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ISN'T IT WONDERFUL?

A HISTORY OF MAGIC AND MYSTERY

BY

CHARLES BERTRAM, CONJURER,

TOGETHER WITH HIS REMINISCENCES.

With numerous Illustrations by

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and some explanatory diagrams by the Author.

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INTRODUCTION.

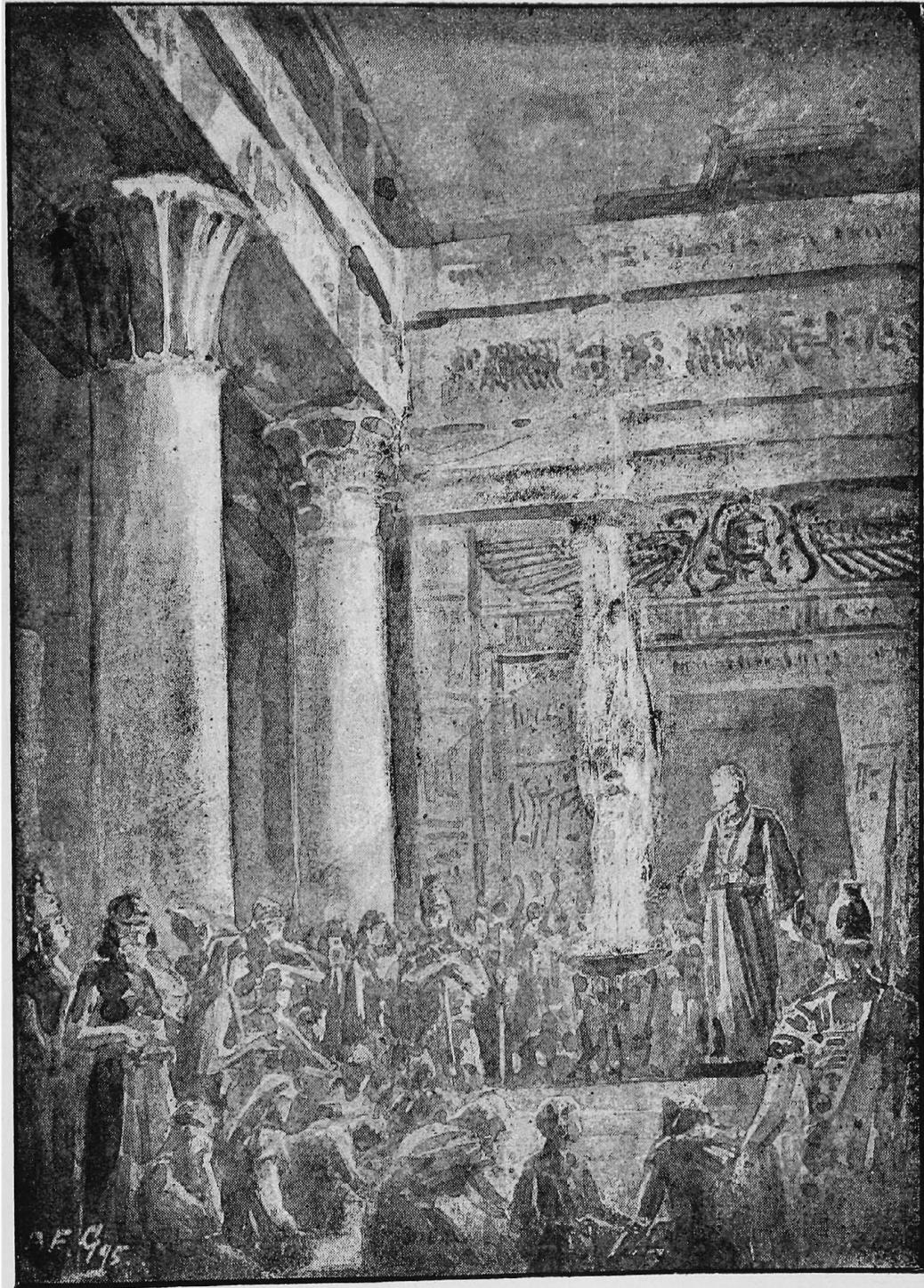
THE profession of conjuring, if not the most ancient, is certainly one of the oldest professions in the world, and, before commencing my account of the efforts made by a humble professor of the art, I trust that the reader may be interested by a short sketch of its history. Without this, it is possible that he might receive a book relating to the conjurer's art with a shrug of the shoulders. But conjuring, if it has now drifted down to the level of mere entertainment, has played its part in the history of the world; and even nowadays I am prepared to hold that it is an art which, if it is not the intellectual peer of painting or poetry for instance, still demands the devotion of a lifetime and a natural aptitude, if not genius, from him who would excel in it.

Although it is probable that the extreme Orient was the original birthplace of conjuring, it is in Egypt that we first find any reference made to the mystic art.

And Pharaoh "sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof, and Pharaoh

told them his dream." This is the earliest reference we have to the art of conjuring, and we gather from it that the magicians of Egypt were acquainted with certain rites and mysteries, and that their power was held in such high esteem as to be invoked by Pharaoh Apophis himself.

Who were these magicians, and what was the power they wielded? It is believed that these so-called mysteries were practised by the priests, who were not only able to influence the entire nation by their position and calling, but also had the great temples of Egypt at their disposal for the production of their mysteries. With these advantages, they naturally became famous as magicians over the whole of the known world. The sciences were perhaps only imperfectly known to them, but the knowledge they possessed, jealously reserved to themselves and a favoured few, gave them an immense power over the unenlightened people. Vast temples, labyrinths of subterranean passages, dimly lighted or perfectly dark, long aisles, dark vaults and recesses, extended corridors, leading to various secret chambers: no more suitable and convenient buildings than these



AN ANCIENT EGYPTIAN TEMPLE.

could be imagined for the production of their so-called mysteries. In a subterranean temple between the two pyramids, Cheops and Chephres, the mystic and fearful rites of the magicians were performed. In those labyrinthine Catacombs, startling spectacles were produced, and overwhelming displays of enchantment presented. Without dwelling on the literal accuracy of the passages of Holy Writ, it seems quite clear that the Egyptians possessed means by which optical manifestations and illusory effects could be produced, and which caused awe and consternation to the uninitiated and untutored multitudes. The mysteries of the Ancients seem generally to have taken the form of apparitions, and there can be very little doubt that the priests and magicians used some arrangement of mirrors or lenses, which reflected or cast figures or pictures upon fumes or curtains, and which was doubtless the forerunner of the magic lantern, invented by Kircher in the 17th century. As these apparitions were exhibited in subterranean temples or in underground apartments, the prevailing darkness would naturally heighten the effect of the illusions, give more solemnity to the proceedings, and

for religious purposes, more completely subject the people to the influence of the priesthood. We know from the very earliest records, that magic was practised by the Ancients, and also that their arts and mysteries have been handed down through the succeeding generations with very little change. The same love of mystery dominates the minds of persons now, as then, and in much the same manner, magic and mystery are used by magicians, for the purpose of imposing upon the weak minded, and upon persons, who, for any purpose, either religious or otherwise, seek their aid. Closely associated with the magicians and sorcerers of these ancient times were the serpent charmers of the East.

That the Psylli of Antiquity possessed some secret method of fascinating serpents, known to us as serpent charming, we are well aware, and there seems no reasonable doubt but that their methods have been handed down to their successors of the present day in Egypt, India, and Persia. It is explained that the various tricks which are performed with serpents, although appearing to be very terrible, are not attended with very much danger, inasmuch as

precaution is taken to deprive the reptiles of their fangs, and to extract the vesicle containing the venom. If it were so, it would of course reduce the whole matter to mere charlatanism and rank imposture. James Bassett, in his book "The Land of the Imans," positively asserts that the Persian snake charmers deprive their serpents of their fangs before proceeding to charm them. On the other hand, Hasselquist, a keen observer, states in the "Lives of Celebrated Travellers," that he has discovered something beyond vulgar deception in the power exercised over serpents by the Indians. Although their methods are hitherto unexplained, yet when made known, they may be extremely simple. Those who love to deny the existence of all knowledge which they do not themselves possess, would rather turn the whole matter into ridicule than labour to explain it. They assert that when these charmers meet with a person, who fancies that his house is infested with serpents, a notion they sometimes contrive to infuse into his brain, they commence by cunningly introducing one or two tame serpents into some out of the way part of the house. The snake, on hearing the

well known sounds of the charmer's instrument, comes towards him, and is immediately seized by its



AN INDIAN SNAKE CHARMER.

master and placed in the basket. The charmer takes

his fee for having rid the owner of the house of his unwelcome visitor, and retires to put his little deception into practise at some other house.

Rogues there are in every country, and their existence implies that there are also fools and dupes, but even this well authenticated fact by no means explains the numerous curious tales respecting the serpent charming, which are too well established to admit of any doubt.

The serpents used by the charmers to exhibit their powers, are of that most deadly species known to us as the "cobra di capello" or hooded snake. The serpent is kept in a basket, and when the musician or charmer plays upon a pipe or flute, the "cobra," by graceful undulating movements of his head, seems to keep time to the music, sitting up as it were, in the basket, and appearing to experience great pleasure from the sound of the music. As the music proceeds, it rises in a spiral movement from the basket or ground, and as the music ceases, gradually relapses into lethargy and immobility. The cobra must then be immediately covered. Under certain conditions these reptiles can be handled, and a case is mentioned

of a gentleman, who, upon the presumption that its fangs had been extracted, handled a snake to examine more closely the beauty of its spots, whilst it was dancing upon a table. The serpent did not harm him, but the next day his Mahomedan servant saw the same musician perform with the same snake in a bazaar. On the music suddenly ceasing, the snake darted at one of the spectators, a young woman, fastened on her throat, and inflicted such injury that she died within half an hour. These charmers do not absolutely restrict their power to the charming of the "cobra di capello," but all kinds of serpents are amenable to their art, not excepting the terrible "boa." Many allusions are made to the serpent charmers in the Holy Scriptures, proving that their power of commanding these dangerous reptiles was known to the ancient nations, and that the art has been handed down from them to the professors or charmers of the present day. Cawnpore is especially famous for its snake charmers, where an exhibition of their art can be witnessed for a few rupees.

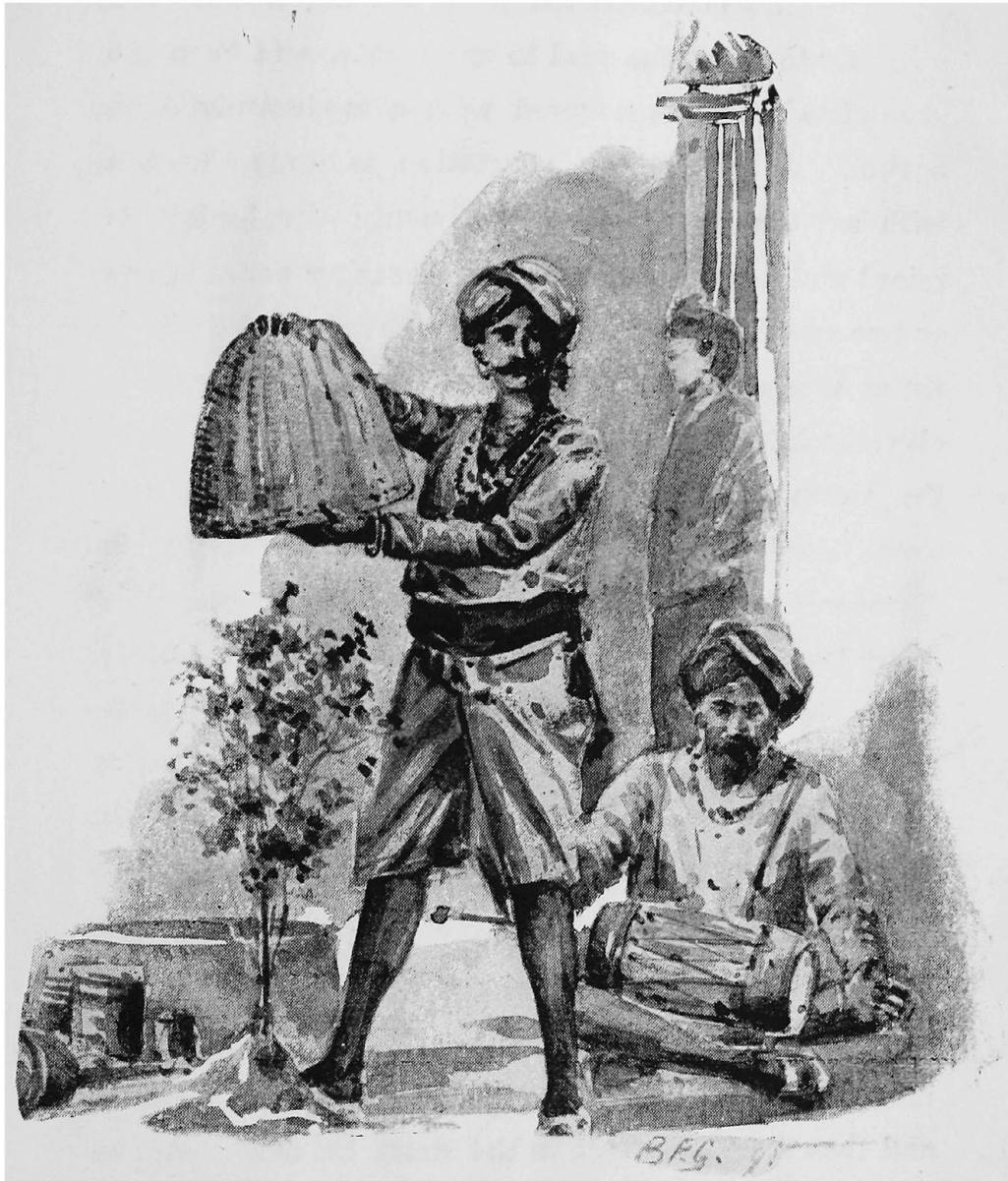
The Indian jugglers are spoken of by all travellers as possessing remarkable dexterity, and although most

of their feats are of the juggling, and not of the mysterious order, yet there are some tricks practised by them, which are clearly of very ancient origin, and very astonishing. They are able to swallow long chains, which are made to clink in their stomachs, and by contracting their stomachs, eject them again. They are able to swallow long swords, a feat which is sometimes emulated by European jugglers, but which is not without an element of danger. The performer commences to practise this trick by first overcoming the nausea occasioned by the contact of the sword with the throat, and by daily practice manages gradually to push the stomach down, until he succeeds in being able to swallow about eighteen inches of the blade. As the sword is generally about twenty-six inches in length, the remaining eight inches are concealed in the throat, when the head is thrown back and the chin kept as high as possible. The appearance is that the whole length of the sword from handle to point is in the stomach. The element of danger attached to this feat is the extreme probability of piercing the coat of the stomach. This feat was once exhibited by a well

known juggler in England at the expense of his life, but I am personally acquainted with a gentleman of position, who with the greatest ease can pass down his throat twenty-six inches of ordinary walking cane, and allow it to be withdrawn by one of the spectators. Fire eating, drinking boiling oil, dancing upon red hot irons, chewing glass, and encircling the body with red hot chains, the touch of which is borne without shrinking or appearance of inconvenience, are amongst the many curious feats performed by the Hindoos. Of their tricks, which savour more of mystery than conjuring, the "basket trick," and the trick known all over the civilised world as the "Mango tree trick" are the most prominent.

This latter trick is recorded by a monk, Clemens, of the convent at the foot of Mount Sinai, as having been performed by Simon Magus the sorcerer of Samaria, in the time of the Apostles. It is curious to note how the explanations differ as to the *modus operandi* of presenting this trick, but all seem to agree as to the final result.

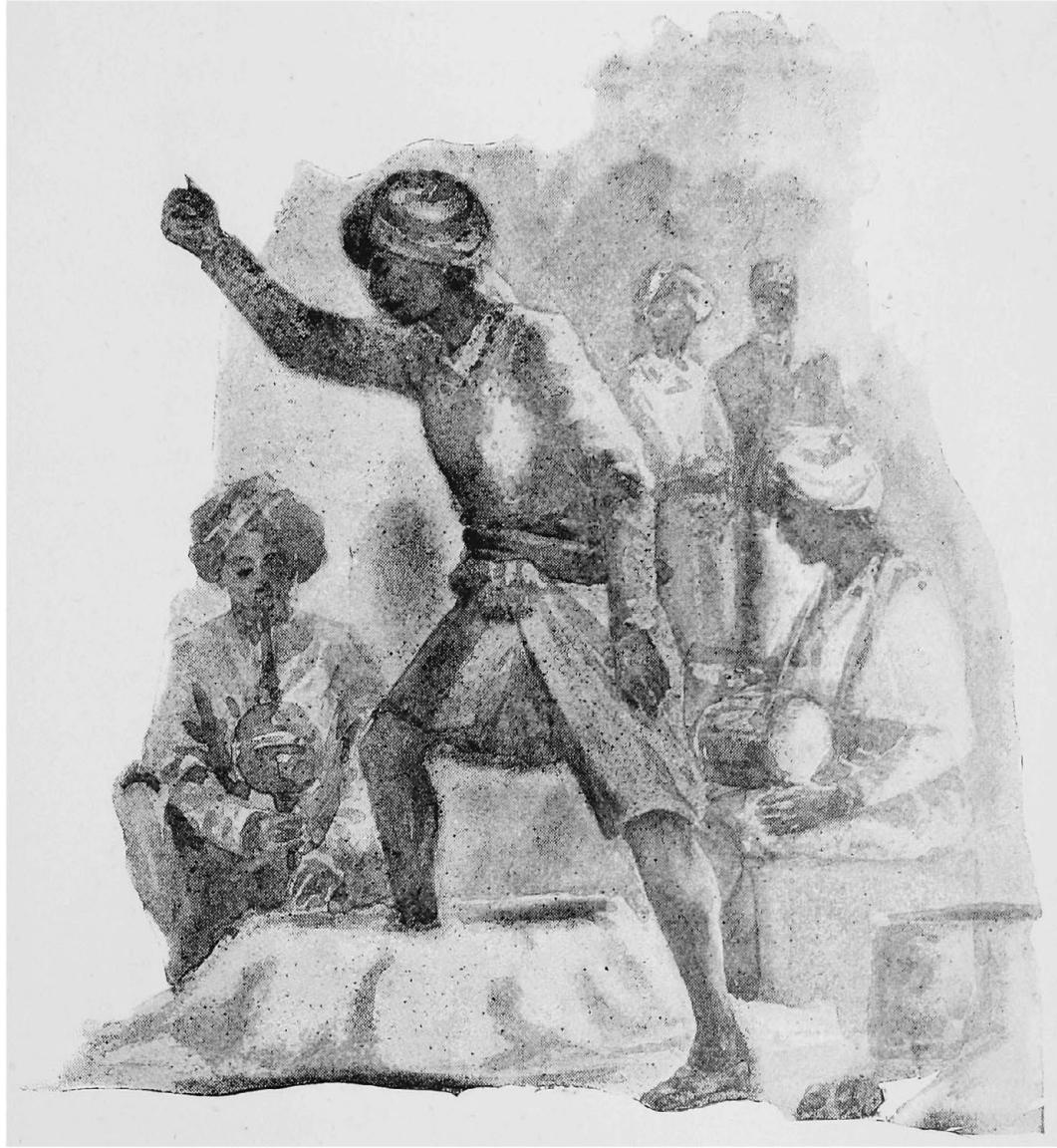
The performer generally places upon*the ground a handful or two of earth, and a seed is then embedded



THE MANGO TREE TRICK.

B

in it. This is moistened with a little water, presumably to assist the seed to germinate, and then the mound of earth is covered with a moderately deep basket. A species of incantation is gone through with a "tom tom" accompaniment; the basket is raised and a small sprout is seen, bearing perhaps one or two small leaves. Again it is covered, and sometimes a considerable length of time is allowed to elapse, while perhaps another trick is gone through, the "tom tom" accompaniment going on all the time. At length the basket is raised, the sprout is discovered to have grown about a foot in height, with many leaves upon it. This is repeated until a large shrub is discovered, and in some instances it is made to bear fruit. There are many explanations of the method by which this trick is performed, the true method being a clever substitution of the various sized plants, adroitly performed by the conjurer unseen by the spectators. Tavernier in "Lives of Celebrated Travellers," states that, "The magician crouched to the ground wrapped in a sheet, and that through a hole in the sheet he saw him cut himself under the arms with a razor and rub the



THE BASKET TRICK.

blood upon a piece of wood, which he planted in the earth. Every time he rose from the ground the bit of wood grew visibly, and at the third time branches and buds sprang out; the tree having attained the height of five or six feet, was next covered with leaves and flowers." The crowning miracle of making the fruit appear was prevented by the arrival of an English clergyman, who threatened the whole of the Europeans with exclusion from the Holy Communion "if they persisted in encouraging the diabolical arts of sorcerers and magicians."

The "basket trick," another Hindoo feat, is a wonderful illusion. Everyone has heard of the frail basket which may be examined, the pretended murder of the boy who is placed in the basket, of the blood flowing, and screams proceeding from the basket (no doubt produced ventriloquially), whilst the performer pierces the basket through and through with a sharp sword, as if in a paroxysm of rage, and how the basket is eventually found to be empty and the boy on a neighbouring tree or other conspicuous place. There are many other illusions said to be performed by these Indian jugglers, such as casting

into the air a rope, the upper end of which remains there, whilst the performer climbs up it and vanishes from sight. These seem to be considerably exaggerated and hardly worthy of credence, but the "basket" and "mango" tricks may certainly be considered connecting links with the past.

In course of time the mystic profession of the Egyptian magicians was carried to Europe, where in "fresh woods and pastures new" they found many disciples who continued the practices of the more ancient sorcerers. Merlin is the first British magician of whom we have any record. He is spoken of in the chronicles of the 11th century as having the reputation of being a great magician. Many are the legendary tales told of him, and amongst them is one in which he is credited with having by supernatural agency, caused the Druidical Stones to be transplanted from Ireland to Salisbury Plain. Merlin made a somewhat mysterious exit from this sphere in the neighbourhood of Kenilworth, and was supposed to have returned to the demons, with whom he had been so long associated. Later on, Pope Sylvester II. practised the black art, and constructed

a brazen head, which, like the Egyptian Sphynx and the Delphian Oracle, gave ambiguous answers to



THE MAGIC OMELET.

questions addressed to it. In the Romish and other churches, many artifices of like nature have been

resorted to; such as the weeping Madonnas, from whose eyes tears would flow at certain seasons, and which were no doubt constructed upon some hydrostatic principle. Some deceptions are pardonable, when the results produced tend in some manner to alleviate the suffering of the needy. An old priest noted for his beneficence, acquired a great notoriety by the exercise of a simple trick, by which he provided food for some of his poor parishioners. He would visit them, and finding them without food, would ask for a frying pan. This he would place upon the fire empty. He would then place his walking stick in the pan and stir it round, while he uttered a short prayer, when lo! a splendid omelet appeared in the pan, much to the delight of the hungry onlookers. The good priest had all the ingredients of an omelet in his stick, which was hollow, and sealed by a little wax at the end. The heat of the pan melted the wax, the ingredients ran out into the pan, and the omelet appeared, while the priest received the credit of having performed a miracle. *Bis dat qui cito dat.*

Phosphorus has been extensively used through the ages by magicians and sorcerers of all classes, for the

purpose of producing illusions. Its use will often explain the writings, apparently mysterious, which have appeared upon walls and in caverns, and which have been said to have had some miraculous origin. When bodies and human forms have been subjected to the influence of phosphorus and raised on high, or suspended in dark places, they will give off a phosphorescent light and produce effects, both weird and unnatural, and calculated to strike ignorant persons who witness these manifestations with awe and consternation.

