged with the negative electricity. He goes into the hall, sees that his battery is all right, stops at the door, and in the face of his patient turns the nickel-plated knob, then plants himself directly on the side of the rug charged with the positive current. The patient feels the tinkle of a slight shock, which he has the impudence and boldness to claim comes from his own body. It was such a glaring fraud that it made me disgusted. When people will deceive, why don’t they do something well, so that it gives one some work to solve the trick?

This is not Prof. Ernest De Blanc’s first effort in this line. A little of the history of his eventful career in America may prove interesting. The first account I could find of him was when he practiced his arts in Portland, Ore., under the name of Dr. Gelamardo. While there he assaulted one of his woman patients and was imprisoned. Next I find he appeared in San Jose, Cal., where he suddenly left town with the money advanced for treatments which people never received..

HIS ESCAPE AT TOLEDO

He was next heard of in Toledo, O., where he billed the town announcing his lecture and entertainment, but for some reason never appeared. He next worked Detroit, Mich., but his success was of short duration, as shown by the following clipping from the Detroit *Free Press*:

It will probably be remembered that a man calling himself "Dr. A. E. Gelamardo, the world-renowned electricity and magnetic healer," some time since advertised in this city that he would, with a talented company, present a play, written by himself, depicting his experience as a condemned felon and convict in the Oregon Penitentiary. He filled a brilliant engagement of one consecutive night at the Detroit Opera-House and then departed for fields and pastures now. On the 1st of this month he was lucky enough to marry at Chicago Mrs. Eva La Gay, a wealthy widow with one child. He immediately went on the road with his alleged drama and was forced to disband his company a day or two ago at Aurora, Ill. There are any number of suits against him, and he has disappeared, leaving no trace behind.

HE TURNS UP AT BUFFALO

No longer ago than July 7 he made his appearance in Buffalo under the name of Prof. Albert Le Grand. His record there is briefly told in the following telegram clipped from the Chicago *Herald*. The substance of it appeared in the New York newspapers at the same time:

BUFFALO, July 7,--Dr. Edward Storck, Chairman of the Erie County Medical Censors, today gave "Prof." Albert LeGrand notice to leave town or be arrested for practicing without a diploma. LeGrand gave free lectures in Music Hall and claimed to cure the lame, halt and blind in Biblical fashion. Dr. Storck said: "Prof. LeGrand has decided to leave the city within twenty-four hours. He admitted to me that he had no diploma, and that he was no physician, but a healer. When I asked him if he did not take fees he said that he did. Then, after a good deal of bluster, he gave in. I have learned some of his history. He was a Dr. Galamardo in Portland, Ore., and claimed to be a member of the Society of Sciences of Paris. He also exhibited a decoration, which he claimed to be a cross of the Legion of Honor. He left that city under a cloud, as he was arrested for criminally assaulting a woman patient. He then turned up in Denver, St. Louis, Kansas City, Baltimore and Boston. He was also arrested in Milwaukee. The society could prosecute him here if it wished so, but if he leaves the city that will be enough. Le Grand speaks French fluently and owned up to me that his magnetic touch was caused by an electric belt concealed in the palm of his hand. He had three or four dummies traveling with him who came upon the platform and were cured by him.

In a surprisingly short time afterwards Dr. Gelamardo, alias Dr. Albert Le Grand, turned up in New Orleans and advertised himself extensively in the local papers. This was on July 20. He found little mercy there, and after he had spent some \$300 in advertising, renting the St. Charles Theatre and paying for rooms and board in advance for himself and his wife, he had to flee the town to escape imprisonment for swindling a New Orleans man some fourteen years before.

SWINDLE IN NEW ORLEANS

Mr. Chas. D. Lafferranderie, a reputable business man, of New Orleans, says that in January, 1874, there arrived in New Orleans, from Antwerp, a person calling himself Aaron Gelamar. Through a common friend Mr. Lafferanderie became acquainted with Gelamar. Gelamar pretended to be the only child of very wealthy parents, his father being engaged in the ship-chandlery business at Antwerp. He had had a disagreement with his father, so he said, and for that reason had left home, but was given a large allowance by his indulgent parents. Gelamar's card contained a full-rigged ship and was printed in both French and English. The latter was:

Aaron Gelamar. To office Knai du Rhin 46 warehouses and store. Digal de Terre, street 81 next to water police, Antwerp. Dealer in old rags, chokens, and old hemp, rop, manlila rop, canvas and old sails, etc., of all kinds paper stock. They beyst price will be payt for it.

So winning and persuasive did Gelamar prove himself that when he proposed a partnership in the ship-chandler's business in that city between himself and Mr. Lafferranderie it was gladly accepted. It was agreed, by reason of Gelamar's long apprenticeship in his father's shop, that he should come to New York to make the necessary purchases. As a proof of good faith, Lafferranderie was to advance Gelamar \$100 before his departure, and on receipt of the invoices and the policy of insurance upon the merchandise, forwarded by a reliable New York firm, Gelamar would receive a draft of \$400.

The result of that transaction I find in the New Orleans *Times-Democrat*:

In the course of time a receipted bill was received by Lafferanderie, made out to Gelamar & Lafferanderie, New Orleans, from Messrs. Baldwin, Hought & Co., No. 66 Sixth Avenue, New York, for \$1,154.75. The bill was dated New York, Feb. 9, 1874, and stated on its face, "less received for cash on account, \$754.75," leaving a balance due of \$400.