The practice of magic was extensively carried on during the 13th and 14th centuries, but generally speaking the arts and devices of the period were almost entirely similar to those chosen and adopted by the ancient magicians. The mystic doings of Zeito, a conjurer of the 14th century, attracted a large amount of attention, and he received particular favour from the German courts. Although the records of his performances savour very much of the improbable, it would appear that he was regarded at the time as a sorcerer of some importance, but in these enlightened days it is possible that he would

not have been held in such high respect, but have been looked upon as a mere charlatan.

The names of Cornelius Agrippa, and of Doctor Faustus are well known. These two necromancers astounded the various European Courts by their wonderful divinations and incantations about the middle of the 16th century. Many wizards had come and gone since the triple crowned Pontifical magician, Sylvester II., but none became so renowned or attracted so much attention as Agrippa and Faust. Their careers were somewhat chequered. Agrippa suffered great persecution for his supposed witchcraft, although in the latter part of his life he was much sought after by the representatives of the English and Austrian Courts. He died in 1534, having made for himself a reputation as a great necromancer, and being regarded as a man possessed of great knowledge and learning.

Better known even than Agrippa is Faust, of whom so many legendary tales have been written, and whose supposed personality has been immortalised by Gounod and Goethe. According to the legend, Faust, ambitious and sensuous, was supposed to have

entered into a compact with the Devil, to whom he had sold himself body and soul, on condition of his having his youth prolonged and all his desires gratified. At the termination of his compact, Satan claimed him as his own. The real Faust is supposed to have come to a violent end about the year 1540.

John Dee, or Doctor Dee, was an alchemist and assiduous student of astrology in the reign of Elizabeth. He pretended to have the power of intercourse with spirits, and to foretell events, by gazing into his magic speculum. He was a man of great learning, and his ability gained for him a vast reputation. He was consulted by persons of high degree upon important events, and was generally looked up to as a seer and astrologer whose counsels were not to be ignored. A great part of his studies was devoted to the attempt to discover the imaginary philosopher's stone and the means of making gold, which necessarily ended in failure and disappointment. After passing through many vicissitudes, and losing his reputation as a philosopher, seer, and astrologer, he, in his old age, experienced great distress and

poverty, and eventually died at the age of eighty-one. It seems strange that a man of Dee's education and knowledge should have been weak enough to waste his talents upon such a "will o'the wisp" as the philosopher's stone. Elizabeth seems to have tolerated necromancy, having extended her patronage to Dee, although during the reign of Henry VIII., conjurers, sorcerers, and wizards were prohibited from exercising their arts and incantations, were regarded as rogues and vagabonds, were exposed to bitter persecution, and were punished with imprisonment and sometimes with death, the death penalty taking the form of burning at the stake. These were indeed hard times for the poor wizard, although the severity of the punishment was somewhat relaxed at the close of Henry's reign.

Even now it is easy to realise how simple it must have been for any person acquainted with the merest smattering of science to have imposed upon the ignorant people of the 17th century. Their knowledge of conjuring, as we in our time know it, was simply nothing, but the superstition prevalent amongst the people was appalling, and the simplest

conjuring feat was regarded by them as witchcraft and demonology. They seemed to regard as witchcraft any trick which it was beyond their power to explain, and were prepared to mete out punishment accordingly. This superstition is even now not entirely blotted out from the minds of all. Only a short time since, in Ireland, a woman was burned to death as a witch, by her own family, a sign of superstition and gross ignorance, which it is difficult to believe could exist in the 19th century. In an old volume, the definition of a "witch" is given as "one who imprecates evil on man and beast," and the definition of "wizard" as a "knowing one." The march of time, the study of science, and the growth of education have served to enlighten people, and now they rightly regard the conjurer or magician more as "a knowing one" and an entertainer, than as one who revels in mystic arts and delights in the company of demons.

It was not long after the close of the middle ages that books were published upon the subject of magic, pointing out to the readers thereof the wide difference between conjuring or magic as an amusement, and sorcery as an art in connection with evil

spirits and demons. With the publication of these books, the public became more schooled to legitimate conjuring, and from the instructions given, became acquainted with the solutions of those tricks which had hitherto been regarded by them as mysteries and the result of sorcery. The conjurer became a person who exhibited these mysteries for the amusement of his patrons, and being thus elevated to the position of a public entertainer, was no longer regarded with awe as a child of the Evil One, but was welcomed as a person who caused merriment and diversion, laughter and astonishment.

The tricks performed by wizards and conjurers of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries bore a great similarity to those performed by the conjurer of the present day. Boxes, balls, cards, coins, rings, handkerchiefs, etc., were some of the stock in trade of the conjurers of the past. That there is "nothing new under the sun" might be not inaptly applied to conjuring. It is indeed astonishing how few and far between are novelties in the conjuring world, and how often "new tricks" are discovered to have been performed, or presented in some form or other

by the magicians living from 300 to 3000 years ago. In an old treatise upon conjuring, dating back 300 years, many of the devices and illusions which it purports to explain, may be recognised as old friends of our boyhood, the same deceptions continuing to hold audiences amused in the present year of grace.

No particular impetus was given to conjuring as a source of amusement and pleasure until the year 1770, when Breslau made his *début*, and for many years astonished and amused London society by his wonderful feats of dexterity and legerdemain. Breslau did more than any previous professor to raise conjuring to a popular form of amusement. He appeared before the Royal Family, and by presenting his illusions in an artistic and dexterous manner, secured the favour and patronage of the nobility and gentry of the day. By using the daily papers as a means of advertising his wonders, he kept in touch with the public, and contrived to make his performances exceedingly popular and remunerative. An innovation in the form of a variety entertainment was also inaugurated by him, and many items and continental novelties were used in combination

with his own dexterous performance. Breslau seems to have been the first conjurer who made "card tricks" an especial item in his programme. He had specially studied the manipulation of a pack of cards, and performed his tricks with great dexterity. In 1784 he published a treatise upon conjuring, explaining all his tricks, and with its publication retired from the profession, having been extremely successful, and having conferred considerable benefit upon his fellow men by enlightening their minds with regard to conjuring in general.

Simultaneously with the retirement of Breslau, Pinetti, an Italian conjurer, arrived in London. He also published books and treatises on the Mystic Art, and had the honour of presenting his entertainment on several occasions before the Royal Family, and of receiving the congratulations of His Majesty George III., who always experienced great pleasure in witnessing exhibitions of conjuring. Pinetti was the first to introduce clairvoyance or second sight in a conjuring entertainment. Many years later, in 1846, this art was brought to great perfection by Robert Houdin, by whom it is said, by some authors,

to have been invented. There can be little doubt, however, that ages before the existence of either Pinetti or Robert Houdin, clairvoyance existed in an incomplete manner, and the so called sorcerers of ancient times produced many of their mysteries by working upon some such principle. There is hardly a phenomenon in existence which operates so largely in the encouragement of superstition, as the supposed power of clairvoyance. It is always associated with divination and prophecy, and gives rise to a belief among the superstitious that there is something supernatural in the power.

It would occupy far more space than is available in these pages to enter fully into the *modus operandi*, but it may here be stated that this apparent mystery is produced by means of a code of words perfectly learnt by two persons, one of whom is the medium, generally a young lady of prepossessing appearance, but who looks a little dejected and as if suffering from some strain upon her nervous system. She being perfectly blindfolded, the other, the controller or professor, passes amongst the audience, pointing to or touching articles, such as pieces

of jewellery, trinkets, garments, etc.; the medium accurately describes each article in turn. By the question asked or the remark made by the controller, the desired answer is conveyed to the medium, who in describing the articles is supposed to exercise her power of "second sight." This class of performance was brought to great perfection, some few years ago, at the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, by Heriot and Little Louie, his daughter, who not only accurately described the articles given as tests, but seemed to anticipate the wishes and ideas of Heriot, so rapidly and cleverly were the questions and descriptions conveyed to the medium during his ordinary conversation with the audience. The "second sight," or what has taken its place in a great measure, "transference of thought," has been brought to even greater perfection in the present day, and is shown with great effect by Mr. Sidney Gandy and Miss Inglefield in a most charming and original manner. The system being perfectly silent, no questions passing between these two clever artists, Miss Inglefield, the medium, describing articles and figures in such an "uncanny" manner, as would

undoubtedly have qualified her for the stake in the olden times. Pinetti left London, and after a successful tour through Europe, died in Russia in 1797.

As we find black sheep in almost every fold, so we discover now, in the conjuring world, a man posing as a conjurer, but practising his art in a most infamous manner; a quack, charlatan, forger, and thief, in fact, the most unscrupulous being one can well imagine. In alluding to Giuseppe Balsamo, or Cagliostro, as he was pleased to call himself, there is nothing to record of him that is at all creditable. His career was one of roguery, debauchery, and wickedness. He was sentenced to imprisonment for life, and died in prison in 1795. Another conjurer who flourished about this time was Rollin, but his end was exceedingly tragic. He had been very successful as a conjurer, and had retired upon his well earned gains, but becoming associated with political matters, he came to an untimely end, being sentenced to death and executed by the guillotine. Many magicians of more or less note performed in London during the next thirty years, there being a great deal of rivalry and jealousy between them. Some combined

ventriloquism with their magical programmes, some produced mechanical illusions, and many made use of the magic lantern to produce their effects. The construction of automata seemed to occupy their attention--automatic birds, which ate and digested food, automata constructed to produce specimens of writing and drawing, and the celebrated automaton chess player invented by M. Kempelen. These were the novelties in the conjuring world of this period, by which the public were induced to patronise the various performances then in vogue. Nearly all these automata are explained, and admirable descriptions of their construction given by Sir David Brewster in his splendid series of letters on Natural Magic. He makes mention also of an automatic magician, who, when a medallion of brass was placed in a drawer, gave an answer to a previously indicated question. "If the drawer was shut without a medallion being placed in it, the wizard shook his head and resumed his seat. When the machinery was wound up, the movements continued for about an hour, and about fifty questions might be answered." This savours very much of the fortune telling "penny

in the slot" machines, with which most of us of the present day are familiar, and of which this lifeless magician was probably the forerunner.

John Henry Anderson, known as Professor Anderson, "the Wizard of the North," was brought before the public in a singular manner. No public entertainer ever had a more fortunate commencement. Mr. John F. Sutton, the famous showman, was, when a very young man, closely associated with Anderson, and was intimate with him through the first part of his career. His account of the wizard's life is therefore much more reliable than the contradictory accounts given by the various biographers of Anderson; and this account I have from his own lips: Originally a confectioner's apprentice at Aberdeen, Anderson made the acquaintance one day of M. Philippe, a conjurer of some renown, who had fallen upon bad times. Philippe had invented a clever trick, known as the "gun trick." It was worked in this way. The conjurer would pass a gun among his audience, drop a charge of powder and a bullet into it, and then invite some one to fire it. The bullet would then be found in the



PROFESSOR ANDERSON, WHEN
A YOUNG MAN, MAKING THE
PASS (FAIRE SAUTÉ LE COUP).

conjurer's mouth. To show there was "no deception" the bullet was previously marked by some one among the audience, and on being taken from the conjurer's mouth, after the gun had been fired, was found to be the identical one that had been dropped down the barrel. Of course the trick was capable of a simple explanation. By means of an ingenious apparatus, which fitted over the muzzle, and an expert bit of palming, the bullet was extracted before the gun was handed over to the gentleman in the audience to be fired off. The singular thing about the trick was that the inventor, M. Philippe, could make neither profit nor renown out of it. In fact, he gave up conjuring altogether, and settled down in Aberdeen as a cook. At Aberdeen he met young Anderson, who was tired of the humdrum life of an apprentice, and yearned for the footlights. Anderson picked up a few tricks from him, including the "gun trick," which was to make his fortune. Determined to make his mark as a conjurer, the young fellow tramped from Aberdeen to Liverpool, where he got an engagement at the Liver Theatre, which disappeared long ago. He was to receive five

shillings a week for doing the gun trick. The effect was magical. It was soon the talk of Liverpool, the theatre was packed nightly, and the theories as to the method of performing the marvellous feat were innumerable. At the end of three weeks the young conjurer, who had now assumed the proud title of the "Wizard of the North," was receiving a third of the takings, or about £40 a night. The proprietor afterwards increased the "Wizard's" pay to £60 a night, an advancement unparalleled in any profession. After making a brief provincial tour and much money, he betook himself to London and became lessee of the Strand Theatre. Anderson, now Professor Anderson, was the first to give matinées, and although other caterers for the public amusement claimed the bright particular distinction of being the first to give morning performances, there can be no doubt that the defunct prestidigitateur is entitled to whatever credit is due to his invention. Anderson, during his eventful career, speculated largely in theatrical enterprises. He was at various times lessee of the Strand Theatre, the Lyceum, the Adelphi, St. James's, the Theatre Royal.

Manchester, and another theatre at Liverpool. He made money out of his own entertainment and lost it on the theatres. Anderson in his early days was a remarkably handsome man, and one of the best West End tailors used to send him a couple of suits of clothes a day, one to wear on the stage, and the other to wear in the street, on the condition that he should tell his friends the name of the tailor whenever he was asked. One or two anecdotes of the Wizard are worth repeating. He had the misfortune to pay his first visit to America when the War of Secession was at its height. Sutton was sent ahead to make the "boom," or, as we should say in this country, to do the advertising. He found himself in Virginia on the day Fort Sumner was bombarded. He had some bill stickers with him posting up gigantic placards of the "Wizard of the North," with Professor Anderson's portrait at the top. The Southerners eyed the stranger with deep suspicion. To sound the praises of the "Wizard of the North" in the rebellious south was a most perilous procedure. The placards were seized, the poor bill stickers ruthlessly buffeted, and Sutton himself had to fly for his

life. Every placard was torn off the walls, and the head of the "Wizard of the North" exhibited as a



PROFESSOR ANDERSON,
IN LATER LIFE.

traitor. On another occasion during his eventful stay in America, Professor Anderson was arrested

as a conspirator for having some guns and cannon balls among his luggage. He referred his captors to the British Consul, and was able to give satisfactory proof that his war-like weapons were intended for the harmless purpose of a conjuring entertainment.

Anderson's great ambition was not to "strut and fret his hour upon the stage" as a conjurer, but as an actor. His favourite character was that of "Rob Roy," the part which he played when he first introduced the "gun trick" to the public. In a playbill in my possession, Anderson is advertised to give a performance of Rob Roy at Covent Garden Theatre, he playing the "Title Role," and he often performed in this character. That Anderson had no particular liking for his profession of a conjurer, we have the authority of Mr. Sutton for saying. His ruling passion was to be connected with the drama, a fact which is corroborated by the frequency of his theatrical speculations, and the record of his intimacy with the leading actors of the day. Anderson's season at Covent Garden was very successful, and by way of a brilliant termination he conceived the idea of a two days carnival benefit and masquerade

ball, which was duly announced to take place on Monday and Tuesday, March 3rd and 4th, 1856. The programme included the celebrated Drury Lane farce, entitled "The Great Gun Trick," in which Mr. Charles Matthews was announced to play. The opera, "La Somnambula," a drama, "Time Tries All," in which the whole of the Strand company gave their services; a new squib, "What does he Want?" the melo-drama, "Gilderoy," in which Professor Anderson took the leading part; and as a finale the great comic pantomime of 1856, entitled, "La Belle Alliance," or "Harlequin and the Field of the Cloth of Gold." The second day was to be devoted to the Great Wizard's Grand Bal Masqué. The whole of the spacious pit was entirely covered, and the stage thrown into the *Salle de Dance*. All went well until near the end of the Bal Masqué, when, at a quarter to five, the theatre was found to be on fire. "A few of the maskers were grouped about on the stage, presenting a most incongruous scene of costume and character, when a large burning beam fell from the ceiling upon the stage, striking a man's foot and scattering burning embers about in

every direction, and causing the greatest consternation amongst the company. The women commenced shrieking and rushing about in wild confusion. The company rushed down to the doors and fled into the neighbouring streets in all the grotesqueness of their dresses. The magnificent theatre was completely destroyed, the skeleton and ruined walls alone remaining. Anderson was indirectly accused by some of the Press of either deliberate arson or culpable negligence, and in a letter to the *Times* of March 29th, 1856, he appeals to that newspaper as an impartial tribunal, pleading "not guilty," and quoting and taking exception to an extract from *Punch* :—

"Of the Wizard of the North
Sing the Tuesday night's renown,
When he let the gas burst forth,
And burnt the play-house down."

He said this may be meant in fun, but that fun is of the "frog and boy" species, which meant death to him.

Anderson then travelled through Australia, Tasmania, New South Wales, the Sandwich Islands, San

Francisco, and New York, arriving at Liverpool on the 26th December, 1862. His last performances in London in 1865, at St. James's Hall, resulted in a loss of £1166. In a letter to the *Times*, December 2nd, 1866, he says, "That some idea may be formed of the large amount of money which has from time to time passed through my hands during the thirty years of my public career, I may state that my losses alone have been (with a tabulated account) £26,526." After making another continental tour and visiting Australia, he died in 1879. During his professional career, Anderson had many competitors pitted against him for laurels in the conjuring world, Hermann, Frikell, Bosco, Robert Houdin, and the Brothers Davenport being amongst the number, as well as the so-called spiritualists, whose tricks and impositions Anderson, with the assistance of Mr. Sutton, managed cleverly to expose.

The exposé of spiritualism has been continued by Mr. Maskelyne, of the Egyptian Hall, who is ever on the alert to bring to the light of day any new venture or imposition of the spiritualistic order. The poor charlatan is to be pitied who falls into

Mr. Maskelyne's hands. He will receive no quarter, and is sure to have his methods roughly handled and exposed.

Wiljalba Frikell, a conjurer of great ability, was born in Finland. He took up conjuring at first as an amateur, but eventually adopted it as his profession, and travelled all over the continent. He made his first appearance in London in the exhibition year, 1851. Frikell was at this time thirty-three years of age. He devoted most of his energy to presenting his tricks without any adventitious assistance in the form of apparatus. His stage presented a very bare appearance when compared with the stages of Anderson, Bosco, and Houdin ; but although in plain evening dress, and with bared arms, he managed to produce some extraordinary effects. Frikell expressed his opinion "that the effect and astonishment produced by modern conjurers is diminished by using cumbrous apparatus and complicated paraphernalia, and the useful lesson of the fallibility of the senses, by means at everybody's command, entirely lost." He further stated that it was his object to restore the art of conjuring to its original

province, and extend it to a degree which he believed it had never hitherto reached. In this he in a great measure succeeded, for he had many followers who discarded apparatus as fully as himself, and, at the present day, it cannot be denied that a dexterous sleight of hand performer can command more success and create more genuine astonishment, than can a magician who relies largely upon apparatus and mechanical appliances. This of course does not apply to some of the larger illusions, which need stage effects, such as that produced by Döbler in 1841, by firing off a pistol and simultaneously igniting 200 wax candles on his stage. The effect must have been very surprising at that period, but in these days of progress and perfection in electric lighting, the wonder and astonishment would be considerably minimised.

Louis Döbler was a very finished performer, and seems to have combined dexterity and manipulation with an elaborate display of apparatus. He also had the advantage of a charming manner, gentlemanly bearing, and good personal appearance, which all conduced to make his entertainment graceful and

enjoyable, and stamped him as one of the most noted and popular magicians of the day. He appeared before Her Majesty the Queen and the Royal Family at Windsor Castle. At the conclusion of his farewell performance in London, he presented each of his audience with a floral souvenir and a poetical composition of his own, in which was expressed his gratitude to the public for their appreciation of his efforts.

One of the most remarkable men of the 19th century, remarkable not only as a conjurer, but for his skill and ingenuity in mechanical construction, was Jean Eugene Robert, who was born at Blois in 1805. He was educated with a view to adopting the law as a profession, but as he made little advancement in his studies, and the study of mechanics was more congenial to him, he became a watchmaker, which was also the trade of his father. One could almost have foretold that when he developed into a conjurer the construction of apparatus and delicate mechanism would be his great forte, as was eventually the case. He made the acquaintance of one Torrini, a conjurer, with whom for some time he travelled,

and with whom he afterwards went into partnership. He returned to Paris, married, and followed his calling as a watchmaker for some years, but his health failed, and he was reduced to great poverty and distress. It was not until 1845 that he was enabled to open a "Temple of Magic" in the Valois Gallery, Palais Royal. Here he performed under the name of "Robert Houdin," a name he had adopted, and presented the mystery of "second sight," a similar performance to that given in London in 1784 by Pinetti. Houdin's fame now became noised about, and after fulfilling an unsuccessful engagement at Brussels, he returned to Paris, and was fortunate enough to obtain the patronage of Louis Philippe, before whom he gave a performance at St. Cloud. He astonished the Royal Family with his tricks and with his clairvoyance. Houdin did not forget to make the most of the opportunity thus afforded him of establishing his reputation as a "wizard." He was enabled to carry on his theatre of magic successfully until the Revolution, which proved so disastrous to Louis Philippe. Houdin then came to England and

performed during two seasons in London, and had the honour of appearing on three occasions before Her Majesty Queen Victoria and the Prince Consort. He then left London on a provincial tour, performing in most of the principal cities, where he invariably succeeded in drawing "crowded houses." There is one town, however, in which it is recorded that he did not quite "catch on." Houdin was a man whom experience had taught to bear an even temper in adverse circumstances, even when at Hertford, where his audience only numbered five persons. Did he dismiss them? No! He gave his performance, and at the conclusion invited his audience upon the stage, which he in the meantime had had prepared to receive them, and regaled them with a good supper, no doubt adding to his reputation as a genial host.

Houdin toured through Ireland and Scotland, and in 1856 visited Algeria, having been commissioned by the French Government to proceed thither, with a view to breaking down or counteracting the pernicious influence which the Marabouts had obtained over the unenlightened and superstitious Arabs by

the exhibition of their so called miracles. Robert Houdin appeared amongst them, and presented to them far greater marvels than they had hitherto seen, to prove to the Arabs that the tricks of these false prophets were mere child's play, and too simple to be the work of an envoy from heaven, and that there were no sorcerers like the French.

Houdin employed what he termed his "darling study," electricity, in some of the experiments which made up his programme before the Arabs, notably in a trick known to us as the "light and heavy chest." In this instance, a box which could be easily lifted by an ordinary person, was made to become apparently so heavy that it could not be moved; the explanation being that by the application of electro-magnetism the box would be attracted or made to stick to the platform upon which it rested, and could not be moved until the electric current was disconnected. To heighten the effect of the experiment, and imbue the Arabs with a sense of his supernatural power, Houdin laid no stress upon the fact of the box being apparently heavier, but stated that he could deprive the

most powerful Arab in his audience of his strength, and restore it to him at will. The Arab attempting to move the chest did so at first with ease, but immediately afterwards failed. Again, putting forth all his strength, he was not able to move the box, and being ignorant of the principle of electricity, naturally concluded that he had been deprived of his strength by the mighty magician. Another trial, and an electric shock produced by an inductive apparatus was conveyed to him, when, with a yell of agony, his legs gave way and he fell upon his knees. The electric current being immediately intercepted, he, full of terror, rushed through the spectators and fled, exclaiming, "Allah! Allah!" With other tricks of an equally astonishing nature, Robert Houdin struck the death blow at the Marabouts' pretended miracles, and afterwards explained to the deluded Arabs that no supernatural power was necessary to produce them, but that their production depended upon scientific principles and dexterity, and were "inspired and guided by an art called prestidigitation, in no way connected with sorcery."

So successful was Robert Houdin in his mission

that the Arabs presented him with an address, of which the following is a translation :

“Homage offered to Robert Houdin by the chiefs of the Arab tribes, after his performance given at Algiers on the 28th and 29th of October, 1856.

Glory be to God,

Who teaches us what we know not, and enables us to express the treasures of the mind by the flowers of eloquence and the signs of writing.

“Generous handed destiny has sent down from above, in the midst of lightning and thunder, like a powerful and fertilising rain, the marvel of the moment and the age, him who cultivated the surprising arts and marvellous sciences—the Sid Robert Houdin.

“Our century has seen no one comparable with him. The splendour of his talent surpasses the most brilliant productions of past ages. Our age is the more illustrious because it has possessed him.

“He has known how to stir our hearts and astonish our minds by displaying to us the surprising facts of his marvellous science. Our eyes were never before fascinated by such prodigies.

What he accomplishes cannot be described. We owe him our gratitude for all the things by which he has delighted our eyes and our minds, hence our friendship for him has sunk into our hearts like a perfumed shower, and our bosoms preciously conceal it.

“We shall in vain attempt to raise our praises to the height of his merit; we must lower our brows before him and pay him homage, so long as the benevolent shower fertilises soil, so long as the moon illuminates the night, so long as clouds come to temper the heat of the sun.

“Written by the slave of God, Ali-Ben-el-Hadji-Moussa.”

Then followed the seals and signatures of the chiefs of the tribes.

Houdin returned to France and gave some farewell performances in Marseilles, and retired into private life, thenceforth devoting himself to his favourite study, the application of electricity to mechanism, and enjoying a peaceful existence, which he had scarcely known before.

A few years after the retirement of Houdin, no

little sensation was caused in London by a series of illusions presented at the Polytechnic, under the direction of the celebrated popular scientific lecturer, Professor Pepper. The illusion which particularly claims our attention now was that known as Pepper's Ghost. Thousands flocked to see these performances, and for a long time the public continued to be mystified and perplexed. A sketch was generally presented in which several actors took part, and in which shadowy forms came and went in the most weird manner. Upon a full set stage an actor would appear to be talking to another person, and would straightway walk through the second individual or ghostly form, producing a most uncanny effect. Vapoury forms appeared and disappeared as if by magic, and there seemed no solution to the mystery. This invention was claimed by Mr. Sylvester, who was afterwards known in connection with other illusions as the "Fakir of Oulu." The secret of the ghost illusion leaked out, and, becoming known, many imitations were produced, and by arrangement with Professor Pepper, ghost shows were exhibited at several of the London

music-halls, the most successful being produced at the London Pavilion and the Canterbury. The effects are produced by throwing the reflection of a person acting as the ghost upon a sheet of plate glass, the glass being so arranged that the actor on the stage, in approaching the shadow reflected on the glass, can pass before or behind the glass at pleasure, and so apparently pass through the vapoury form, the lights being also so arranged as to make the glass quite invisible to the spectators. The illusion is now quite common, and is often met with at country fairs and exhibitions. In these cases the glass invariably covers the opening of a small stage, thrown forward at an angle towards the audience, the persons enacting the part of ghost being in a pit in front of the glass, and beneath the stage, out of sight of the audience, with a strong light thrown upon them, and the stage at the back of the glass in comparative shadow. This is, of course, only a primitive method of producing somewhat similar effects to those produced in the original illusion. An improvement upon the original ghost illusion was shortly afterwards produced and exhibited under the name of Metem-

psychosis, in which, by means of a sliding glass and the carefully arranged manipulation of lights, a lady would be seemingly changed to a gentleman, a marble statue into a living person, or, as the exhibiting professor jokingly remarked, "a basket of oranges changed without any trouble whatever into pots of marmalade," the change gradually taking place before the eyes and in full view of the audience. Although Metempsychosis was a great improvement upon the Pepper's ghost, strange to say it did not command so much attention nor cause so much real astonishment as did the startling mystery which had some years preceded it.

Mr. Sylvester, the inventor of the ghost illusion, appeared a short time afterwards at the Oxford Music-Hall under the name of the "Fakir of Oulu." He commenced his entertainment by causing his wand mysteriously to attach itself to his finger tips and to the palms and the backs of his hands, as if it were attracted there by some electro-magnetic current, which had the effect of preparing the minds of his audience for his larger trick, the suspension of a living person in mid-air, presumably by the

same means as that employed in the previous trick. Sylvester spent a large amount of time in elaborating and improving this illusion.

His medium stood upon a stool placed upon a low platform erected on the stage, and two substantial rods or props (silvered) were placed one under each arm, just above the elbows, and after a few mesmeric passes by the Fakir, the medium fell apparently into a deep mesmeric sleep. The stool was then removed, and also one of the supports, leaving the medium suspended upon the remaining rod. The Fakir made some more mesmeric passes, and the young lady rose into a horizontal position, following the movements of the Fakir's hand, and at his will returned to the perpendicular position. Also whilst apparently asleep, her head resting upon her hand, she revolved round the support, and continued to do so, even after the remaining support appeared to have been removed, for it was only a silvered shell which had been taken away, leaving a black iron core as the support, which, against the black background, was not visible to the audience, and gave the lady the appearance of sleeping in the air.

Sylvester had numerous imitators, but none of them presented the illusion as perfectly as he did, or caused so great a sensation. Sylvester left England for Australia, which he has, I believe, permanently adopted as his home. From the time of the production of Pepper's ghost there was somewhat of a lull in the conjuring world, and although it could not be said that the popularity of conjuring as a source of amusement had in any way diminished, few professors were found giving public performances for several years. Robert Houdin remarks in his memoirs that "sleight of hand" is an immense quarry, in which public curiosity can work for a long time, and so we find in the present day, the art of conjuring holding its own, and the public interest being as keen now as in the days of Houdin and the earlier magicians.

"Conjuring is a profession in which one errs by excess of modesty," and so I will ask my reader to bear with me now, whilst I unfold to him my own personal experiences in the conjuring world.

MY INTRODUCTION TO THE ART OF CONJURING.



LITTLE did I think when, in 1869, I, as one of Her Majesty's Auxiliary Forces, embarked at Dover with my companions in arms, *en route* for Brussels and Ghent, that I should, before many days, be initiated into the profession which would become the mainstay of my life and would, in a manner, be my passport into society, and a means of bring-

ing to me so many acquaintances and friends.

I might almost say that this journey was the beginning of my life. In 1867 I had been enrolled as a

volunteer in the 19th Middlesex Rifles, and in a very short time, by hard practice, managed to work my way as a shot into a place somewhere near the front of my regiment, with the result that when the visit of the Riflemen of England to Belgium, to take part in the Tir International, was arranged, I was one of the contingent. I may mention here that I was fortunate enough to carry off some of the first prizes, and to receive my medal, commemorative of the visit, at the hands of His Majesty Leopold I. Some years later I was so lucky as to "shoot" in the Queen's Sixty twice, and also twice in the St. George's Sixty at Wimbledon, for which I have the National Rifle Association badges.

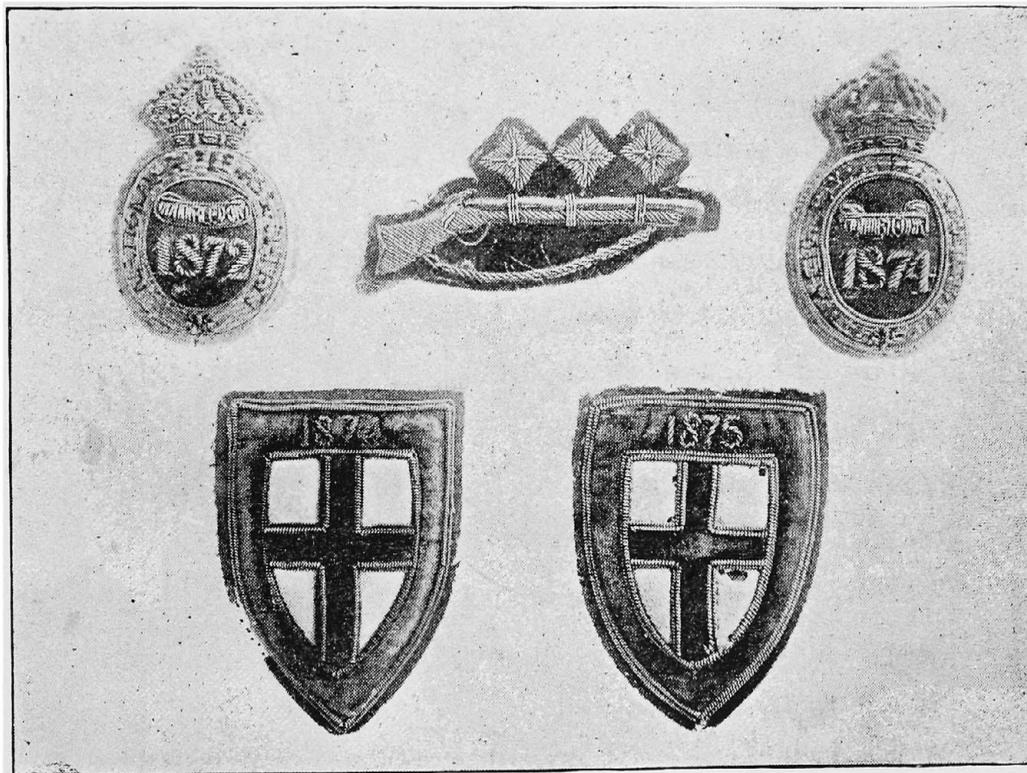
One day I went into a café in Ghent with a dear old friend of mine, named Doncaster, at the invitation of a captain of the Garde Civique, who, in the exuberance of his joy at meeting us, insisted upon our taking a bottle of champagne with him. We seated ourselves at a small table, and the champagne was duly brought; the garçon cut the string, up went the cork into the air, and it fell upon the table, whereupon our Belgium friend, taking up the cork and

making pretence to swallow it (and really I thought that he had done so) promptly, with a wry face, blew

QUEEN'S
SIXTY BADGE.

BADGE FOR BEST
SHOT IN REGIMENT.

QUEEN'S
SIXTY BADGE.



ST. GEORGE'S BADGE.

ST. GEORGE'S BADGE.

it from his nose again. The effect on me, a perfect novice, was electrical. I could not make it out at all.

I begged him to show me "how it was done," that is, as well as I could make him understand, for at that time my knowledge of French was very limited, and he could not speak English. However, he showed me how he performed the trick, and, of course, it turned out to be very simple indeed—as most tricks prove to be when the secret is out.

This little trick worried me long after we had parted with our friend, or perhaps I should say, *my friend*, for it was he who unconsciously put me in the way of earning a fairly good income—who gave me the "open sesame" to the world, and, perhaps I shall not be considered egotistical if I say, to a certain prominence and fame in my profession. I have often longed to have the opportunity of thanking him, and of showing him how the few seeds of knowledge he imparted to me have sprung up, flourished, and borne fruit. The trick haunted me so much that I practised it until I could do it fairly well. After my return to England I "sprang it" upon my astonished friends and relations, and I was continually being asked to repeat it for the benefit of any new comer. I was regarded with a certain amount of awe, simply



because I could swallow a cork. Eventually I was wearied of constantly performing the same trick, so added one or two more, simple illusions or sleight of hand feats, to my repertoire, and so drifted into being a kind of amateur wizard and conjurer.

Shortly after this time I suppose my slight reputation was noised abroad amongst those who made conjuring their profession, and I was asked one day by an old friend to give an entertainment for the benefit of some charity at the Kensington Town Hall. I consented, and found, much to my relief, that there were other ladies and gentlemen to take part in the entertainment. For some weeks I practised, and, after very elaborate preparations, went off to the hall on the appointed day with an assistant. When the time arrived for me to go on I wished very much that I was at home again. However, bracing myself up as best I could (although the thought that I had to stand there for one hour was appalling) I went on the platform. My nervousness was so pronounced that I could hardly speak; my mouth was dry, and the silence of the audience seemed dreadful to me. At last I brought my first trick to a successful conclusion

and was applauded. Oh! what a relief. How well now I know the value of that applause! Audiences do not always realise what applause means to a performer. I have heard of a well known actor who once stepped forward to the footlights, and, addressing the audience, said, "Ladies and gentlemen, if you don't applaud I can't act." How well I appreciate that remark, and how many thousand times it has come to my mind since that eventful evening!

I was truly thankful for the reception accorded to my first trick, and through the kindness of the audience brought my performance to a successful close. One or two notices duly appeared in the local papers, and, as they did not say unkind things about me, I was encouraged to practise the mystic art, and set myself to work in earnest to become proficient in a programme of two hours' duration. I purchased small articles of apparatus, I made various "props" myself, and eventually collected enough properties of every description to stock a moderate-sized shop.

I next had the pleasure of giving many entertainments for charitable institutions, hospitals, schools, etc., etc., getting, of course, many opportunities for

practice and experience, until at last I seemed able to "get hold of the audience" better and to make my tricks last longer. So far I had no idea of entering the ranks of professional conjurers, but simply practised the art as a source of amusement to myself and my friends, although I had become very proficient (at least my friends said so) in the manipulation of a pack of cards, card tricks, by the way, always having had a peculiar fascination for me, and to them I gave the greatest attention.

About this time a gentleman of title, since deceased having had the misfortune to break his leg, sent for me to go professionally to amuse him and his friends whilst he was laid up; and I was so successful in my endeavours that I went no fewer than nineteen times in nine weeks to his house, meeting and making a new set of friends upon each occasion. It was he who advised me to try to get an introduction to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales, who, he said he felt sure, would be interested in my performance.

Accordingly, one day I went down to Marlborough House, rang the bell, and inquired for His Royal Highness. I was told, of course, that I should

have to see the Equerry (the late Colonel Shadwell Clerke), and, after waiting some time, and being led from room to room, I did see him, and very courteous indeed I found him. He told me that he would mention the matter to the Prince and I prepared to leave. Just at that moment the Prince came down the corridor, and Colonel Clerke crossed over and spoke to him for a minute. The Prince passed on, and Colonel Clerke returning, told me that His Royal Highness would consider the matter.

Some weeks after this I was somewhat astonished to receive a command to appear at Marlborough House to give a performance. As I had to be there on the evening of the day I received the Royal summons, I had very little time to prepare. However, I arrived at a little before ten, and was shown into the dining-room by one of the imposing looking footmen, dressed in scarlet uniform embroidered with gold lace, and wearing a medal which I afterwards learnt was worn by all the footmen of His Royal Highness' Household. The Royal party had finished dinner and was sitting at the table smoking. I was shown to a seat next the Duke

of Teck, His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales sitting at the head of the table and two seats away from me. His Royal Highness made me quite at ease by the kind and familiar manner in which he spoke to me, though a slight accident happened to me almost immediately after I had seated myself at the table. One of the footmen poured me out, as I thought, some wine. I did not touch it for some little time, as I was listening to the Duke of Teck, and when presently I took a draught from my glass it proved to be cognac. It took my breath away, made me cough violently, and I could scarcely recover myself, but the Prince passed it off very nicely for me by saying: "What, Bertram! are they commencing tricks upon you already?" This gave me an opportunity of explaining matters and getting myself out of a rather unpleasant situation. After a time the party adjourned to the drawing-room, in which I had to perform. I was then introduced to Her Royal Highness the Princess of Wales and the Duchess of Teck. I was extremely pleased with the gracious manner of the Princess of Wales, and the way in which she tried to make me feel unembarrassed.

I will not go into details of all the tricks I performed, but simply say that they were carried out successfully, and, at the close of the performance I was congratulated by their Royal Highnesses, and the Duke of Teck came behind the screen, which was serving as my "sanctum," and expressed his astonishment at my performance, remarking good humouredly, "I do tricks myself, but I am a fool." Meaning that he was not proficient in the art. I felt sure as I left Marlborough House that I had entirely satisfied His Royal Highness, and that I should on another occasion have an opportunity of performing again. Little did I think then that since that time I should perform to the Royal household on no fewer than twenty-one occasions. I shall take an opportunity of mentioning again in another chapter several other performances which I have given professionally, and which I trust may be of interest to my readers.

The next performance of any interest which I gave as an amateur, was given on August 28th, 1882, to the late Zulu King, Cetewayo and his chiefs, at the instance of Mr. Dunn, who acted as interpreter to his Majesty. When I arrived at the house in Melbury

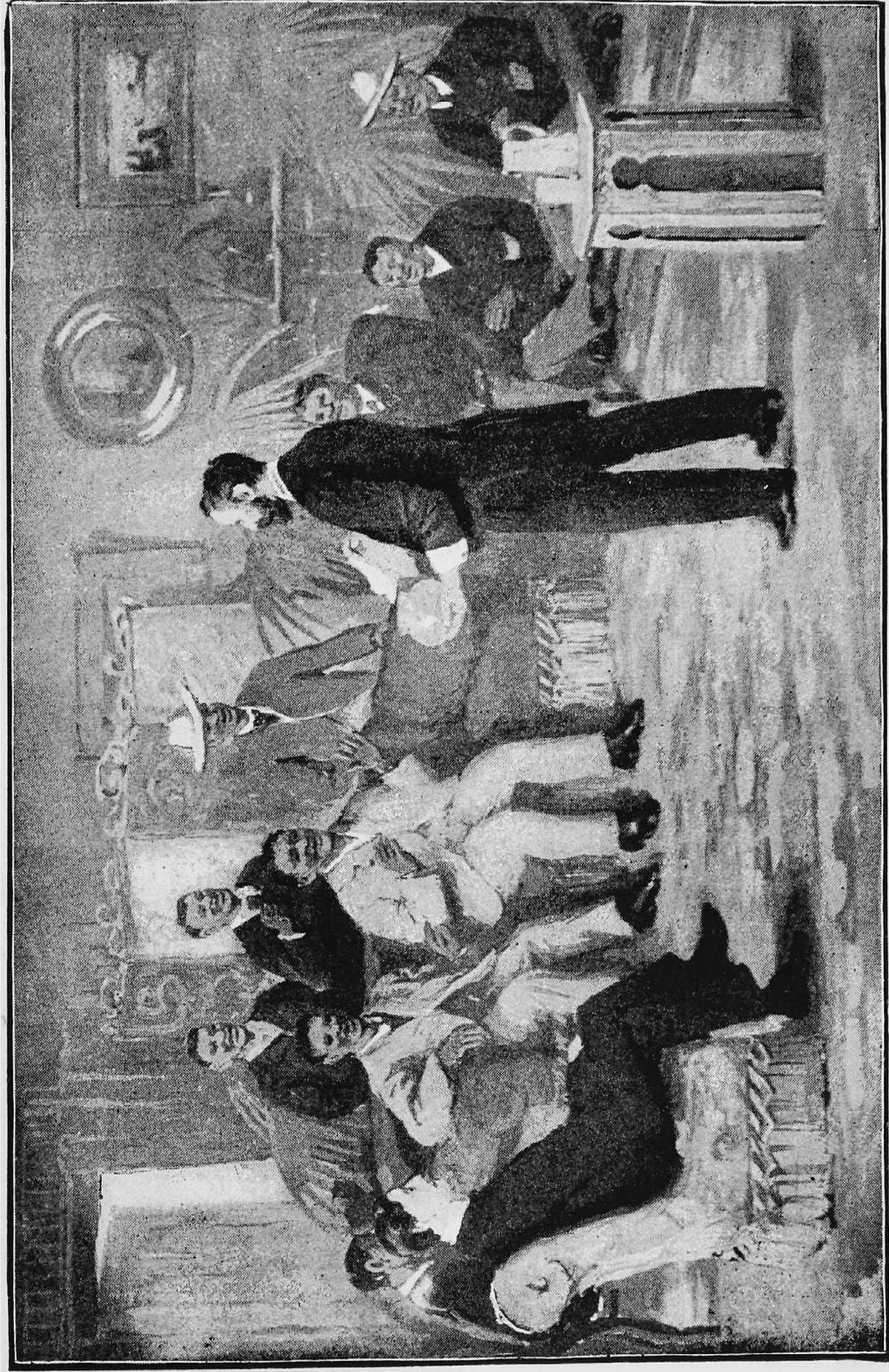
Road, Kensington, I was struck by the peculiarity of the decoration of the house, which seemed to have been furnished specially for the then inhabitants. There were high dados of a kind of straw matting running round the walls of the rooms, while the passages were similarly decorated. I was shown into a large room, and the seats were ranged in a semi-circle in front of me. I had a pianist with me, and my wife accompanied me on this occasion. All being ready, Cetewayo and his chiefs came into the room and looked very strangely at me, coming up to me as if to inspect me. Cetewayo sat in the middle, and each member of the party wore a thick ring on his head, which looked like thick iron, but I believe was made of hide, prepared in a peculiar manner. Cetewayo was a very genial and, I thought, kind looking man, but the chiefs were very disagreeable looking beings, one of them being particularly so—a man who wore a straw hat, and who I was told was the medicine man. My tricks were of the mechanical order rather than sleights of hand, as I thought these might be more suitable for the occasion. Amongst other things, in showing them the miraculous produc-

tion of gold fish, I met with an accident, which I will relate, though to do this is to let the reader into the secret of the trick. The bowls of water are covered and secreted in large pockets, specially made in the coat of the performer, and in a large bag at the back of the waistcoat. I had five ten-inch bowls secreted on me in this fashion : each full of water and containing four or five gold fish. I had, in the most approved method, produced three of these bowls of fish, to the great and childish astonishment of Cetewayo and his chiefs, and was proceeding to get the others out, when the covers of the other two bowls slipped off accidentally, and the water came pouring from me. I could do nothing but produce the bowls minus the water and fish, and then take the fish out of my pockets with my hands. I think, to the minds of the Zulus, that seemed to be even more clever than the production of the previous three bowls, inasmuch as they looked upon me as a kind of human reservoir. Another trick which astonished them greatly was the production of a number of doves. One of them flew round the room, and settled upon one of the chiefs to his intense

horror. He called in his own language to the medicine man to take it off him, and I fancy he felt himself bewitched. After many other tricks, I performed the ever familiar trick of making a pudding in a hat. This I contrived to do very well, but when I offered Cetewayo the cake, and motioned to him to eat some of it, his medicine man jumped from the floor, where he had been reclining, and with terrific gestures, absolutely forbade him to touch it.

The performance was eventually brought to a conclusion amidst expressions of greatest wonder. Cetewayo came to me and shook hands with my wife and myself, saying, through the interpreter, Mr. Dunn, that "he could find no words to express his astonishment at the wonders he had seen."

This was virtually the last of my amateur performances, and I must now explain how it was that I came to adopt conjuring as a profession. I was born in Woolwich on the 26th April, 1853, my father being an army and navy contractor. When I was quite young I assisted him in his business, and my earliest recollection is, going with my uncle to assist, in my small way, in serving the troops. Five



MY PERFORMANCE BEFORE KING CETWAYO.

o'clock in the morning would find me at the Royal Artillery and Marine barracks helping to superintend the giving out of the rations to the troops, or going round with the officer of the day inspecting the meat and forage. I used to go back in time for school where one of my school fellows, and in after years, my friend, the late Fred. Leslie, was one of the scholars. Shortly after this I was sent to college with the idea of becoming a Wesleyan minister. I pursued my studies with great enthusiasm, but, happening at this time to be struck down with typhoid fever, I had to relinquish them, and eventually the idea of becoming a parson was given up. About this time a change came over my father's affairs, and he left Woolwich to take a wine merchant's business in London. I accompanied him, and gradually developed into a wine merchant. I then had a wholesale office in the city, and, though commencing in a very small way, by working hard, managed to become fairly prosperous, and found myself the possessor of several thousands of pounds at the early age of twenty-two. But the slavery of the work and the anxiety, make those times hateful to look back upon.