This was followed by a policy of insurance of the Atlantic and Mutual Insurance Company, No. 55,153, made to Geistner & Lafferanderie, and was stated to cover a shipment of horseshoe nails and other goods shipped upon the steamer Western Metropolis. The policy was signed by J.H. Chapman, Secretary, and W.U.U. Moore, President.

Upon the back was indorsed as follows:

Insurance for \$1,150 at 1-1/2.....	\$14.37
Policy.....	1.25

Record 58, folio 17.

It was signed Feb. 9, 1874. On receipt of these documents Mr. Lafferanderie sent \$400 by wire Feb. 14, the receipt for which was shown to the reporter, and bore the signature of J.T. Alleyn, cashier, for manager.

Mr. Lafferranderie then bided the arrival of the goods, which he has been doing ever since.

They never came to hand, and subsequent investigations revealed the fact that the letters purporting to have come from the New York firms were forgeries, as were also the invoices and the policy of insurance. They had all emanated from the brain of Aron Geismar, who had violated the trust and confidence placed within his hands by a too-confiding fellow-countryman.

FOLLOWING UP THE SCOUNDREL

Mr. Lafferranderie saw a picture of the "Professor" in the Toledo *Bee*, and recognized it as the face of the man who had swindled him. The picture in the newspaper was compared with the photograph in his possession, and though it had been taken years before, they were identical. Mr. Lafferanderie had made an effort to trace the swindling Gelamar, and while doing so he learned that he was practicing medicine out West. This was conclusive.

Yet, in order to make no mistake Mr. Lafferanderie called on Prof. Albert Le Grand, pretending he wished to be doctored. The recognition was mutual. Prof. Albert Le Grand, alias Dr. Gelamardo and Aron Geismar were one and the same. Mr. Lafferranderie went to make out an affidavit, but before his return Prof. Albert Le Grand had fled the town. He did not even wait to take his electric battery along, but his wife, who professed ignorance as to this place of abode, took it in charge. Thus there was no exhibition at the St. Charles Theatre and numbers of poor people escaped being swindled.

Aron Geismar, alias Dr. Gelamardo, alias Prof. Albert Le Grand, alias Prof. Ernest De Blank, is not an over clever swindler. Notice these peculiar wordings in his advertisement for Brooklyn and that for New Orleans.

HIS ADVERTISING SCHEMES

First: "Admission Free!" appears conspicuously in both.

Second: "No objectionable person, boys or children admitted to this refined lecture and exhibition." Brooklyn advertisement.

"No objectionable person, nor boys nor children admitted to this refined exhibition." New Orleans advertisement.

Third: "Prof. Ernest De Blanc, the famous chevalier electrician of Paris." Brooklyn advertisement.

"Prof. Albert Le Grand, the famous world-renowned Healer and Electrician of Paris, France." New Orleans advertisement.

The following are samples of his advertisements:

EXHIBITION AND LECTURE
By Prof. ERNEST DE BLANC
On SUNDAY EVENING, NOV. 11, 1888
At the
BROOKLYN ATHENAEUM

—
Admission Free!

--

Orchestra in attendance. Doors open 7.30 P.M.

Commencing at 8 Sharp.

The public in general is cordially invited. The Afflicted with Chronic Diseases are specially invited.

No objectionable persons, boys or children admitted to this Refine Lecture and Exhibition.

Electricity is Life! Health is Happiness and Wealth combined!

Prof. ERNEST De BLANC
The Famous Chevalier and Electrician of Paris,
Will exhibit his Unrivalled Skill and Treat the Afflicted in view of the audience Free of
Charge!

Patients daring to be treated by medicine or surgery not accepted.
Diseases treated without medicine and without surgery.

Prof. ERNEST De BLANC
is now permanently located at No. 87 Ashland place
(formerly Raymond street), near Fulton street,
Brooklyn, N.Y.

At New Orleans this was his method of advertising, and is just about the same thing he
had adopted for Brooklyn:

ST. CHARLES THEATRE, NEW ORLEANS
ON SUNDAY, JULY 22, 1888
ADMISSION FREE
Come One! Come All! Free!
Commencing 8 P.M. sharp. Doors open 7.30 P.M.

PROF. ALBERT LE GRAND
THE FAMOUS WORLD-RENOWNED HEALER AND
ELECTRICIAN OF PARIS, FRANCE.

CONSULTATION FREE!
Diseases Cured Without Medicine and Without Any Surgery.
SPECIAL TERMS FOR THE WORKING-CLASS PATIENTS.

THE POOL OF SILOAM.

THE LAME WALK, THE BLIND SEE AND THE DEAF HEAR AAT TREMONT TEMPLE.

Prof. Albert Le Grand is now located for sixty days at No. 14 University Place, formerly
Dryades street, New Orleans.

I think I have given enough to show that Prof. De Blanc is a swindler, and of the meanest
kind, inasmuch as his victims are among the sick and ignorant. If this exposure saves one such
person from expending his hard earned money on Galamar's quackery I shall feel that my work
has not been in vain.