In 1882 I had a dispute with a relative over business matters, the details of which it is not necessary to go into, with the result that I gave up a prosperous business, and came out of the quarrel without a penny in the world—all my hard earned money gone in “one fell swoop.” All my work since 1867 thrown away, all my savings vanished, and a wife and three children to support!

Strange to say, the relief was so great that the day on which I found myself penniless seemed to me the happiest of my life. I soon found out that while I had been engaged in an irksome business I had been unconsciously paving a way to a new life, and that what I had only taken up as a hobby was a something on which I could place a good deal of reliance, and within a week I had received quite a number of private engagements; these continued to come in with such regularity as to warrant my taking another house, and establishing another home. My life was changed. I had more time to myself, and, needless to say, I availed myself of it to study the profession I had taken up, and to perfect myself in all its mysteries. I had now opportunities of practising,

for which hitherto I had found no time. I became more skilful, and I found that by making my whereabouts known, I had often more engagements than I could fulfil.

In 1885 I fancied that I should like to make my debüt in public. To this end I approached the lessees of St. James's Hall, and was fortunate enough to secure the drawing room, which I decorated in a novel and pretty style, making it quite the beau ideal of a conjurer's drawing-room. It had no drop curtain, and had one step running along the whole length of the platform or dais which acted as a stage. I had a black servant in livery to wait upon me, and under the skilful management of my friend, Mr. Graham Lewis, I opened and gave my first performance there on March 15th, 1885.

This was to be my first appearance before a paying public, and I must say that upon this occasion my nervousness was extreme. I felt, and still feel that so much depended upon this, my first real venture, that when I look back upon that time I am hardly surprised at my anxiety. However, the room was quite full and the hour arrived.

One of the features of my programme upon this occasion was the introduction of *La Cage Volante*, or flying bird cage, in which, a cage, containing a live canary vanishes before the audience without it being hidden by any kind of covering. This, of late years, has been imitated by several professors, but with certain alterations, which do not at all enhance the value of the trick ; another feature in my performance was an *exposé* of card sharpening. These two items of the programme were especially noticed by my friends of the Press, and seemed to interest my audience exceedingly. The success of this, my first public performance, far exceeded my expectations. The succeeding performances were very well patronised by the public, and my audiences were of a very fashionable description. I stayed at the St. James's Hall, giving eight performances a week for four months, and then the County Council stepped in, and in their wisdom insisted upon a fireproof floor and ceiling being placed in the room, and so my performances there were abruptly brought to an end. During my stay at this hall I was, in a manner, rivalled by M. Verbeck, who occupied the Prince's Hall opposite,

although I do not think that we hurt each other; on the contrary, I fancy it did us both good, as the public showed a desire to see and compare the French and the English conjurers, as we were then called.

In expressing my admiration of M. Verbeck as a conjurer, I may say that I count myself among his most ardent admirers. He was an artist in all he did, he elaborated his tricks admirably, and although he was not by any means a big man he had an exceedingly commanding presence, and a peculiar power of fascinating his audiences. He had, moreover, a splendid address, and was so distinct in his elocution, that innumerable young ladies of rank patronised his entertainment as an interesting form of French lesson, which they were able to obtain whilst witnessing his clever performance. One little incident happened to me during my stay at St. James's Hall, which is perhaps worth recording. I have already mentioned that my stage was without a drop curtain, so that all stage arrangements had to be made before the audience were admitted. At the back a kind of recess was fitted as a room, and in it stood a table and a large pail of water. I was in the middle of a very

important trick, the audience were very attentive, and Miss Ruf was playing pianissimo, when there was an awful crash, a yell, and a deluge of water at the same instant, the water pouring underneath the piano and down the step from the stage to the front seats. Rushing behind, I found that my black friend, Selim, as he was called, had fallen asleep on the edge of the table and had fallen into this bucket of water. He was very sorry, he said, but the next day he disappeared, and I have never set eyes on him since; not unnaturally, since he took with him a gold and a silver watch of mine, and a silver watch and overcoat of one of the attendants. The attendant's watch was subsequently discovered at a pawnbroker's just out of Oxford Street, but Selim had anticipated the "vanishing trick" most successfully.

As I had now to leave St. James's Hall, and was unable to secure any place in London in which to continue my performances, I accepted a very flattering offer from Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke at the Egyptian Hall. My engagement lasted a little over twelve months, until their season terminated. Upon their return I rejoined the company and produced,

with the able assistance of that charming and now well known lady illusioniste, Mdlle. Patrice, for the first time in London, that startling illusion "L'escamotage en personne vivante," better known as the vanishing lady trick—the trick that gave birth to the number of subsequent illusions which have been produced, and of which I shall speak later on. In the meantime, after appearing at the Crystal Palace for a season, and at Brighton, I produced at the Alhambra, London, a series of marvellous and startling effects, known as Bertram's Diablerie or Black Magic.

Since then I have performed at Osborne, by special command of Her Majesty the Queen, and in nearly every town of any importance in the United Kingdom, coming down to the present day. Speaking generally I must admit that my professional life is a very pleasurable one; one of great interest, unbounded variety, and never ending amusement; a life I should be sorry to change for one of any trade or business whatsoever.

SOME NOTABLE PERFORMANCES.

AMONG the many performances I have given, some appear to me to be marked with a peculiar interest from the presence thereof of people of importance, or from other circumstances, which may amuse or interest the reader.

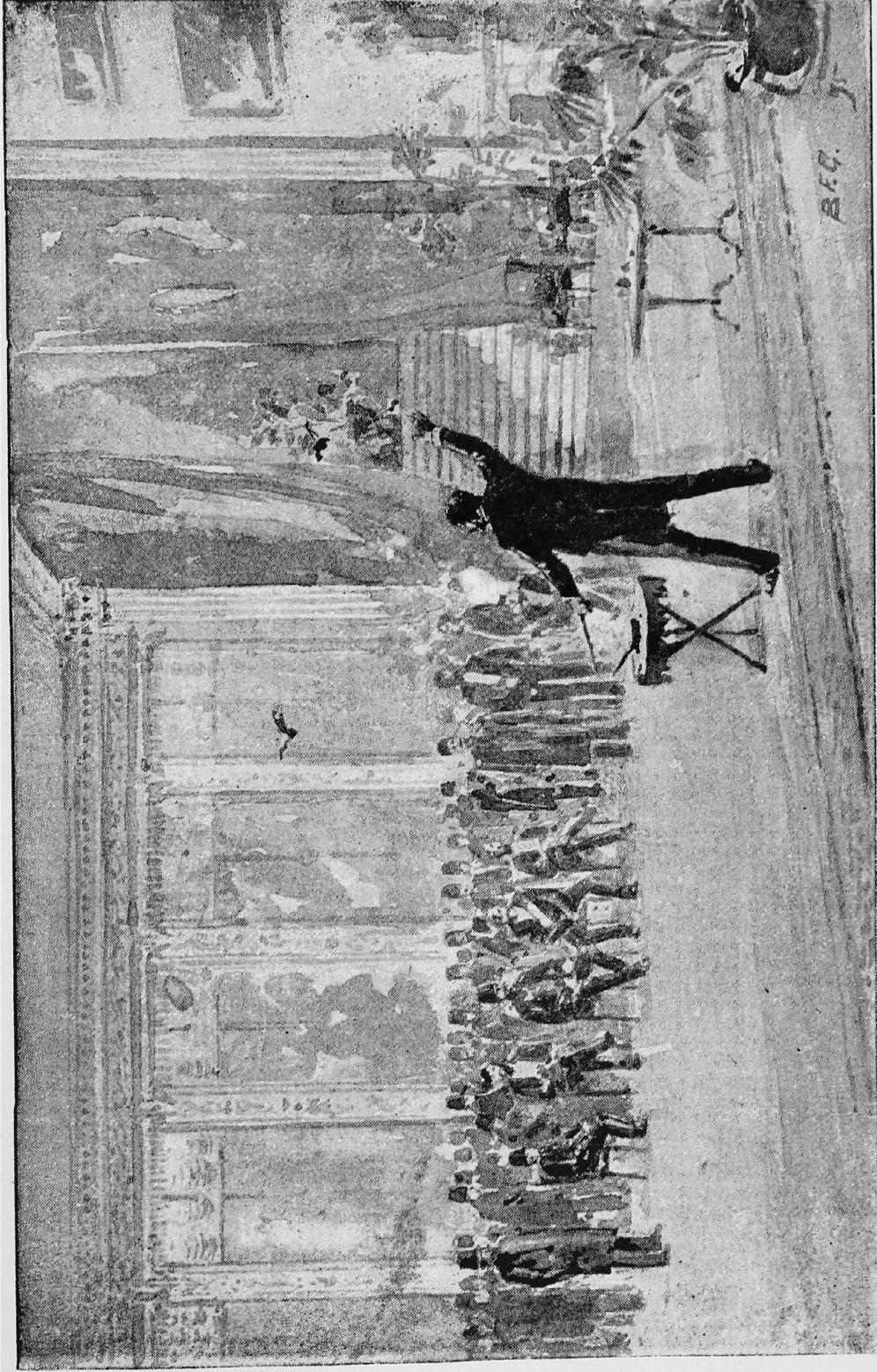
One of the most curious performances I have ever given was one which I gave as an amateur to oblige a professor of legerdemain. My friend had been engaged to appear at a little village in Surrey where a gentleman was giving an entertainment to a number of poor women from the workhouse, but for some reason my friend could not attend, and deputed me to go in his stead. I duly arrived at the house, and the giver of "the treat" interviewed me himself; drawing a little back and looking scornfully at me, he addressed me in a drawling voice: "Are you the conjurer-r-r?" I replied that unfortunately I was. Whereupon he told me to "go down that passage and his butler would give me something to eat." I felt

inclined to go home, and should have done so had I not been acting as deputy for another. However, I said I wanted nothing to eat, but would like to see the place where I was to perform. I had a large portmanteau and basket of apparatus, and this was conveyed about half a mile from the house over a series of fences to a small marquee tent in the middle of a field. In the tent was a plain deal table and a clothes horse with a sheet thrown over it to act as a screen. The man who carried the basket went away, and I was left *alone* in that wretched tent, not a soul being within earshot. As it is necessary for a conjurer to have his pockets—and I was no exception to the rule—I changed into evening dress in the tent. I had just completed my toilet when a fussy little clergyman came bustling into the tent, and inquired how long I should be in preparing. On receiving my answer he went away, and I arranged all the little things that I should require for the performance, unpacked my portmanteau, and waited. No audience appeared, and presently, a slight shower of rain having commenced to fall, I heard the distant voice

of the fussy little parson calling, "Mr. Conjuror, Mr. Conjuror!" I found him frantically waving his hands in the distance, and calling to me to come to him. Not a pleasant thing to have to walk through the wet grass and climb over fences in pumps and evening dress, to say nothing of the little secret strings, etc., which I had arranged, and which are necessary for some of a conjurer's tricks. Instead of my going to him, however, he procured an umbrella and came to me. He *only* wanted me, it appeared, to bring all the things over to another tent *nearly half a mile away*. Well, the reader may imagine I was not very well pleased, so I politely let him know that I required some assistance to do that, which, after some delay, I received. The things were removed to the other tent, and I was then inconsiderately told by the fussy little man to begin at once. All my things were disarranged and huddled "higgledy-piggledy" into a basket. I could find nothing I required, so I commenced with some card tricks, they being most handy. The audience was entirely composed of old workhouse women, and a more woe-begone audience, even for workhouse

people, I never had the misfortune to come across before or since. I had scarcely commenced when the fussy little parson stood up on a form at the back, frantically waving his wet umbrella at me, and shouting, "No cards, Mr. Conjuror-r-r, no cards!!!" Accordingly I had to start afresh. Fortunately for me the poor creatures seemed to be in happy ignorance of what I was doing, and I shuffled through as I best could with any trick which came most handy. I had been trying to be funny for about half an hour, and it was no easy matter to be funny under those circumstances, when my saviour came in the form of a splendid thunderstorm. The rain splashed down delightfully, and, striking the canvas of the marquee, came through in a fine spray. The ubiquitous little parson popped up again on to the form, and called out, "Stop now, Mr. Conjuror, stop now!" I stopped at once, and in ten minutes was on my way to the railway station.

Twelve years later I was performing in Mr. Chevalier's Recital Company in the same village. The same little parson was in the centre of the front seats, and when I appeared on the stage and caught



BEFORE HIS MAJESTY THE SHAH.

his eye, I really expected him to jump up and call out, "No cards, Mr. Conjuror, no cards!" I wonder whether he recognised me. I think he did.

On the occasion of the visit of the Shah of Persia to this country, I was engaged by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild to appear at Waddesdon Manor, before His Majesty. The preparations for the Shah's reception were extremely elaborate, and for my performance the magnificent corridor or picture gallery of Waddesdon Manor was transformed into a temporary drawing-room. The Shah was the centre figure of a brilliant company; on his left was the Duke of Cambridge, on his right the Duke of York, the late Duke of Clarence also being present. No ladies, however, appeared—unless it was that several of those in Persian male costume were ladies, as I afterwards heard was the case. I had to give my performance in French, and at the close the Shah shook hands with and congratulated me. He had, I may mention, refused to lend me his large diamond with which to perform a trick, but it was jokingly remarked by one of the comic papers that His Majesty had invested me with the "Grand Order of the

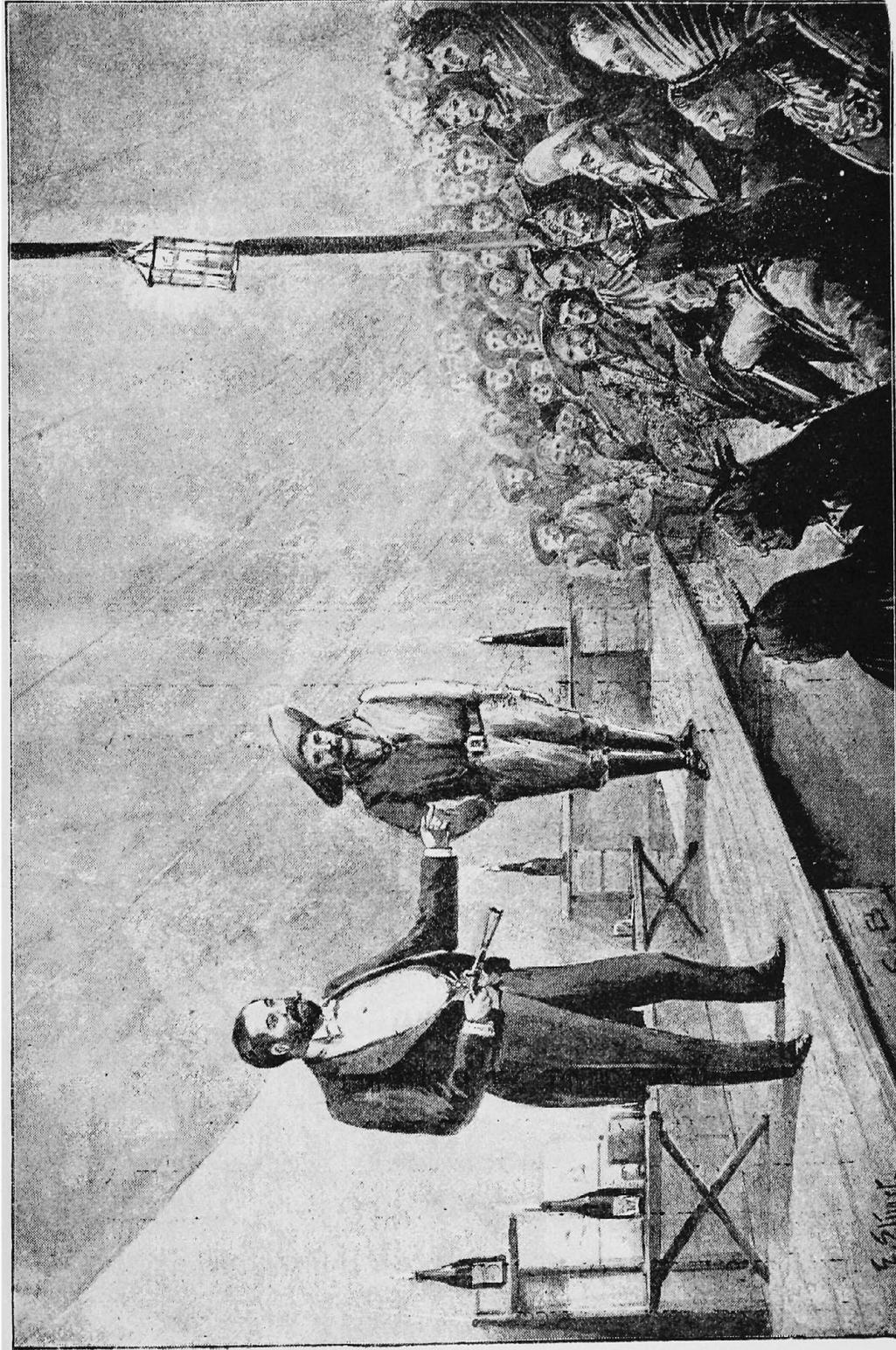
Slippery Eel," as a mark of his appreciation of the amusement I had afforded him.

I was engaged by Lord Knutsford to give a performance to try and astonish the Matabele Warriors, who were then visiting this country. During the course of my performance their astonishment seemed unbounded, and their childish glee and wonder when I shook innumerable half-crowns from them, picked them from their hair, and allowed them to take handfuls from their own pockets (they wore clothes) was indeed great. The exhibition of the phonograph also struck them with wonder and awe. Some of them looked and felt under the table to discover, if they could, from whence the sound came; while others closely watched their chief (who had previously been induced to sing a kind of war song into the machine) to see that he was not speaking when the sounds came from the instrument. Whilst upon the subject of the "noble savage," I might add a word anent a performance given by me to the Indians of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show. During a chat one day with Major Burke at the American Exhibition, he asked me, as a kind of treat to the Indians, to give

them "a show." I was delighted at his proposal and consented. At the finish of their performance one evening, one or two of my particular friends and myself adjourned to the Indians' mess tent. There a strange and weird scene presented itself, one that could not have been more primitive even on the prairies or in the homes of the Indians themselves. I give a rough sketch (by myself) of the scene, and trust that the reader will forgive my attempt at art, in his knowledge that I am only trying to make my description more intelligible.

No preparations whatever were made except that two or three empty orange boxes were arranged, on each of which was placed an empty champagne bottle with a candle inserted in its neck. These stood upon a very rickety wooden platform, lighted by a lantern which had been borrowed from somewhere at the last moment, and tied to the tent pole. On the platform the band of the cowboys was ready to play any accompaniment to my tricks which I might need, and one of the cowboys acted as my interpreter. In the front rank was seated Mr. John Nelson, the original driver of the Deadwood coach, and

beside him sat Red Shirt, the chief. Colonel Cody, through an unavoidable appointment made some time previously, was unable to be present. A truly wonderful sight the Indians presented with their heads wrapped in their blankets, as they sat silently and solemnly waiting for the performance to begin. Their applause consisted only of a series of approving grunts, and they gave no sign whatever of surprise. They simply looked quietly on and grunted their appreciation. During the performance of a trick upon "Old Nelson" as they called him, I pointed a pistol at him and asked him if he objected to my shooting at him. He grimly replied, "No! I've often been shot at," as I suppose he had been whilst on his celebrated coach; but he was rather surprised to find that when I did "pull on him" my bullet had fixed the knave of spades on the breast of his shirt. I was thanked most cordially by a deputation of the Indians after the show, and was told by the cowboy interpreter that I was henceforth to be known amongst the Indians themselves as the "Black Bearded Medicine Man with the Tricky Fingers." One of the cowboys remarked with refer-



“NO! I’VE OFTEN BEEN SHOT AT BEFORE.”

ence to my card tricks that "if I would go away with him and do as he told me, we should own Mexico in a week."

I was pleased when one day I received an invitation from Mr. William Woodhall to attend one of his charming "Sandwich Soirees," which he was giving at Queen Anne Mansions, St. James's Park. It seemed as if everyone of importance then in London was present, including Mr. Gladstone, who, I was specially delighted to hear from his son, Mr. Herbert Gladstone, had expressed a wish to see me perform. In the course of the programme M. Verbeck was called upon, and a splendidly artistic performance he gave. When Verbeck had finished and another item or two had been got through, Mr. Gladstone did me the honour of asking for me. Verbeck had quite unconsciously left me very little to do. However, Mr. Woodhall supplied me with a *new pack* of cards which I gave to Mr. Gladstone to open, asking him to select one, to mark, and return it to the pack. Unknowingly I made a great hit by desiring Mr. Gladstone to concentrate his thoughts upon the name of the card he had chosen, and *dismiss*

every other thought from his mind! The utter ridiculousness of asking Mr. Gladstone to dismiss every other thought from his mind at the time of the siege of Khartoum seemed to amuse the audience considerably. Eventually, I told Mr. Gladstone the name of the card, which was found in his pocket. His astonishment was very great indeed, and the success of my part of the evening's programme was from that moment assured. I performed one or two tricks only, but they were all effective. Mr. Gladstone asked me to send him a photograph, which I did, he sending me a letter of thanks for it, in which he designates it as a "souvenir of a very pleasant evening."

On the 26th November, 1884, when I was just commencing my professional career, I received my second command to appear before His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales at Sandringham. I had only the shortest possible notice, in fact I received it at one o'clock on the day in question, and I had to leave by the five o'clock train from Liverpool Street. I hastily got a "show" together, and drove about in a cab for the rest of the articles I needed—flowers, bouquets,



MR. GLADSTONE WATCHING BERTRAM.

etc.—and finally got into Holborn on my way to the station. I had about twenty-five minutes to get from the General Post Office to the station, but just as the cab turned into Cheapside the horse slipped and fell, and out I went, receiving a nasty blow, and the box of tricks, flowers, and the rest of my impedimenta strewn over the road. I gathered up my things as quickly as possible, and placed them upon the step of an omnibus, in which I rode some distance until I was able to get another cab, by which time I had wasted nearly a quarter of an hour. I offered the cabman a fabulous fare to get me to the station in time, and he would have done it easily had he not managed to get blocked by the traffic in Broad Street. I reached the station just in time to see the last train to Sandringham (Wolferton) go out. What was to be done? I was due at ten o'clock, and I knew the Prince to be a great stickler for punctuality. I went to the station master, who told me there was no other train. I inquired the price of a "special" (I think it came to £29 17s. 6d.) and was told it would be ready in a quarter of an hour after I gave the order for it. I left my luggage in the cloak-room and went out

into the City to borrow sufficient money to pay for the train; came back and desired the station master to have the special prepared. I started at, I think, a quarter to seven, having wired His Royal Highness of my accident. To prevent delay upon my arrival I took the precaution of dressing in the train, and of preparing for my performance by placing the various little things and bits of apparatus in order. I eventually reached Wolferton, where a closed carriage and pair were waiting for me, and arrived at Sandringham at ten minutes to ten o'clock. His Royal Highness had left orders that he desired me to come to him the moment I arrived, which I did, and found him rather annoyed; but he was greatly surprised to find me already dressed, and more surprised to know that I could commence at once. The performance took place in the ball-room, there being present about 300 of the gentry and tenantry, besides the Royal party. It was an exceedingly lucky thing for me that I was thus enabled to carry out His Royal Highness's command.

At ten o'clock precisely the National Anthem was slowly played, whilst the Royal party walked up the

centre of the hall and took their seats in the front row. I had the pleasure of performing without a break until ten minutes past twelve o'clock, receiving the congratulations of their Royal Highnesses. I slept at Sandringham that night, and next morning received a handsome present and some game from His Royal Highness, and returned to town, but not in a special train.

I have always thought that I gained a deal of *kudos* from this performance, as it proved that I would not, if I could help it, disappoint, and could be relied upon to arrive either by "hook or by crook."

PEOPLE WHOM I HAVE MET.

My professional wanderings have given me the opportunity of meeting and coming into contact with an enormous number of people of all grades of society. I have, for instance, performed, in the course of the same evening, before the sandwich-board men of London and at Marlborough House. Food for reflection, indeed! I hold it a mighty privilege to have been permitted to be the possessor of the "open sesame" to such contrasts as these, and I thank my Creator for having given me the power to be able to entertain and cause enjoyment to prince and peasant alike. The earliest introduction I remember having had to any person of note, was to the late Sir David Salomons. Shortly after this I remember having the pleasure of being introduced to and shaking hands with Garibaldi. I have performed before all the Royal family on many occasions, the late Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Germany, the Shah of Persia,

Prince Bismarck, the Chinese Embassy, the German Embassy, the late Mr. Waddington, the President of the Argentine Republic, General Boulanger, the Sultan of Johore, the Gaekwar and Princes of Baroda, and many Indian Princes and Maharajahs. I may pass over this portion of my book by saying that there is scarcely a person of any note with whom I have not become, in some slight measure, associated. Sir Henry Irving has, more than once, generously "assisted" me to deceive the audience. Mr. J. L. Toole has also assisted me, and once, amid roars of laughter, fearlessly declared when I asked him if he ever found more than four aces in a pack that he *always* played with seven. Others whom I may mention, who have acted as assistants to me, are Mr. W. S. Gilbert, Mr. John Hare, Mr. Charles Wyndham, Mr. Lionel Brough, Sir Arthur Sullivan, M. Alma Tadema, Sir Edward Burne-Jones, Sir John Millais, Madame Christine Nilsson, Madame Albani, Madame Nordica, that prince of pianistes—Paderewski, to whom I am indebted, not only for acting as an "assistant," but for many introductions, and Madame Yvette Guilbert, who, in a charming manner took

many precautions that I should not "deceive" her, and yet *was* "deceived." I had the pleasure of giving instruction in the "mystic art" to my old friend and schoolfellow, the late Fred Leslie, and a very apt pupil I found him. In a comic opera entitled the "Grand Mogul," he and Arthur Roberts were representing two itinerant quacks, and were, I believe, supposed to be in a strange country as professors of dentistry. Finding dentistry did not pay, and that the natives were so "disgustingly healthy," they called upon the populace to walk up and see "The charmer of serpents in a booth close by," (Miss Florence St. John) and as a preface to the wonders that they had to show "did a little bit of hanky-panky" outside. A screamingly funny pair of conjurers they were too, and how pleased poor Leslie would be if I "put him up" to a new bit, and he was able to "spring it" upon Arthur Roberts unawares. The cleverness with which Arthur in turn would play up to it in order to convert it into some use for himself could only be appreciated by those who had the opportunity of knowing what the difficulties were. Well do I remember also some of the older actors, Phelps

Barry Sullivan, Fechter, Charles Mathews, Sothern, Buckstone, and many others with whom I was personally acquainted, and my youthful delight at their performances many years since; the clever Vokes family, with whom I was also on terms of friendship; my early struggles for a front seat in the pit of "old Drury," and my delights at seeing my first pantomime, with Master Percy Roselle as Hop-o'-my-Thumb. I was always strangely fascinated with everything appertaining to a "show," and I have often remembered a remark of my father's, "that boy will never be satisfied until he is a clown at Astley's." I suppose, in a measure, his prophecy has come true, for am I not a "Society Clown," as that clever and inimitable actor, Mr. George Grossmith, calls himself?

A great many years ago I carried out this desire of mine "to make an appearance," and was fairly successful in some amateur theatricals at St. George's Hall, Langham Place. Perhaps here it would not be out of place to speak of the first conjuring performance I ever saw. I think it must have been about 1865 when I came first to reside in London. A schoolmaster of mine at Woolwich obtained the permission of my

parents to take me to London to see a then celebrated conjurer or magician. Not a "a prestidigitateur" as he would now be styled, but a real magician, none other than the celebrated "Wizard of the North," Professor Anderson. I well remember that I was seated in the front of the balcony of the large St. James's Hall, near the stage, waiting for the curtain to go up, and how filled I was with anxiety and wonderment at the novelty of the scene, the lights, and the starry ceiling. After some music at length the curtain was drawn, and there appeared on the stage hundreds of lights, and the silver and gilded paraphernalia of the Wizard, as well as two wonderfully clothed and gorgeous footmen, standing at the back, who bowed low when the Wizard entered. I had never seen anything like it in my life, nor have I ever seen anything like it since. I believe the first trick he performed was with a "cauldron" hung from a tripod into which, under his directions, was poured pail after pail of water. In my childish wonder I could not conceive how it was that the cauldron never became full. After placing the lid on the cauldron, making a (red) fire underneath and marching about it in

a mystic manner which seemed to lend an air of enchantment to the scene, he fired a pistol with a very loud report, removed the lid, and out flew a dozen or more pigeons. The audience burst into loud applause, and I was dumbfounded with amazement, the same wonder coming to me again even as I write these lines. Little did I imagine that I should, in after years, perform upon that identical stage and walk those same boards, as a kind of devotee of that "man of mystery." The never ending wonders that he performed, the hundreds of glasses of wine which he filled from an "inexhaustible bottle," any kind which was asked for by the audience being immediately supplied, were to me inexplicable. Amongst others he performed the great gun trick, the trick which really made him, as I have since learned, and spoken of in a previous chapter. The gun was loaded with a marked bullet, and was fired at him by one of the audience, when lo! the bullet was caught by the wizard on a china plate, and the next bullet with a lady's handkerchief. How could such things be? That was what troubled my youthful mind. Then the second sight performance with his daughters was

even more marvellous still. I fear that towards the end of his performance my mind was so confused with the seeming miracles I had seen, that I am unable to remember all the items of his programme. But these which I have quoted are vividly impressed upon me, as well as the brilliancy of the whole scene and the surroundings. I have had opportunities, on many occasions, of witnessing conjuring performances in England and on the Continent, but I never have seen any performance so brilliant, or any stage so lavishly fitted as that of the Wizard. His performance was a purely mechanical one, and the apparatus he used most costly. It has often occurred to me that a performance given by a modern professor upon exactly the same lines, with all the old appliances, all the mystic apparatus, and all the gorgeous tinsel for effect, would be exceedingly interesting to the new generation, and perhaps would mystify and perplex them in exactly the same way as I was astonished myself. But since that time fashions have changed, and there seems to be a new school of conjuring sprung into vogue, namely, that of pure sleight of hand, and with it a new generation of conjurers. I have the pleasure

of the acquaintance and friendship of many of the present English professors of sleight of hand, foremost amongst whom I can number my friends, Mr. James Stuart and Mr. David Devant, Mr. Arthur Strode, M. Henri de Manche, and my old and esteemed friend, Mr. Sidney Pridmore, all of them excellent conjurers in their respective lines. By way of conclusion to this chapter I should like my reader to make the acquaintance through my introduction, of a gentleman I had the pleasure of meeting some years since, and who has already been referred to in an excellent treatise upon conjuring, edited by the well known author, Professor Hoffman. I refer to M. Charlier, an expert in the mystic art, who has made card tricks his speciality. I should like to give my reader a picture of this extraordinary man, but fear that my ability in word painting will convey a very inadequate idea of his mysterious personality.

He came to my house one day about fourteen years ago, and introduced himself to me, saying that he had heard that I took some interest in conjuring, and that he would like to make my acquaintance. He was an old man. From his appearance he might have been

anything between seventy and ninety. He had a thin, clean shaven face, of parchment-like appearance, full of wrinkles; thin; long hair, grey and unkempt; a mouth firmly closed; long, thin, Jewish type of nose; and small piercing eyes. He wore an old tall silk hat; black and rather seedy-looking clothes (they were a size too large for him, except the trousers, which, though baggy, were too short), and shoes which showed a little of his scrupulously white stocking above their uppers; a clean, but cuffless shirt, loose, which showed his long thin arm, terminating in long, thin, very supple fingers, and he generally wore a black tie. He had been a tall man, I should say, perhaps six feet in height, but his shoulders were slightly bent with age. He walked with a very firm step, and very quickly, always carrying with him a small black bag. He spoke nine or ten languages fluently, including English, was very distinct in his pronunciation, biting off his words, as it were, sharply and crisply. His manner was exceedingly polite and gentlemanly, and if he was quick to rebuke a familiarity, was equally quick to pardon or accept an apology, very aristocratic in his bearing, but having at times somewhat of the style

of an autocrat. At the same time he was gentle, very deferential to ladies, always full of well turned compliments and very insinuating in his manner. His general greeting consisted in raising his hat, bowing profoundly, and saying, while he lifted two fingers, "I give you my blessing," or sometimes, "I will denounce you before the cardinal." This he followed up with a smile or some jocular yet appropriate remark.

This was the man who stood before me for the first time. I could hardly make up my mind what he was. He seemed to be anxious to know me and to do something for me, but why I could not discover. I had never seen him before, and yet he seemed to take a strong liking to me. Day after day I saw him, appointment after appointment he would make with no special object, and though his constant hints were most valuable to me, he would never accept any monetary favour; but, on the contrary, always brought my wife some trifling little present, a monogram sketched by himself, or a tiny sachet also made by himself, and which he handed to her, with a long earnest speech, generally attributing to these little

gifts some potent or mysterious property, and so impressing these facts upon her that oftentimes she was quite frightened even to look at or handle them. He was a mystery, a most wonderful being, a man who commanded the most profound respect from every one. Hour after hour he would sit with me, showing me his card tricks, playing *ecarté* with me, but never for any stakes, showing me the methods used by the "greco" in cheating, and always inviting me to try to detect him. This in time, I could occasionally do, and after a while, I could make almost every pass that he could. Occasionally he would dine or sup with me, but, beyond that, nothing. If I offered him anything (for I felt sure that he was needy) he would look disdainfully at me, and would leave me without a word. I often asked him for a photograph, but he told me over and over again that he never had a picture painted or a photograph taken in his life. Several times, when he caught me in the act of taking a sketch of him, he would become irritated beyond measure, and I would have to desist. I think, however, that I could give a very good idea of his appearance from memory.

One day, after we had been chatting and comparing

notes for a time he rose from his seat, held my head between his hands and kissed me twice on the forehead, exclaiming, with his eyes streaming with tears,



CHARLIER AS I KNEW HIM.

“Beelzebub, Beelzebub,” and went away without another word. I did not see him again for a week, after which time he came back, and I suppose for about five years was more or less a visitor at my house,

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but always on the same kind of footing, never wanting anything, never permitting any favour other than the ordinary politeness which would be shown to a visitor, but always exhibiting the deepest interest in myself. When the Cleopatra Needle was in position, and ready to be turned upon the Thames Embankment, he told me he had obtained permission to deposit a packet in the receptacle constructed for preserving records, and that he had placed there my photograph, and a record on parchment of our connection with each other, etc. As to whether this was true or not I have only his word, but I believe him to have been too much of a gentleman to have descended to a wilful falsehood. He seemed to take a special pride in this, and I am constrained to believe him. And now for the sequel to all this. One day an old friend of mine and a great friend of Charlier's, came to me and told me that Charlier's landlady had not been able to get into his room, and that as he (Charlier) had not been seen for some days, had fetched assistance and had his door broken open, when Charlier was found lying on his bed, dead. I told him I could scarcely believe it, and that I felt sure he would have sent for me had he

been in trouble or want. He replied that it was perfectly true, that the little furniture and his clothes had been sold, and that he had been buried. About three months after this when calling upon my old friend Doncaster, whom I have previously mentioned, he said to me, "Did you not tell me that Charlier was dead?" "Certainly," I replied. "No," he said, "he is not. He came in here yesterday afternoon, and said he was going to Naples to be married." That is the last I have heard of Charlier. I have never set eyes upon him since, and I am still in doubt whether he died or married—a remarkable exit for a truly mysterious man. Of the many things I had an opportunity of learning from him and of the artifices he showed me, I shall take an opportunity of speaking in another chapter. In the conjuring world I have met comparatively few professors of legerdemain, other than those already mentioned, although I had the good fortune once to witness a performance by the elder Herman, since deceased, in Paris. He was, to my mind, the *beau ideal* of what a conjurer should be. His graceful style and perfectly polished manners, together with

his remarkable powers of manipulation, stamped him as the Prince of conjurers. I afterwards saw Brunet, a Parisian professor, but his performance was of the mechanical and "false bottom" school, and although he had a mysterious method of presenting his illusions, he did not seem to take great interest in their production. The younger Herman, now in America, I saw upon one occasion only. He had something of the manner of the elder Herman, and his style was extremely brilliant. Festa, a very clever French conjurer, the younger Frikel, whose style savoured too much of the firework and spasmodic order to be impressive or graceful, that Prince of illusionists, Buatier de Kolta, whom I much admire, and whose quiet, grave, mysterious, and deliberate method in all his movements lend an air of mystery to his performances (a method, by the bye, very difficult to acquire, and requiring great nerve and self possession), are amongst the other conjurers whom I have seen. Dr. Lynn was another conjurer who made a great success in London when he first commenced his series of performances. He had a remarkable method of elaborating, or of spinning out

a trick, and, by his amusing patter, so attracted the attention of the audience, that he rarely failed to deceive them. He would then show them "How it's done," and his explanation was generally more intricate than the trick itself. I must own that I strongly dislike his method of "scoring off" any of the audience who volunteer to assist him. This, I admit, is legitimate, so long as it is confined to the deceptive portion of the trick, but to place a person in an embarrassing position and, in vulgar phrase, "make a fool of him" before an audience, is exceedingly and obviously objectionable. One of the most painstaking performers, whose séances I have had the pleasure of witnessing, whose wonderful performances have been given all over the world, and are always watched with great interest, is Hartz. His performances are entirely unlike those of any other conjurer I have seen. His forte seemed to lie among wonderful "productions," and, I must say, some of them are truly marvellous, and illustrations of what may be accomplished in the "mystic line" by forethought, patience, and careful preparation. His method, in one of these production tricks, was

generally to commence without anything on the stage, excepting perhaps two chairs. He would then build upon the stage a table made of a sheet of glass, standing upon a slight frame of nicked brass, and then request the loan of a hat from one of the members of the audience. He would immediately proceed to take from it innumerable silk handkerchiefs, a wig, hundreds of tin cups, a dozen coloured glasses, a dozen champagne bottles, a dozen reticules, cigar boxes, lighted lanterns, several large bird cages, each one far larger in appearance than the hat itself, and a large sheet, which he would spread on the floor, and on which he would shake out enough feathers to make a good sized bed, then cannon balls and a talking baby. Leaving the hat carelessly on the glass table, he would busy himself with his already crowded and littered stage, when, behold! a large skull would slowly rise, apparently unassisted, from the hat. Removing this he would then shake out hundreds, nay thousands, of cards, until the stage would be perfectly covered with these innumerable articles. His was indeed, an "Inexhaustible Hat." This trick would take up the better part of an hour to

perform, and could be produced only by elaborate preparations beforehand, and an infinite amount of patience.

Another painstaking conjurer of the more modern order with whom I am acquainted is M. Servais de Roy. He is extremely dexterous, and an artist to his "finger tips," a man who takes great interest in his art, and displays an amount of patience which serves him in good stead in his performances. There is not a shadow of a doubt but that "work will tell," and hence the amount of success he has attained. Amongst the ranks of modern conjurers, contemporaneous with myself, are Charles Morrith, Carl Hertz, M. Louis Blanc, Dr. Byrd Page, Guibal, Bosco, and Herrman. Cynics might say that they have ever had just a slight leaning towards deceit, but I think it is only during the last ten years that ladies have, with any success, attempted to practise the art of deception in public as conjureses. One or two have, during this period, certainly earned considerable fame. *Facile princeps* amongst these ladies is Mdlle. Patrice (Mrs. Lang Neil), whose graceful dexterity in sleight of hand, aided by a charmingly

ingenuous stage presence, makes her experiments as difficult of detection as those of any conjurer I know. This lady has had the honour of performing on several occasions at Sandringham before T.R.H. the Prince and Princess of Wales. Her success is phenomenal, as good conjuring requires qualities very seldom indeed found in a woman, and she may perhaps be taken as the exception which proves the rule that ladies do not make good *prestidigitateuses*.

Amongst other lady illusionists are Madame Card, Okita, and Madame Nicolo. I fear that the number of persons whom I have been obliged to mention has extended this chapter beyond the length I had intended to devote to it, but as new conjurers spring up from day to day, it is necessary, in order to give a complete record, at least to mention their names, and this must be my excuse to my reader.

PUBLIC PERFORMANCES.

I HAVE already mentioned that at the conclusion of my season at St. James's Hall, I received an offer from Messrs. Maskelyne & Cooke, of the Egyptian Hall, Piccadilly, to give my performances at their "Home of Mystery," in conjunction with themselves, and I commenced my season with them in December, 1885. Mr. Maskelyne did his utmost, in the most unselfish manner, to make my performances a success. Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke's performance is of an illusionist character, and the perfection with which Mr. Maskelyne places his deceptions before the public is marvellous. He has his own workshop; and, as he is an exceedingly clever mechanician, he makes nearly the whole of the apparatus which he uses on the stage himself. Since my first season with this very clever and ingenious gentleman, he has been aided by his son, Mr. Nevil Maskelyne, who, besides assisting in the production of the various illusions, takes part in

the dramatic portion of the production. The illusions being generally presented in the form of sketches, Mr. Nevil Maskelyne has had an opportunity of proving his ability as an actor, and the manner in which he portrays the characters he assumes, stamps him as a comedian of no small ability. Mr. Maskelyne's stage is perfectly isolated from any access except through the "flies," and even then the only method of getting to the stage from the back of the scenes is by a ladder descending to the stage from a small door in the "flies." This precaution is a wise and very necessary one, as it is impossible to keep "too secret" the ingenious ways and means by which the various illusions are produced. The many illusions produced by Mr. Maskelyne would require a far greater space to detail than that which can be spared in these pages, but notably amongst them we find his clever *exposes* of spiritualism, together with the wonderful "cabinet" illusion, produced in the evergreen sketch, "Will, the Witch and the Watch." The wonderful "transformations" effected through the medium of this cabinet must be seen to be believed, and the manner in which Mr. Maskelyne suddenly "migrates" from

the cabinet to the gallery of this pretty little theatre is most bewildering. His wonderful automaton figure "Psycho" also created great interest and curiosity for a number of years. A small figure, seated on a box, "perfectly isolated" from the stage by a cylinder of glass, played cards, as if it were truly endowed with life. The figure's intelligence was positively alarming, and, to the uninitiated, remains a mystery to this day. None the less clever was his sketching automaton "Zoe," in the same isolated position. This figure of a lady, life size, but not by any means "life weight" (as is evidenced by Mr. Maskelyne carrying the "young lady" down to his audience) when replaced upon her pedestal, which no proper young lady should ever leave, immediately commences to sketch the portrait of any celebrity of the day, producing an excellent likeness. This figure is the acme of ingenuity, and reflects upon Mr. Maskelyne an enormous amount of credit for the patience and mechanical knowledge displayed in its construction.

Mr. Maskelyne, being also an excellent musician, no astonishment can be expressed at his having

utilised music as a means of presenting an illusion to his patrons. He actually succeeded in constructing an automatic orchestra, and so perfectly did he cause these figures to seemingly perform upon the instruments allotted to them, that at one time it looked as if professional instrumentalists would have to look to their laurels, that they would wake up one morning, and find, like "Othello," their occupation gone. "The Temptation of St. Anthony" was another of his marvellous sketches, followed by "Arcadia," "Mr. Daffodil Downey's Spiritualistic Séance." "Elixir Vitæ," an effective illusion in which Mr. Maskelyne personates most admirably a very avaricious doctor, and cuts off the head of a country bumpkin, Mr. Cooke, ostensibly as the means of curing him of a "buzzing in the yed," but in reality to rob him of the money he is supposed to have in his possession. Mr. Cooke's impersonation of the country bumpkin, together with his dialect and the manner in which he carried out his part of the little drama, was perfect.

My association with Messrs. Maskelyne & Cooke extended until June, 1886, and on August 16th of the same year I had the pleasure of introducing, under

Mr. Maskelyne's auspices, that wonderful illusion and invention of M. Buatier de Kolta, "L'Escamotage en Personne Vivante," or "The Vanishing Lady" trick. As this illusion is one which I think I can safely say is considered by every known professor of the magic art to be the most perfect and most startling stage trick which has ever been produced, I anticipate the desire of my reader, and enter into the details of the production of this trick at the Egyptian Hall. A full *exposé* of the illusion will be given in another chapter. I was assisted in the illusion by Mdlle. Patrice, a very beautiful young lady, tall and fair. And so that my reader may fully appreciate the value of the illusion, I may perhaps be allowed to mention that she weighed a little over nine stone—so that she was not by any means *petite*—a fact which greatly enhanced the effect of her disappearance. The illusion was arranged as follows:—The stage was clear of any furniture, though the scene used represented a drawing-room interior. The stage in front was sixteen feet in width, and from the foot lights to the back cloth was fifteen feet. On the centre of the stage, which was covered with

oil cloth, an open copy of the *Times* newspaper was laid perfectly flat. Upon this was placed a chair made with a cane seat and back. Mdlle. Patrice was now introduced to the audience, and looked perfectly charming in a long white silk Grecian costume, trimmed with gold lace, and with a long yellow silk cloak hanging from her shoulders. Upon seating herself in the chair I informed her that I had the power to cause her to disappear, and that I could send her unseen to any place which it pleased her to name. She desired to go to "Arcadia," which was construed into meaning the (Burlington) "Arcade here" opposite, from which she could quickly return. Giving her a little bottle to smell "containing a potent liquid," she fell into an apparently deep sleep, with her head drooping gracefully on one side. I then produced a large red silk shawl, seven feet square, which was given for examination to the audience. This was lightly placed over her head and tied at the back, and then was lightly drawn downwards, so as to completely envelope her. I walked round the chair, and after again showing that she was still underneath the veil, I stood for a moment by the

side of the chair. I touched the veil lightly with both hands, whereupon it disappeared, as had the lady also, nothing being left except her dainty lace handkerchief upon the seat of the chair. Looking round the theatre I inquired, "Where are you?" "Here!" she exclaimed, and there she was, seated in the gallery beside some astonished person, absolutely ignorant of her presence, and oftentimes greatly frightened at her being there. She then quickly made her way to the stage, and there received the thunders of applause, which were continuously bestowed upon our joint efforts. Of course, hundreds of imitators sprung up. No place of entertainment was complete without its vanishing lady, but as the trick was never complete without the veil being made to vanish, the illusions which were attempted elsewhere lost all their significance, and eventually "wore out" what was a most startling and marvellous feat. The principal features in my production were the "mise en scene," the putting of the lady to sleep, the admirable acting of Mdlle. Patrice, and finally the vanishing of the veil simultaneously with the lady's disappearance, all of which caused an especial interest

to the audience, and made our performance stand out in contrast to all imitations. As an example of our press notices I may quote the *Morning Post* of August 7th, 1887, whose account of the illusion was as follows :—

“Then comes the great event of the evening, *L'Escamotage en Personne Vivante*. Mr. Bertram takes a large newspaper, which he unfolds in the centre of the stage, to cut off any communication with any possible trap door. On this newspaper he places a chair. In the chair he places a young lady, who crosses her hands in her lap over her lace handkerchief. After she has apparently been rendered insensible by inhalation, Mr. Bertram produces an enormous black silk handkerchief, about five feet wide by seven feet long. This he brings down to the audience to show that it is not in any way prepared, and the spectators can see that the silken stuff is thin enough to be translucent. With this flimsy shawl Mr. Bertram completely covers the young lady, carefully adjusting it to the floor, and as carefully tying it behind her head. When all has been done regularly and in order, and there is only to be seen the figure

of the young lady as she sits in the chair enshrouded in the black veil, Mr. Bertram suddenly snatches away the silken shawl, which disappears from his hands at once. The young lady has vanished, the chair stands there empty, save that there remains on the seat the lace handkerchief she had held in her fingers; it has fallen from the touch of a vanished hand. Amid the applause which this strange disappearance calls forth, Mr. Bertram steps to the door at the side of the stage and leads on again the young lady who *vient de disparaître*.

“It is announced that the illusion is performed by Mr. Bertram in London precisely as it is performed by the inventor in Paris; but this is not absolutely exact, as there are two or three modifications in the trick as shown at the Egyptian Hall, which are obvious improvements. The administration of a strange elixir to the young lady about to vanish does not take place in Paris. And in Paris, when the young lady vanishes, she does not leave her lace handkerchief on the chair from which she has disappeared. These are both excellent touches of art, admirably adapted to heighten the final effect,

The clumsy attempts at imitation have given lustre to the original feat, which stands pre-eminent like a rich Brazilian gem in the midst of French paste."

The interest of the public in this trick was very great, and allusions to it were constantly being made in the various journals, and sketches and skits upon it appearing in the comic papers. An amusing sketch of the trick appeared in *Judy* of August 25th, 1886, which, through the courtesy of the proprietors, I am able to re-produce, they having very kindly given me their permission, and supplied me with the necessary block.

On October 19th, 1886, *Punch* made the trick the subject of their cartoon entitled "The Latest Trick." in which Russia was represented as causing Bulgaria to vanish through the Treaty of Berlin, by covering her with the shawl of diplomacy. I had hoped to be able to re-produce the cartoon, as evidence of the interest taken in the trick by the public, but the proprietors of *Punch*, whilst appropriating my trick as a subject of their cartoon, could not see their way to doing me the courtesy of allowing me to show a copy of their cartoon to my readers.

So universal was the sensation caused by this feat, that Mdle. Patrice and I were honoured by a special



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command from H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, to produce the illusion in the ball-room at Sandringham,

which we accordingly did on November 9th, 1886. On this occasion, Mdlle. Patrice, when asked by me whither she should be mystically transported, was desired by H.R.H. the Princess of Wales, to go to the drawing-room and bring her a bouquet. She was seated as usual upon the chair. "Hey, Presto!"—she had gone, and in ten seconds ran up the ball-room with a beautiful bouquet of flowers, which, with a few well chosen words in German (Mdlle. Patrice being a perfect linguist), she presented to Her Royal Highness, who accepted it with some complimentary remarks and expressions of astonishment. Their Royal Highnesses also graciously accepted some photographs of the illusion as a souvenir of the performance. This illusion was the forerunner of many others, almost every conjurer having a "new illusion," but none were equal to or created such an impression as this invention of M. Bautier's, but so great has been the rage for illusions since then, that up to this present year of grace, 1895, their production has not ceased. Among them may be mentioned: "The Flying Lady," "Aphrodite," "The Convict's Escape," "Stroubaika," "Dr. Cramer's Vanity Fair,"

“Servias le Roy’s Flying Visit,” and a very pretty illusion of David Devant’s, entitled, “The Birth of Flora.”

✓ My first introduction to provincial audiences was a tour extending to seventeen weeks in the Midlands and the North of England. In addition to my own entertainment the athlete “Sandow” gave his marvellous exhibitions of strength, and the original “Blue Hungarian Band” played selections of their weird music, for which they are so justly celebrated. The tour proved a great success, and created quite a sensation in the many towns visited by us.

One of the most successful exhibitions with which I have been connected was the “Holy Land Exhibition” at Brighton, where I performed “Eastern Magic” for a lengthened season. The exhibition was unique in its way, illustrating as it did life, manners, and customs of Jerusalem and the Holy Land. The whole idea was conceived and beautifully carried out in every detail by my now great friend Mr. Charles Lang Neil, to whom I was indebted for my engagement. One of the chief features of this exhibition were the lectures on Jerusalem and the Holy Land, by the Rev. James

Neil, M.A., who is well known in connection with Palestine and the East.

My next engagement, which I am still fulfilling, is with Mr. Albert Chevalier, as a member of his now world-known Recital Company, and with whom I have been pleasurably connected now for nearly three years ; during that time we have visited 356 of the chief cities and towns of the United Kingdom. Some idea may be gathered of the success of the company when it is known that we have played to as many as 30,000 persons in a single week. Chevalier is one of the best of good fellows, and a generous and true friend. His artistic ability is so well known that it is useless for me to speak of it in these pages—suffice it for me to say that the splendid name he has made for himself has become a household word.

ILLUSIONS, ETC.

I REFERRED, in one of my previous chapters, to a series of illusions I had the pleasure of presenting at the Alhambra, entitled, "Bertram's Diablerie," or "Black Magic;" the method of producing which, will, I think, be of interest to the reader. The scene was as follows:—Upon the ascent of the curtain the stage was found to be in dense gloom, an unfathomable, limitless blackness, as if one gazed into a perfectly dark cavern, although the stage was not only lit up by the "floats," but also by an extra row of naked lights along the front of the stage, and a row of lights running up on either side as far as the first tier of boxes. In the centre of this vastness a small red spot seemed to form, and gradually grew larger and larger, while, with a crash upon the cymbals, I appeared in the centre of the stage attired as "Mephistopheles;" a wave of my hand and a small Mephisto appeared mysteriously from space. In dumb

show he intimated to me that to carry out certain designs suggested in the sketch I should summon the "Spirit of the Mystic Arts" to my assistance. With a wave of my hand in the air I caught mysteriously from space the magic cloth, a large red silk veil, seven feet square. Then followed a kind of incantation scene. I waved the cloth in the air, and lo, standing on my finger tips at arm's length, was seen the "Spirit of the Mystic Arts," in the person of Mdlle. Patrice (whose assistance I was again fortunate enough to secure), in white silk Grecian costume. Lowering my hand she descended gracefully to the stage. After a little more pantomime, during which I expressed my desire to become a master of magic, she touched me with her wand, and instantly my costume was changed into a perfect evening dress, my face assumed its natural appearance, with a beard, and at the same time two gilt tables and three chairs appeared on the scene. A series of conjuring tricks were then presented by Mdlle. Patrice and myself, and Mdlle. Patrice disappeared by means of the "Vanishing Lady" trick. The little Mephistopheles I wrapped, apparently in the veil, and

threw into space again. I then wrapped myself up in a white sheet, whilst standing in the centre of the stage. The sheet fluttered to the floor, and I had "vanished" even more mysteriously than I had appeared. To the uninitiated these things seem impossible, but the secret being out, the solution to the mystery is at once seen. It is an optical illusion; the stage was entirely draped with black velvet. The extra lights, to the public mind, would ostensibly appear to throw more light on the stage, but they simply served to blind the spectator to anything upon the stage which was black or draped in black. The illusion is as if one looked out into space on a dark night *over* a candle. Nothing black could be seen, but the smallest trace of white or colour seems to attract the light and stands out most vividly against the black background. So, by skilfully undrapping the black velvet from any characters and furniture, and by draping them again, the effects were produced. The whole scene was admirably placed upon the stage by the directors of the Alhambra at a very large outlay—black velvet not being the least expensive material with which to drape so large a stage as that

at the Alhambra. This series of illusions I had the pleasure of presenting in a somewhat similar form, at the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, Brighton Aquarium, and the Spanish Exhibition, where I also had the honour of giving a special performance of the "Black Magic" before His Royal Highness The Duke of Cambridge.

Upon his production of "Fa(u)st and Loose," a burlesque upon "Faust," which was then being played by Mr. Henry Irving at the Lyceum Theatre, Mr. Toole desired me to see him relative to furnishing certain illusory arrangements which were to do duty as a "skit" upon the elaborate electrical and other effects which were nightly causing a sensation in the Lyceum drama. In the Lyceum play Faust and Siebel fought with swords, and each time that Mephistopheles knocked up their swords with his, a number of sparks emanated from the contact. The effect in the burlesque was indeed comical, for the swords of the combatants were each fitted with tubes of acid, which, when broken, ignited some chlorate of potash, etc., and fired a small piece of red flash paper; and when they touched each other there came

alternately from each sword a flame of red fire, which necessarily caused a deal of laughter. On the first night Mr. Toole came upon the stage with a small pouch of these tubes to break upon making his "entrances," etc. When the time came for him to produce his "flash," he placed his hand in the pouch and accidentally broke one, whereupon they all went off in a kind of smothered flame and smoke. It must have been very alarming for Mr. Toole, but it had its comical aspect also. It was extremely funny to see the "devil afraid of his fire," and the consternation upon Mr. Toole's face was very droll, but nothing would induce him to try his hand again with the "flashes," and in after performances they were thrown on from the wings at proper intervals. I trust Mr. Toole will forgive me referring to this incident, but as I feel somewhat of a delinquent, inasmuch as it was my duty to have warned him of what might happen, it was owing to my neglect that the accident occurred. Many illusions of this order were used in the burlesque; cigarettes were lit by simply touching the "hot member." In effects with cards I also had the pleasure of instructing our beloved comedian,

and a very apt pupil he proved himself. I saw Mr. Toole in his great character of "The Wizard of the Wilderness," in which he did some "wonderful" tricks, and in a splendid burlesque upon "second sight" he proved himself to be quite an adept in the art of conjuring.

In concluding this chapter I should like to record my admiration for another illusion of that great inventor of tricks and illusions, M. Buatier, which he has entitled, "La Cocon." A sheet of white paper in a frail frame, somewhat resembling the lid of a cardboard box, was hung upon a tape stretched across the stage, a rough drawing of a silkworm was painted in ink upon the paper, the paper immediately burst and a large facsimile of a cocoon appeared, under which a small stand was placed in order to support it. The cocoon opened, and a lady emerged from it attired as a huge butterfly with outspread wings. This was so neatly performed and seemed so inexplicable that it called forth the admiration of all conjurers and illusionists, and again served to prove what an admirable inventor and mechanician was this master of the conjurers' art. This illusion

was produced at Messrs. Maskelyne & Cooke's, and had a very long and successful "run," such as it thoroughly deserved.

DODGES.

“He can do what he likes with the cards when he’s got ’em,
There’s always an ace or a king at the bottom.”

—INGOLDSBY LEGENDS.

I PROPOSE in this chapter to deal with some of the various artifices and deceptions which are practised, not only on the legitimate entertainment stage, but upon the racecourses and on the occasions of any large outdoor gatherings, as they will in a great measure deal with that fraternity who are designated by the name of “sharps.” I beg my reader will forgive me if I occasionally introduce into these pages the “Argot” of this particular class, most of them having fancy terms and expressions, which to the cultivated ear savour of vulgarity.

It may, perhaps, seem somewhat of an anomaly that so many people will pay to be deceived by a conjurer, and are pleased in proportion to the magnitude of the deception practised upon them. Many times I have

offered to explain how a trick "is done," and my offer has been at once rejected with a remark, "I am quite content to remain in ignorance. If I knew how it was done, I should not be so well pleased." On the other hand, conjuring can be used for other purposes more nefarious than simple amusement, and certain devices and tricks, sleights of hand, etc., are resorted to by unprincipled persons, for the purpose of duping, deceiving and robbing the unwary who happen to come in their way.

To place such upon their guard, and to explain to the public briefly a few instances and articles which have come under my personal notice, is here my aim and desire.

The subject of the thousand devices which are resorted to by the unprincipled, by the "grec" or as he is more usually termed, the "sharper," would need a volume to itself, so I must confine myself simply to drawing attention to one or two methods in particular—touching lightly upon each one in turn. Here I must state I am with all due respect, quite at variance with my friend, Mr. Maskelyne, of the Egyptian Hall, who, in his admirable treatise entitled "Sharps and

Flats," expresses his opinion that the apparatus working "sharp" has an advantage over the manipulative "sharp," or in other words that the cheat who uses "hold-outs," "bugs," "reflectors," etc., and goes into action with a large quantity of machinery concealed on his person, is less liable to detection than one who relies solely on the dexterity of his fingers. How Mr. Maskelyne could have fallen into such an error, is beyond comprehension, for it must be clear to any person, who has the faintest experience in these matters, that the risks run by a manipulative "sharp" are infinitesimal when compared with those incurred by a "sharp" working apparatus with the same object. In most books or treatises which have appeared upon the subject of card-sharping or sharps and their devices, or which have in any way treated upon these subjects, great stress has always been laid and lengthy explanations given of the various clumsy instruments and mechanical appliances used, or purporting to be used by these "*chevaliers d'industrie.*"

First I will call the attention of my reader to an instrument called a "hold-out." A "hold-out" is a kind of flat pair of lazy tongs, which is attached to

the arm up the sleeve and is supposed to hold a card or more, as may be needed, until such time as it or they may be required by the "grec." This instrument has a cord running down the leg and is attached to one knee by a cord, which is brought through a hole in the trousers, and fixed with a hook to the opposite knee. When the cards are required, the cord being pulled by spreading the knees, the lazy tongs extend and bring the card or cards required into the hand of the sharp. Now I maintain that it is difficult to imagine a person, in his ordinary senses, sitting down to play cards, armed with such an instrument as this, and arranging his cords, etc., before commencing his play, when the slightest hitch would at once betray its presence; and the fact of his having such a contrivance found upon him, would leave him no loop-hole, or chance of explanation.

Is there anyone in this world who could be induced to believe that the ordinary poker player would not at once detect one of the party working down his sleeve a pair of lazy tongs, and producing therefrom the cards which he required to make up his hand? If the "grec" were playing with blind people it might

perhaps be accomplished, but I can think of nothing so ridiculous as to try and impose in such a manner even upon the ordinary card player. No, the "grec" must find something safer, and have at least a "back door" to get out of, in case of accident.

Reflectors or small mirrors placed in rolls of imitation notes, snuff boxes, pipes, and even in tooth picks are also said to be used occasionally—well, in some games it might perhaps be useful to know a card before it turned up, but even the discovery of one of these innocent little arrangements would make it look very awkward for the "gentleman" to whom it belonged. He could scarcely say that he used it as an accessory to his toilet. "Arm clips" for "holding cards," "ring hold-outs," "bugs," prepared faro boxes, and a hundred and one pieces of apparatus, too numerous to mention in these pages, all these things are certainly to be purchased. There are establishments in America, whose only business is to supply these things, and to judge by their circulars they would seem to be doing a "roaring" trade: but it seems to me that in most cases it is the old tale of the razors which were made to sell only and not for

use. And as the existence of these bits of rectifying apparatus are equally well known to most card players, I think a "grec" would have too much respect for his skin, than to be caught red-handed with an instrument which he could not dispose of or disown. No! He must have something simpler, and above all, something which cannot actually be produced against him.

Marked cards are another "luxury" provided by these American firms, the methods of marking the cards being innumerable. In some packs the scrollwork of the pattern denotes the suit and value of the card. Others are marked by means of the sprays in the flowerwork pattern, the position of a leaf on a particular spray, or the shading of a part of a leaf which will denote the name of the card; others are known as the "Angel backs." These are cards which have two angels represented in the design on the backs of the cards, the shading of the bodies of the angels being different in each card, thereby indicating its name, and the suit being told by the shading of different sections of the scroll work. I will not go into a more elaborate description of all the various

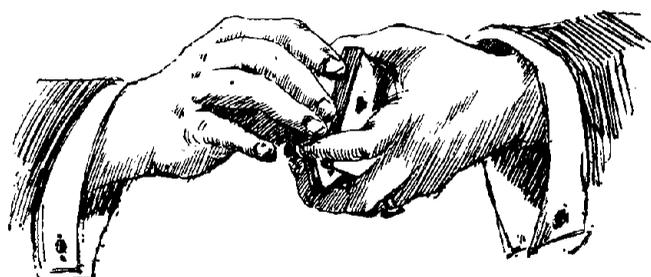
patterns of cards that can be purchased for the purpose of "rectifying fortune," but simply state that almost every card player is cognisant of the existence of these cards and of the various patterns, that it would be only possible to use such a pack on very isolated occasions. No! The "sharp" must "work" where there is money to win, and to get the chance of winning money he must play where he would be unsuspected. What would a company of gentlemen think of a man who brought his own cards, and commenced to win? Such a thing might possibly pass in the "backwoods out West," where the marked pack possessed by one man, might be the only pack for miles round, or the second player might not know the secret of the marking. These are isolated occasions, but the *chevalier d'industrie*, the card sharper, who has to make a living at the "game," must have some artifices which can be practised at any time, with any cards, and without any incriminating apparatus to convict him.

Now what is it that a "sharp" requires by which he can "correct fortune?" Surely not a lot of clumsy instruments strapped all over his body, nor marked

cards, the knowledge of which is common property. No, he must be a master in the manipulation of cards, he must be a perfect player of the game, and possessed of plenty of *savoir faire*, plenty of courage and a complete lack of nervousness. I do hope my reader will not imagine for a moment that I am upholding the sharp. I am simply trying to point out that it is useless to think that because another person is not armed with the diabolical instruments I have named, he cannot be a "sharp." A "sharp" of the first water is a man who exercises his brains and who plays the game until he loses, and then in order to correct matters uses his fingers and such devices as leave no trace of evidence behind. To guard my reader against such a man, and to "back up" my statements further, it is necessary to explain a little more fully the "manipulation" of the cards.

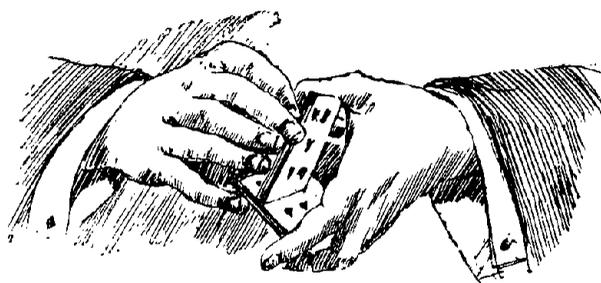
The first and most necessary trick to guard against is the "*Saut de Coup*" or Pass, which is accomplished, I mean perfectly accomplished, only by an immense amount of practice. As I consider this to be the groundwork of all manipulative card sharpening, I will endeavour to explain the method of performing it.

Let us suppose that the centre card of the pack is the ace of hearts, and the top card the king of spades, and that it is necessary to bring the ace of hearts from the



FIRST POSITION IN TWO HANDED PASS.

centre to the top of the pack. The pack is held in the left hand with the faces of the cards downward, the little finger of the left hand is inserted into the



SECOND POSITION IN TWO HANDED PASS.

middle of the pack upon the top of the ace of hearts, and immediately, the top half of the pack is forced downwards until the palm of the right hand hides it

from view, the first finger and thumb of the right hand at the same instant holding the bottom half of the pack by the edges as far down from the top as it is possible to get the fingers without exposing the top half. This may be called the first position, for although the movements are, or should be, all in one, there are two distinct positions during the pass. In the first position the little finger of the left hand is on the top of the bottom half, *i.e.*, on the ace of hearts, and is necessarily under the top half of the pack, while the second and third fingers are outside at the bottom edge of the front or top, and the first finger on the top edge of the same half. For the second position, the little finger and first, second and third fingers of the left hand should draw under cover of the right hand the front or top half of the pack, while the bottom half is lifted a little with the second finger of the right hand and placed underneath or behind the original bottom half, all the fingers of both hands squaring the cards. The ace of hearts will now be on the top and the king of spades in the middle of the pack. If the pass is made in this manner, it is absolutely noiseless, and cannot be seen even when

attention is previously drawn to its being made. It may seem difficult when explained in words, but a short time devoted to practice before a looking glass, and carrying out these instructions carefully will soon convince a person that this is the *best* method of making the pass, and also when made perfectly, is absolutely impossible to detect. I have repeatedly asked persons well acquainted with the "pass," if they could detect it, and I have invariably succeeded in so doing it as to draw from them a negative reply.

A pass similar in effect to the "*Saut de Coup*" can be made with one hand. It is generally known as the "one hand pass," and is performed as follows. The cards are held in the left hand, faces downward, and held by the top joints of the second and third fingers, and the top of the thumb; the little finger squares the cards, by being extended under the bottom edge (Fig. 1), and must be kept in the position during the making of the "pass." The first finger should be extended, and not touch the cards at all, a portion of the pack B is then released, and falls into the palm of the hand, the thumb still supporting the remainder A; the first finger then pushes up the released

position B, until it joins the thumb again, forming a figure thus and as shown at Fig. 2. The portion marked A is then dropped on to the first finger, whilst the thumb presses down the portion B, all the fingers squaring the pack immediately after the movements. If this is practised slowly at first, the fingers

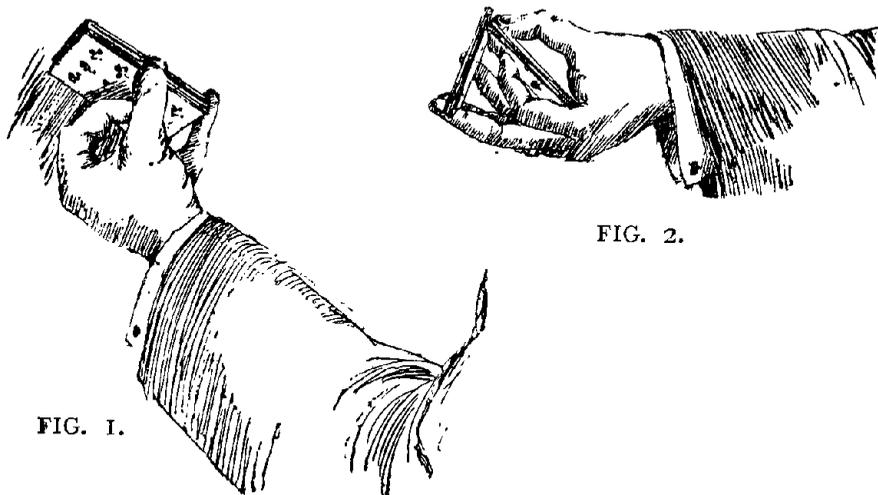


FIG. 1.

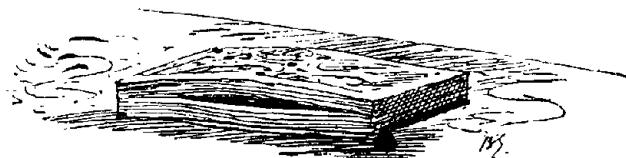
FIG. 2.

gradually get used to the work each has to perform, and it is possible to change the position of the cards at last so rapidly that it is impossible to detect any movement whatever, especially if a slight sweeping motion is made with the left hand to and from the body during the movements. Persons who are quite proficient in this pass, can, so they say, make it over

one hundred times in a minute (I myself can make it between eighty and ninety times a minute). In the hand of the "grec" it can be used to convey to the top of the pack any stacked cards, by the help of "the bridge" which I shall explain next, as it is a necessary adjunct to these two passes, "the one hand pass" and the "*Saut de Coup*."

Many, many persons know of the "bridge," and recognise it when they see it, but very few know the method of making it unobserved. I have read many explanations of this sleight, but all fail in conveying an idea of how secretly and quickly it is possible to carry out this device, or of how dangerous it is in the hands of any unprincipled person. The "pont" or bridge is made as follows:—We will suppose that the "sharper" wishes to keep several cards on the top of the pack. He will make a false shuffle, or shuffle the cards in such a way as not to disturb the top cards; then he will square the cards with both hands, slightly bending the whole of the pack downwards over the first finger of the left hand, with the fingers and thumb of the right hand; then, as a kind of finishing touch, he will take a number of cards,

including those he wishes to keep intact, off the top of the pack, pushing them off with his left thumb and receiving them in his right hand upon the first, second, third and fourth fingers, the right thumb being on top of this portion ; then in the movement of placing this portion at the bottom of the pack, he presses down his right thumb and pushes up his right fingers, in this way slightly bending this portion of the cards in an opposite direction to the curve of the



BRIDGED CARDS.

remainder of the pack ; squaring the cards again with both hands, he then places them upon the table. The cards now have a slight opening in the centre, and when the cards are cut the probability is that they will be cut at this opening, and thus the stacked cards will be brought on the top of the pack ; should this, however, fail, the cutter not cutting exactly at the bridge, the bridge will still be there when the cards are taken up, and the one or two handed pass can be

made at the "bridge," and the cards brought into the desired order. A similar result may be obtained by making a "step" instead of a bridge; the name implies what this device is. The cards which are stacked are, after the false shuffle, left on the top of the pack, which is squared and given to be cut. When the cut is made, the under half is replaced upon the top half, not squarely, but leaving the then bottom half projecting about a quarter of an inch, thereby forming a small step; the little finger of the left hand then presses down the "step," and the two handed pass or "*Saut de Coup*" is made, thus neutralising the cut, and bringing the cards into their original position. These two passes, together with the "bridge" and step, are the devices most generally adopted, and can be used or adapted to nearly every game of cards, where the cards are dealt from the hands. In trying to explain to my reader these devices, I have spoken of making a false shuffle. I do not intend to convey that a long, elaborate shuffle is gone through, but simply a "riffle" of the cards, that is, taking a half of the pack in each hand, and "riffing" them all one into the other, excepting the

few on the top of the pack, which it is desired to be kept together. Without going into any details, I will presume that my readers understand the game of *Ecarté*. The method a "sharp" would adopt would be, of course, to play the game, and if he found it necessary to cheat, he would wait until it was his turn to deal, then picking up the cards from the previous deal, would take care to pick up four of a suit, including a king, if possible, placing them upon the top of the pack, and adding either from those remaining on the table, or from the pack itself in course of shuffling, seven others. The cards would be then "riffled" or shuffled with the "ecarté shuffle," which is similiar, but the top eleven cards are not disturbed. He would then place the cards on the table to be cut, and would perhaps "bridge" the cards or make the steps. If they were cut at the "bridge" no pass would be necessary, but if he relied on the "step," or by accident or design his opponent did not cut at the bridge, then he would make either the one or two handed "pass," whichever he was the more proficient in, or had the better opportunity of making, and so bring the cards into order with the

eleven cards stacked on the top. He could then deal two cards to his opponent and two to himself. These cards he does not necessarily want to know, nor does he care what the next three he deals to his opponent are, for he knows that seven cards will have been dealt from the eleven, and that of the next four, which are all of a suit, three come to himself and the fourth is the trump card. If he has "stacked" a king with the four cards, he of course prefers to hold it in his hand, as it will then in all probability count two to him, whilst it counts only one if turned up as a trump card; "turning up a king" is also liable to create suspicion, but if held in the hand does not attract so much attention. There are a great many false shuffles which can be used, and by using which the cards can be kept in a perfectly pre-arranged order throughout the pack; they will be found explained at the end of this chapter.

I should like now to ask my readers if they have any doubt as to the positions occupied by these two "sharps," viz :—The one who uses his fingers dexterously and even only uses the passes I have mentioned, and the other who using the clumsy apparatus to

which I have before referred? Suppose a "grec" trips, and someone accuses him of having made a pass, there is only one person's word against another's. The sharp would, of course, indignantly deny it, and consider himself much aggrieved that such a charge should be preferred against him, and by a skilful piece of acting, or perhaps with the timely interference of a confederate, turn the tables upon his accuser, so that a gentleman would generally pause before making any accusation upon such flimsy evidence as the flash of a card or the almost lightning turn of a pack. Then again, suppose he is suspected of "bridging" the cards, the slightest touch of the cards destroys all evidence against him, and, moreover, it would not be impossible for him to accuse some other player of having "bridged" them, perhaps unconsciously and by accident.

Now look upon the other hopeless picture of a "sharp" being suspected of using "advantages," as the various pieces of apparatus are prettily termed. Picture him sitting to table, armed with a "hold out" up his sleeve, a "bug" on the table, and a mirror or two about him; he is detected using the "hold

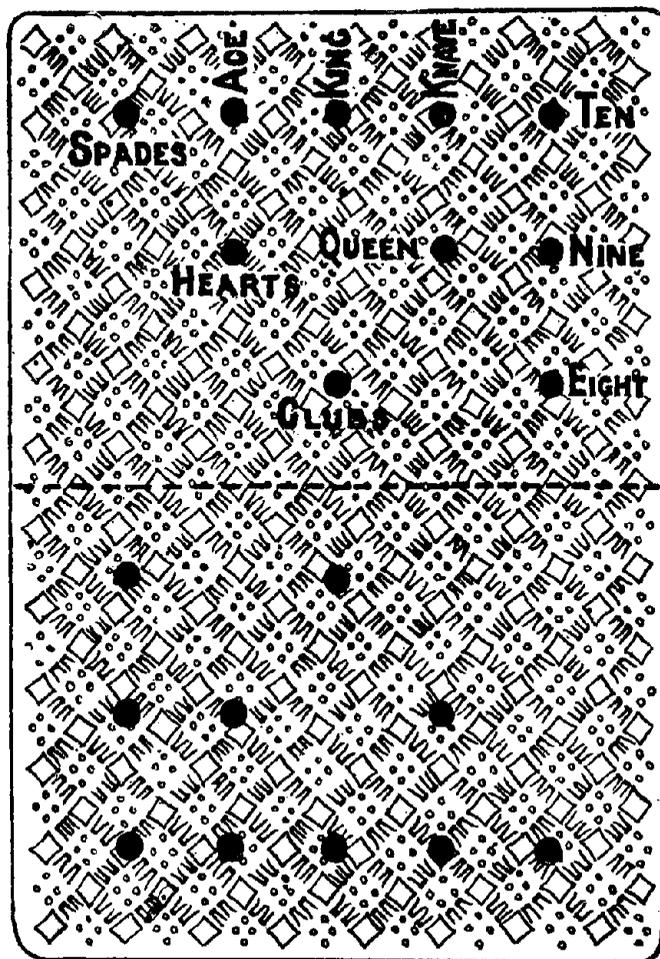
out," is suddenly seized by his fellow players and searched, or even politely requested to hand over the implements.

Mr. Maskelyne gives as a frontispiece to his book a picture by Mr. Alfred Bryan of the detection of Kepplinger, the master cheat as he is termed, who does not look at all dignified or comfortable, as he is seized, gagged and searched. I should say that any man who was such an utter idiot as to sit down and attempt to cheat with such apparatus on him, when detected deserved all he got in the way of punishment; and I should imagine that most persons would not be so fortunate as Kepplinger was in the treatment they would receive, but would be punished in a very summary manner even by "friends." For the sake of comparison between the two "cheats" — the "light fingered man" and the "gentleman" with the apparatus—the reader may consider the one to be in the position of a man suspected of picking a pocket, nothing being found upon him when searched; and the other in that of a burglar found in a house with "jemmies," skeleton keys, and other nefarious implements concealed about his person,

One would be perhaps dismissed with a caution, while the other, in all probability, would get penal servitude.

Although I am of an opinion that a "sharp" would very rarely resort to using marked cards, yet occasionally such cards have been used, both for the purpose of cheating and also for legitimate conjuring. There are, as I have said, an infinite number of ways in which the cards can be marked, and a person can of course adopt any plan known only to himself. I think the best of these devices is the method adopted by M. Charlier, of whom I have spoken in a previous chapter, and by whom this method of distinguishing cards was invented. In this case it is not necessary to see the card at all, as the card is distinguished by the touch. The cards are first split into halves and a tiny puncture made in different positions with a fine needle point in the back half of each card, after which they are re-united and run through a press. The tiny puncture is then quite invisible and feels only like a tiny grain of grit upon the card, but it is quite sufficient to indicate the name of the card even whilst being dealt. I

give an illustration of the marking of a piquet pack of thirty-two cards; the marks are here exaggerated



and it will be seen that the indicating punctures are made at both ends of the cards, so that no matter how the cards are mixed or shuffled the

“spots” are always at hand. It is also possible to indicate to a confederate, the names of all the cards held in the hand, by simply holding the cards, the pack being closed, and by alternately placing the thumb on the “spots” corresponding to the names of the various cards, to telegraph to him upon the top card the names of the cards held in the hand. This system is also extended, and can be used to indicate the names of every card in a complete pack of fifty-two.

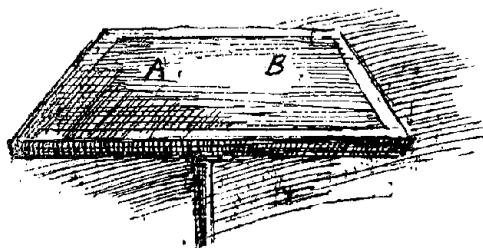
In explaining the diagram the “spots” that denote the value of the card are situated along the right edge and the top of the card. If there is no spot the card is a seven. The spots that denote the suit (clubs, hearts, and spades) run diagonally to the top left corner from the centre of the card. The absence of a spot indicates a diamond, so that the seven of diamonds would be the only plain, unmarked card. If the thumb of the left hand be rubbed with pumice stone, the punctures can be more readily distinguished. The cards may also be doubly punctured, that is in the same spots but through to the face of the card, and then the cards can also be read by means of the first finger of the left hand. This method of

marking the cards is exceedingly subtle, and very difficult to detect, and I have seen it used in some beautiful card tricks and combinations with great perfection and complete success by that mysterious person, M. Charlier. But clever as this system may be, difficult as it may be of detection, I still maintain that a "sharp" would infinitely prefer to trust to his own dexterity than to rely upon such cards, for no matter how perfectly they were worked they could in case of detection be used as evidence against him.

FALSE. SHUFFLES.

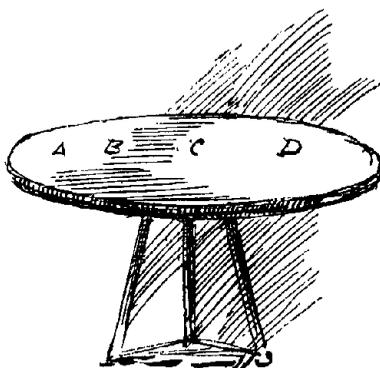
HAVING referred to "False Shuffles" in this chapter, I may here explain several methods of keeping a pack of cards in a pre-arranged order, and to point out some curious effects produced by making such shuffles as these. It will repay my reader to study these "shuffles," carefully following the instructions here given, with a pack of cards in his hands. To illustrate the various movements thoroughly, and to make them clear to him, I will ask my reader to place all the cards in their proper sequence, commencing with an ace, a two, a three, and so on to the king, and keeping each suit separate, and in this order, viz., hearts, spades, diamonds, and clubs, the ace of hearts being the top card, and the king of clubs the bottom card as the pack lies face downwards on the table. Now, if the cards are simply cut, whist fashion, a hundred times, the order is never altered, the cards always keep the same sequence, and if cut so that the king of clubs becomes the bottom card, none of the other cards will

be found to be out of their proper order, the reason being that by continuous cutting, the two halves of the pack simply keep going round and round each other. Now, let the reader take the pack in his left hand (the cards being in the order given, and the king of clubs being at the bottom of the pack), take a few cards, say six or eight, off the top with the right hand and throw them upon the table at B, and then take



eight or ten more off with the right hand, and throw the remaining cards in the left hand upon those at B; then throw those in the right hand on the table at A, and place those at B on those at A, picking them all up together. Repeat the operation ten or a dozen times, and then make the pass at the king of clubs, bringing that card and those above it to the bottom of the pack. The cards will then be found to be still in the original order, with the ace of hearts on the

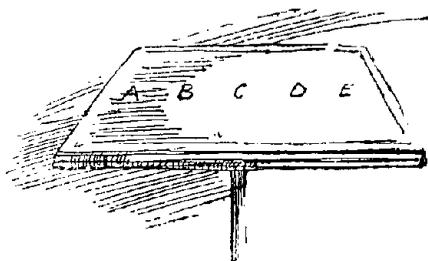
top, simply because the sequence is kept throughout, although apparently the cards have been hopelessly mixed. This is a most intricate variation of cutting cards, and to the uninitiated the effect is quite astounding. Now, to continue these effects a little further, and to make them appear more astonishing still, let the reader take the cards in his right hand



and drop ten or twelve cards off the bottom of the pack on to the table at A, B, C, and the remainder at D. Now place those at A upon those at D, then those at B upon those at D, and then place all those at D upon those at C, picking them all up together. Repeat this operation as many times as one pleases, make the pass at the king of clubs, and the result will be the same as before—the cards will not be at all

disarranged. The number of packs which are made make no difference at all in the effect, if the accumulated cards on the last heap are ultimately placed on the preceding heap, as represented by C, in the above diagram of four heaps only.

Another method is to place the pack on the table face downwards at A, take a few cards from the pack and place them at B, a few more from A and place



them at C, a few more from A, and place them at D and E. Now gather the cards up by placing A on B, B on C, C on D, and D on E. Repeat this as often as desired, and make the pass at the king of clubs, and the result will be as before, the cards will not be disarranged. This is very perplexing to onlookers. Now, as a conclusion to this series of "shuffles." We must still presume the cards to be in the pre-arranged order, and held faces downwards in

the left hand, calling them, for the sake of clearness in the description, A. Slip, now, a few cards, with the left thumb, from A into the right hand. These we will now call B. Slip a few from the bottom of A to the top of B, a few from the top of A to the bottom of B, a few more from the bottom of A to the top of B, placing the remainder of the cards (if any) in the left hand on the bottom of B. This can be repeated as many times as desired. The cards, when cut at the king of clubs, will be found to have retained their order. This is a splendid finish when used in conjunction with the three previous shuffles, and when neatly and quickly performed is irritatingly deceptive. No one unacquainted with these "shuffles" believes for a moment that the order has been kept throughout, and that the cards are not disarranged. I have used these "shuffles" with great advantage in order to keep a pack in a pre-arranged sequence, when illustrating the dealing all the trumps to oneself at whist, which can be done by arranging the pack, we will say, with a club alternately with three other cards right through the pack. When cut and shuffled as above, and a club appears at the bottom of the pack, they can be dealt

out as at whist and the dealer will be found to hold all the trumps in his hand. If it is necessary to keep only a few cards together, an apparent shuffle can be made by keeping the desired cards on the top of the pack, cutting the pack in two, riffing the corners of the two halves, and sliding the halves one into the other, of course leaving the top card undisturbed. The reader will not require any other "false shuffles" if he is able to accomplish the foregoing successfully and quickly. They will be found extremely useful in many tricks in which it is necessary to keep the pack undisturbed, and many surprising feats can be performed by their aid, which will suggest themselves to the performer when he becomes proficient in this branch of the art.

In concluding this chapter, mention may be made of a curious explanation given by a servant to his master, when suspected of indulging in the pernicious vice of gambling, and who upon being interrogated, explained the novel use he made of a pack of cards which was found in his possession. I have taken the account from a very old publication, and as it shows some peculiar coincidences connected

with a pack of cards, and will better explain the ingenious interpretation placed upon the values of the cards by the artful servant, I have presented to my readers, a facsimile reproduction of the original pamphlet, and trust it will prove of interest.

A NEW
Game at Cards,
BETWEEN
A Nobleman in London,
AND
One of his Servants,
FIRST SHEWING.

How the Servant converts his Cards into a complete Almanack, by which he divides the Year into Months, Weeks, Days, Hours, and Minutes. He likewise forms them into a Monitor, or a Prayer Book.—The whole being an Entertainment to the Curious and ingenious, as well as the Learned and Serious. The like was never before Published.



J. Pitts, Printer, and Wholesale Toy Warehouse, Great st Andrew
Street. 7 Dial,

A NEW

Game of Cards,

A NOBLEMAN in London having a great number of servants, among whom was one in whom he reposed a great deal of confidence, one of his fellow servants becoming jealous; went to make a complaint to his master in order to have him turned out of his service; and all he could impeach against him was, that he was a great Gamester at Cards. At this, the nobleman was highly displeas'd, for gamesters were a set of people im mortally hated. One day he took an opportunity to call him to an account for it.

Jack, says he, what's this I hear of you ?

I can't tell, and please your honour. What is it ?

I am inform'd, Jack, that you are a great player at Cards.

It is a false report, your honour, Pray who was it that told you so ?

It matters not, says the Nobleman, Are you really a gamester, or not ?

An please your honour, says Jack, I am so far a Gamester, that I never played at Cards in my life, nor do I even know what a Card means.

I am glad of this, Jack upon your own account; but I'll call the informer.

With all my heart says Jack.

The informer being come. Did you not tell me, says the Nobleman, that Jack was a great gamester at Cards?

I did, my Lord, says he,

Why, says the Nobleman. Jack denies it.

I don't care for that, says he. I can prove it to his face, that he is one of the greatest Gamesters in London. Search his pockets; and you will find a pack of cards there now he is never without them.

Jack was searched, and the cards were found.

At this, the Nobleman flew into a passion, saying, You rogue how could you be guilty of such falsehoods before my face. Did you not tell me you never played a card in your life nor that even you could tell me what a card means? Now I have found them in your pocket, I will punish you with the utmost severity, not only because you are a great gamester but because that you are a liar also.

My Lord says Jack you may use your pleasure; but if you call them cards I do not, nor do I use them as such.

And pray what do you call them, says the Nobleman.

Says Jack they are my almanack.

Your almanack you dog? Did ever any one make an almanack of a pack of cards?—What sense can you make of them!

My Lord, I am no scholar, and for that reason I make use of these cards as an almanack to govern and rule the year by.

Let me hear after what manner, Jack. If rightly applied I will not be angry, but freely forgive you.

My Lord, says Jack, you'll please to observe in the first place, that there are Four Suits in them, which just answer to the Four Quarter of the Year, There are thirteē Cards in every Suit, which intimates the Thirteen Weeks in each Quarter, There

are Twelve Court Cards, which answers to the Twelve Months in the Year, There are Fifty-two Cards in the Pack which directly answers to the number of Weeks in the Year. Search the Cards a little further, and you'll find there just as many spots in them as there are Days in the Year, These I multiply by twenty-four; and then again by sixty, which brings me out the hours and minutes in a Year.

Very well, Jack, says the Nobleman, but pray do you make no further use of your cards?

O yes my Lord, a great deal, I sometimes convert cards into a prayer-book,

A prayer book, you rogue! if you do make an almanack of your cards, you never can make a prayer-book of them.

My Lord, I'll make it appear; You know I told you, I could neither read nor write, and for that reason these cards answer my purpose as well as the best prayer book in England.

Very well, Jack, let me hear it out, for I like the beginning very well.

Then, Sir, you will please to observe in the next place, when I look over the four suits of the cards, they put me in mind of the four principle Religions, that predominate in the World; namely, Christianity, Judaism, Mahometism, and Paganism. When I look upon the Twelve Court Cards, they put me in mind of the twelve Articles of the Christian Faith, which I am bound to observe and keep,



The King puts me in mind of the allegiance I owe to his Majesty.



The Queen puts me in mind of the allegiance I owe to her Majesty.



When I come to the Ten, it puts me in mind of the Ten Commandments, Likewise reminds me of the Ten Tribes of Israel that were cut off, in their wickedness.



The Nine, puts me in mind of the Nine Muses, and also the nine noble orders practised by Men,



When I come to the Eight, it puts me in mind of the Eight Altitudes, and also the Eight Persons that were saved in Noah's Ark.



The Seven puts me in mind of the Seven Wonders of the World, and also the Seven Planets, that rule the Days of the Week.



When I come to the Six, it puts me in mind of the Six Petitions contained in the Lord's Prayer, and also of the Six days I have to work for my Bread; and that I am appointed to keep the seventh holy.

The Five, puts me in mind of the Five Senses given by God unto Man,

The Four, reminds me of the Four Seasons of the Year which is appointed for the use and benefit of mankind,

The Three, puts me in mind of three Graces, also the three Days, and Nights that Jonah was in the Whale's belly,

The Two puts me in mind of the two Testaments, the Old and the New wherein is contained the Law and the Gospel, also the two contrary Principles, struggling in Man, Virtue & Vice

Now my Lord, the Ace being but one in number teaches me to worship one God, and no more, and that I have but one master to serve and obey,

Very well Jack, I find you apply your cards to a very good use, but there is a card in the pack, you have not explained yet,

An please your honour, says Jack which is that?
 I observed whilst you was shuffling the card you
 laid by the Knave. Does that put you in mind of
 nothing?

That's right, my Lord, says Jack I had almost
 forgot; but, nevertheless when I see the Knave he
 will put me in mind of your Lordship.

What, you dog, count me a Knave, before my
 face;

No, my Lord, you misapprehend me, I meant
 your Lordship's informer

That's well turned, Jack, so I freely forgive you
 And for you, sir, (the informer) take your wages,
 and walk,

But had this miscreant once thought of that
 worthy and never to be forgotten saying, "Do as
 you would be done by," He might have avoided
 a great many evils, which he fell into; for, being
 turned out of service, he was despised by all that
 knew him and at last, was forced to beg his bread.
 So, that this saying to do as we would be done by,
 holds good; that no situation of life however bad,
 not no circumstance, however trying, should pre-
 vent us from paying a constant attention to it,
 However, not long after, the informer died, of no
 other disease, than a broken heart and this Epitaph
 was written on his grave,

Young men pray stop as you pass by,
 And on this stone pray cast an eye,
 And read with care my unhappy fate
 Lest you repent when tis too late;

For had I thought on this advice,
And kept it in my mind,
To do to all as I would wish,
They would to me again.
I might have been longer on this stage.
Likewise be loved by men,
I might have lived to good old age,
And made a better end.

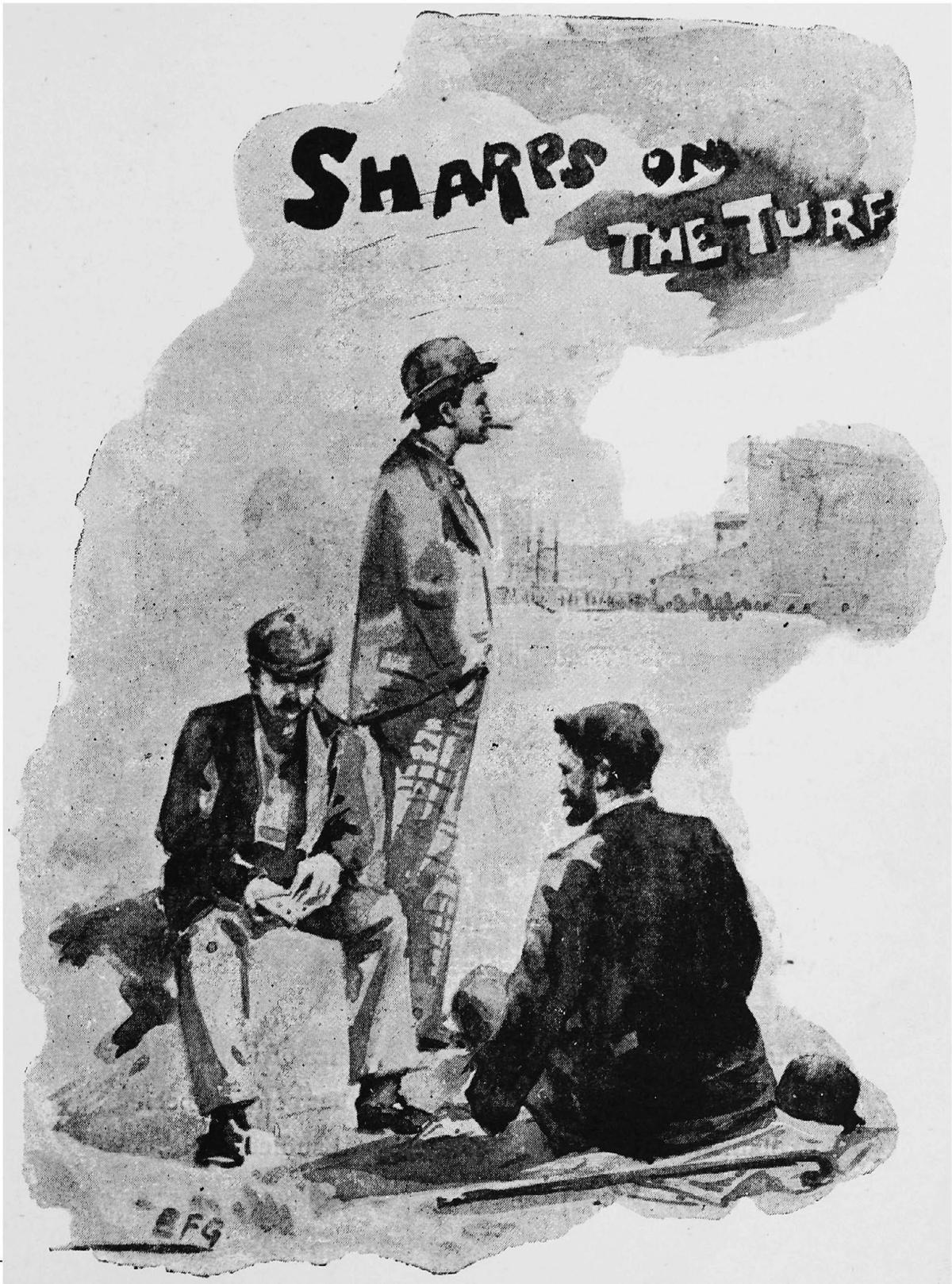


So now this Almanack you see,
I have explained to you.
And if you'll buy the same of me,
I'll kindly thank you too.

F I N I S

J. Pitts Printer

SHARPS ON THE TURF



“SHARPS ON THE TURF.”

SOME years ago I happened to be at a large gathering at Alexandra Park, and chanced to walk down one of the avenues of trees, when my attention was attracted to a small crowd of people. Curiosity prompted me to stop, and I found one of the fraternity working the three-card trick. I had barely been there a moment when the “worker” looked up and said to me, “What, governor, are yer pickin’ up wrinkles?” I confess I felt a little startled at his familiarity, and wondered whether he recognised me from St. James’s Hall, as it was there that I had been giving my seances, “card-sharping exposed.” I thought to myself, “Why should I not begin ‘picking up wrinkles?’” and to that end I purposely visited various racecourses and places where large numbers congregated, and succeeded in “picking up a few wrinkles,” which I have now the pleasure of imparting to my readers. The three-card trick has so often been explained that a short notice here will suffice.

It is performed by using three cards, one a "picture card," a king or queen, and two "pip" or "plain" cards. The cards are spread faces downwards and are taken up again, two in one hand, one on the top of the other, and one in the other hand, alternately throwing them down upon the table, or newspaper serving as a table, the object being to hide the picture card, or, as the worker generally says, "This is for you, and these two are for me, and it's 'five, ten or a golding sovering' that you can't find the picture card." The player has, of course, to watch and use his best endeavours to "spot" the "picture." This is difficult, inasmuch as when the cards are taken up two in one hand, the under one is generally the "picture," and it would seem that in throwing down the cards again that the under one would be the first to fall, and the eyes are naturally led to believe that this is so. On the contrary, the uppermost card, one of the plain ones, is the one to fall first, and is naturally supposed by the uninitiated to be the "picture card," the "worker" generally consoling him with the remark, "it's the only chance the old man's got." If the reader will try the experiment, let him place, say, a queen face

downwards on the table, then lay a three of clubs upon it, and with the thumb and first finger of the right hand pick up the two together, holding each *end* of the card at the centre, and not by the sides, as is often directed in explanation ; he will find it impossible to throw down the uppermost card, the three of clubs, without releasing the queen, but if he places the *third* finger of the right hand on the edge of the undermost card, the queen, he will be able to hold it with ease, whilst he throws down the uppermost card. This is the general explanation of this trick. The turning up of a corner of the picture by a "confed" only to be turned down again, and the "quif" put on to another card instead, is an additional device of the "worker of the broads" "to deceive his clients." In my "picking up wrinkles" peregrinations I found yet another artful device used, namely, the making of the picture card shorter by about one-sixteenth of an inch than the other cards. This enables the "worker" to allow the picture card, when between the two other cards to slip out at the back of his hand, whilst in the act of throwing one forward. When this is skilfully performed it is almost impossible to detect which is

the picture card of the three. I think that if a person "ignores the card" he "thinks it is," and takes an even chance upon either of the other two, he is about as safe as he can expect to be in this game.

Still playing upon the credulity of that portion of the public whose chief desire is to get a great deal in exchange for a very little, the sharp for their would-be gratification provides them with a little game which consists in selling them purses containing, say, three half-crowns, for the small sum of one shilling. The dupe never looks at the transaction from a business point of view, nor sees the utter absurdity of a man getting his living by giving his money away, until he has purchased the purse and finds three half-pence or pence inside the purse instead of the silver he expected to get. Amongst the various explanations of this trick, for trick it is of a very clever description, the chief point, namely, the method by which the exchange of the silver to copper is made without being seen by the spectators, is quite lost sight of. Those who have written on this subject have contented themselves with saying that the silver is exchanged for copper, etc. Yes! but how? Allow me to explain. There are two

ways of playing the trick. The sharp, who stands on a stool, and has a bag in front of him, from which he picks up silver, which he throws into the purse and empties again into the bag, and repeats the operation until the opportunity occurs for him to substitute copper for silver, simply plays a "handy-pandy which hand will you have" sort of game with his audience, and does not sufficiently impress them with the fact of the silver being in the purse, and consequently he finds it difficult to do "business." Let me describe the *modus operandi* of another, a sharp whom I saw, and considered "a perfect artist" at the game. He stood upon a stool about six inches high, without hat or coat, with his sleeves rolled up above his elbows, and without bag or satchel, but using the head of a boy, who stood in front of him, as a table. He produced a purse of soft chamois leather, simply a steel-bound bag with a clasp, without partition or inner pocket in the purse, and opening it and turning it inside out, showed it to be quite empty, a very necessary proceeding. He then explained that to settle a wager he had been commissioned to sell half-crowns at ten-pence apiece, and taking the three half-crowns out of

the right pocket of his trousers, dropped them deliberately and slowly one at a time into the empty purse, closed it, and threw it backwards and forwards from hand to hand, placed it on the boy's head and asked one half-crown for it. Standing there with his two hands on his hips, his right hand took from a tiny pocket under the back of his waistcoat, three penny pieces. These he secreted under the top joints of his fingers, and taking the purse laid it on his right hand above the pennies. He then opened the purse, still retaining the three pennies under the top joints of his fingers. In the act of taking the three half-crowns out of the purse he left the pennies in it, taking care that they did not "talk" (chink). The audience thought the purse empty, and his hands were empty except for the three half-crowns, which he showed. Then pretending to throw them into the purse, he secreted the half-crowns in their turn under the top joints of his right fingers, closed the purse with a snap, and placed it on his right hand, *over and hiding* the three half-crowns. After throwing the purse backwards and forwards again from hand to hand (the three half-crowns travelling with the

purse, but underneath it and not inside), he shook it, turning his hand over, and dropped it on the boy's head—the three half-crowns being retained in the right hand. It was sold for a half-crown almost immediately; the illusion being so complete that the audience saw nothing to make them suspect the existence of any money except the three half-crowns. This is by far the neatest and most telling method of “doing the purse trick,” and is sure to command many purchasers. But before performing it in public, I would strongly advise my readers first to obtain the necessary permission of the police. The “thimble rig” is another little game at which a spectator is invited to try his luck. It consists of three thimbles and a pea, which is moved about from one thimble to another, the invitation being generally as follows :—“It's two to one yer can't tell which *pea* the *thimble's* under” by way of a little joke. The bet is made to any amount, the thimble is lifted and the pea is not there. Of course not; nor is it under either of the other thimbles. The pea is made of soft wax. The worker's little finger nails are long and pointed, and when he sticks the pea on one of these

nails it disappears altogether for the moment, or until it is required for the next “shuffle” or “rig” of the thimbles. There are many minor dodges for fleecing the unwary. “Pricking the garter” is one of them, and consists of a piece of flannel list, which is rolled up on a board or table so that in the centre of the roll a little loop or interstice is left. Into this the client is invited for a small bet to insert a piece of wire or stick with which to hold it when the roll is unwound again. The sharp, however, rolls it up in such a way that one end is about two inches longer than the other, and with an unperceived turn the reverse way, the roll when pulled by this end comes away from the “pricker” altogether. This is also worked with a long chain or watch guard, a figure eight being made upon the same principle. Throwing pennies into basins is an exceeding simple looking operation, but the pennies have a knack, if not of bounding out of the front of the basin, of slipping out over the top of it. Another trick consists of trying with an umbrella rib to knock a threepenny-piece off a piece of stick, which stands on a piece of clay about the size of a sixpence. One may try for an hour, but the three-

penny piece always drops on the clay unless, by a remote chance the player happens to strike the coin itself—a very improbable occurrence.

To knock down two upright wooden pillars placed a little less apart than the width of a large wooden ball which is rolled at them, is almost impossible, and truly said by these itinerants to be a "game of skill." These and many other trifling devices used for transferring the surplus cash from one person's pocket to another, are so successfully practised by these "gentlemen of the fraternity," that additions to their ranks are constantly being made.

Without in any way moralising upon this subject, it is obvious that if there were no "flats" the "sharps" would not exist, and I think that a person who imagines that he is going to get the better of another, by purchasing a purse with three half-crowns in it for a shilling, and finds that he has been "sold" deserves the consequences of his greed and folly.

SOME INCIDENTS.

A MAN who pursues the occupation of a professional conjurer, finds his daily round often enlivened by little incidents, some of which are exceedingly droll and others exceedingly awkward. As I have previously remarked, a conjurer must be an "entertainer" and therefore an "actor," for he has to play his little comedy, generally alone, or partly with the assistance of one of his audience, and he not a confederate; if he works legitimately the conjurer is oftentimes placed upon his mettle to reply to some question, or is often taken aback by a remark from his erstwhile assistant. To illustrate this, I may relate an incident which happened to a conjurer in the North of England.

He asked a little lad from the audience to come upon the platform, ostensibly to assist him in some forthcoming trick; as soon as the lad arrived, the conjurer, with a great flourish of turning up his sleeves, etc., proceeded to take an egg from the lad's

nose, another from his hair, another from his arm, several from his pockets, until he had collected in this manner quite a small basketful. Rubbing his hands with glee he patted the little chap on the back, saying, "There, my little man, if your mother could do that it would be useful to her. She couldn't get eggs for her puddings, you know, without keeping fowls." "Oh, yes, she could," said the boy. "How?" said the astonished professor. "Why, she could keep ducks," replied the urchin. The man of mystery collapsed amid the laughter of the audience. This same professor was once in the company of an acquaintance of his, an "actor" who was only occasionally "shopped," and he was explaining to his friend some of the tricks comprised in his programme.

"Now," said he, "one of my most successful tricks is 'drawing' eggs out of people's pockets." "Ah," dolefully replied the mummer, "that's one of the tricks I'm good at," a remark full of meaning, and conveying in those few words the whole of his views as to the public appreciation of his histrionic ability.

It very often happens that these little contretemps

not only end in the professor getting the worst of the repartee, but in his jumping financially on to the "wrong side of the hedge." A mystery man was once performing at a fair, and taking a country man from his audience, commenced to illustrate to him the "transmutation of metals." He borrowed a half-penny from the countryman, and after making a few passes, desired him to hold out his hand for a moment, and apparently placed the halfpenny in it, telling him then to close his hand. Passing his wand over the countryman's hand, he then asked him to open it, and, "You, see," said the magician, "I have changed your half-penny into a sovereign." "Now," said the wizard, "I'll change it back again; give me the sovereign." "Nay, nay, yer warnt," said the yokel, pocketing the sovereign, "you'll nay change it into a 'arpenny again; I'll 'old un tight enough;" and walked off with the conjurer's sovereign.

This is just what might be expected at a fair, but one would scarcely believe that people were to be found in drawing-rooms and at public entertainments who would actually walk off with the performer's cash,

though they know full well that he is only performing an illusion for the amusement of the audience with his own money. I suppose these persons are actuated by a desire to pose as "clever" before their friends, and forget that "one fool at a time is quite enough."

I was on one occasion performing the trick which is pretty well known as the "Aerial mint," at Stafford. This consists of gathering coins from the air, and catching them here, there and everywhere. Now it is clear that to be able actually to collect coins from space like this would be exceedingly useful, if it were not impossible, so that it is necessary to be possessed of the "needful" before being able to perform the illusion. I commenced my trick by having palmed twenty two-shilling pieces, these are presumably caught from the air one at a time and thrown into a hat, others are introduced secretly into handy pockets of the audience. I had surreptitiously placed in the waistcoat of a "gentleman" in evening dress, quite unknown to him, one of my two-shilling pieces, and to heighten the effect of the trick desired him to give it me himself from his pocket.

He was astonished to find it, but was so mortified at being so completely taken in, that he refused to give me my two-shilling piece, and calmly pocketed it. I remonstrated with him politely, but with no avail; and for the sake of the audience I had to go on with the trick, and leave him to go off with my money. I do not think, however, that I lost all the two-shillings by this little affair, for to show his own smartness he must advertise *me*, and it is only last week, eighteen months since it occurred, that I heard at Chelmsford, after giving a performance there, of the "gentleman" who had been boasting of having "taken a rise out of Bertram" by doing him for a two-shilling piece in Stafford. I trust this clever "gentleman" will continue to boast in this manner of his wonderful accomplishment, and I do therefore "by these presents" forgive him.

The reader doubtless knows the story of the magician who needed a confederate, and pressing a person who was going into the entertainment, into his confidence, entrusted him with a two-shilling piece (a coin generally used as it can be conveniently

palmed) and desired him to take care of it during the evening until the conjurer requested him to return it. In one of his tricks, the conjurer took a florin in his hand, and went through various preliminaries, when presto ! it "was gone into that gentleman's pocket," explained the conjurer, pointing to the confederate. The confederate felt in his pocket for the money, and said, "Yes, governor, here you are : I've spent fourpence, here's the change !" and handed the wizard one and eightpence. That was giving him away with a vengeance.

Exceedingly varied is the manner in which persons act when assisting a conjurer. Some who are kindly disposed enter into the spirit of the trick, and very materially assist the performer, others are antagonistic and do all they know to "spoil him," for what reason I never could make out. No one ever thinks of making a discordant noise when a singer is coming to a high note, but to some people it appears quite legitimate to try and spoil a conjurer's trick. As this desire generally emanates from an "overboiling of self-esteem and cleverness," when I come across such a person, I generally hand

him over to the tender mercies of the audience and offer him ten minutes with them, that he may perform the trick himself. This usually has the effect of



cooling the courage of the clever aspirant, and making him more tractable during the remainder of the trick.

An old lady in a West End drawing-room on one occasion assisted me in one of my tricks ; at the conclusion she left her seat and came and looked at my feet and said, " I see you wear shoes ; I had expected to see 'hoofs.'" She left the room, and could not be persuaded to return. A questionable compliment I take it.

In Dublin at the Rotunda, I asked someone from the audience to come on the stage to assist me. A tall, broad and thick-set, scowling looking fellow, about six feet four, marched up and stood beside me. He looked immense against me as I looked up to him, saying in my "sweetest" tones, "Have you any idea what I want you for?" "No," he said in a deep, loud voice with an Irish accent and such a look ; "No, I doant, but by the living hokey-pokey, don't you make a fairy 'cod' of me"—not quite in these words, but words to that effect. I thought I would not, and of course did not make a "cod" (fool) of him, but I found he assisted me very well, and only wanted to avoid any practical joke being played upon him ; but this was his way of expressing it.

Once when I was performing at Nuneaton, in

company with Mr. Chevalier, a person who came up to assist me, would insist upon striking his chest with his hand and shouting at me that a "greater than Shakespeare is here," and repeating this to every question I put to him. I eventually asked him if he would kindly take a shilling I had previously borrowed for one of my tricks, back to its owner. He turned on me with a contemptuous look and said, "Do your dirty work yourself; a greater than Shakespeare is here." We found the poor fellow not quite right in his mind, and as he would not leave the stage when requested we dropped the curtain on him. He was certainly astonished to find himself behind the curtain and cut off from the audience, but we coaxed him out of a side door much to his satisfaction, and our own gratification.

At a big "At Home" at the Metropole Hotel, I was asked to show some card tricks. The then Lord Mayor, Sir David Evans, acted as my assistant, and after I had shown a great number of tricks, at which his Lordship expressed great astonishment, he suddenly took a card from the pack and replacing it

said, "If you can tell this card I'll give in." I told him the card, and moreover, took it out of my pocket, upon which his Lordship took the remainder of the cards, threw them violently on the table, and exclaimed jocularly, "Well, if ever you come before me, I'll make it warm for you." Since then I have had the pleasure on more than one occasion of "showing" before Sir David, much to his appreciation and delight.

A conjurer should, in my opinion, be a person of very even temper, but there are times when it is extremely difficult to keep to this excellent maxim. A certain professor, slightly known on this side of the "herring pond," and perhaps not so well known on the other side, once conceived the "brilliant idea" of paying a person to attend fourteen times at the Egyptian Hall to take down my "show" in shorthand. He then had the audacity to appropriate the whole "show," lock, stock and barrel, to his own use. This I did not so much mind, imitation being the sincerest form of flattery; but when he ventured to express his opinion to my next best friend, "that Bertram was the merest tyro at his game," it did not

tend to cement or extend the slight existing friendship between us. I meet him very occasionally, but we do not speak as we pass by.

Nine times out of ten, if an accident happens to a conjurer, the fault can be traced to himself or to his permitting someone else to prepare his "show" for him. A conjurer performing the trick of making a "Welsh rarebit" in a hat, left it to his assistant to place a rabbit in the tin which acts as a saucepan, and which is placed on a fire made in a borrowed hat. The rabbit was by accident left at home, so instead the assistant placed a kitten in the tin. When the professor had cut up the cheese, etc., and gone through all the details of working up to the *denouement* of producing a rabbit (rarebit) a cat pushed up its head from the saucepan instead, he excused himself by saying that Cheshire cheese must have been given him by his assistant in mistake, Cheshire cheese and Cheshire cat being I suppose somewhat synonymous. But the kitten's premature appearance made him so nervous that he spilled some of the spirits with which he intended to make the fire in the hat, and the whole caught fire, burning out the lining of

the hat. The only way out of it was to extinguish the flames and place a short note in the hat, asking the indulgence of the owner, and an order on the nearest hatter for a new hat, à la Houdin.

I once saw a conjurer showing the "basket trick." After the disappearance of the lady from the basket, she suddenly appeared again by tumbling upon the stage from the back of the basket where she had been secreted; carelessness of the performer in not placing his basket in the right position on the tressels. I once stepped on a trap in the centre of a stage and disappeared. The trap was held by a slight bolt, and the bolt broke with my weight; carelessness of my own in not inspecting the trap, and of the stage carpenter in not properly barring it when not in immediate use. I went through, but a large silk cloth I held in my hand and used in my performance covered the trap, and very few saw where I went to. A well known army coach being at the time one of the audience, came and congratulated me upon my new trick, saying, "Bertram, you are getting spryer than ever; it was splendidly done," and I could not impress upon him at all what

a narrow escape I had had, or how dreadfully I had been shaken by my fall. As even accidents may sometimes be turned to account, so this gave me the idea for my trick of vanishing before the audience, and turned out to be very profitable.

Conjurers generally borrow as much as possible from their audiences. I do not mean in a monetary sense, but that as it looks less suspicious to borrow articles such as watches, rings, etc., this plan is generally adopted by professors of the mystic art, in preference to using their own property. This is the reason accepted by the public, and generally speaking it is not difficult to borrow from a person in the audience a watch, a ring, glove, handkerchief, in fact almost any article needed, even a ten pound note occasionally, of course for the purpose of being used in the trick.

In endeavouring to borrow a ring or trinket from a lady, the remark that when it is returned to its owner, "an additional charm will be found attached to it," never fails to procure the necessary article of jewellery. The fact of persons in the audience being always so willing to lend articles, with which a conjurer may perform his trick, has been made the

subject of humorous remarks and illustrations. I remember some little time since a very comic picture in *Judy*, which represented an audience sitting, waiting patiently, whilst the conjurer, who had borrowed all the watches and trinkets he could manage to get, went behind the screen. The conjurer not being forthcoming, the audience became impatient; the bell was rung; a little servant appeared, and in answer to a question by *pater familias*, replied, "The conjurer? Oh! he's been gone half an hour." The reader may imagine the faces of those who had confided jewellery to his care.

In many cases, when a conjurer has an idea or description of the article likely to be lent to him, he will heighten the effect of his trick by sometimes procuring a duplicate, which occasionally necessitates a great outlay of money.

It is related of the Comte de Grisy, otherwise Torrini, the instructor of Robert Houdin, that upon the occasion of a performance given before Pope Pius VII., he cudgelled his brains for a new trick, and chance came to his aid. On the day previous to his performance, he happened to be in the shop of

one of the first watchmakers of Rome, when a servant came in and asked for Cardinal de——'s watch, which had been left to be repaired. "It will be ready this evening," replied the watchmaker. When the servant had retired, the watchmaker remarked to Torrini, "This is a very handsome watch, the Cardinal values it at over 10,000 francs. It was made by Brequet. Strangely enough, only a few days ago, a young scamp of this city, offered me a similar watch made by the same maker, for 1000 francs." "Do you think," observed Torrini, "that the person is still inclined to dispose of his watch?" "Certainly!" the watchmaker replied; "he is a young prodigal, and the 1000 francs will be most welcome." Torrini thereupon arranged matters with the watchmaker, who purchased the watch for him, and by Torrini's orders, engraved the Cardinal's arms upon it, so that the two watches were exactly similar. The next day Torrini proceeded to the Pontiff's palace, and after successfully performing a great number of tricks, commenced the concluding trick, the *piece de resistance*, he had prepared for the occasion. He desired some person to grant him the loan

of a watch, and indirectly referred to the Cardinal's watch, by insinuating that a large one would best suit his purpose. In a good humoured manner, the Holy Father suggested that His Eminence the Cardinal should lend his watch to the conjurer, which he thereupon did. Torrini now having possession of the watch, adroitly changed it, and then by way of diversion and much to the horror of the Cardinal, deliberately crushed the duplicate with a cannon ball, placing the pieces in a huge mortar, ground them up, and then offered some of the pieces to the Cardinal for identification. Recognising his arms engraved on one of the pieces, he was quite satisfied that it was his own chronometer which had been so hopelessly pounded, and was extremely wrath. Torrini placed the pieces in a pistol, and deliberately fired them out of an open window into the grounds. His Holiness seems to have had more confidence than the Cardinal in Torrini's ability to restore the watch, for he repeatedly assured him that it would all end well, and entreated him to have patience. Torrini succeeded in arousing the Pope's curiosity, by pretending to observe a blue flame in the mortar, in which he had

crushed the watch, and the Pope left his seat to gaze into the mortar. Seizing this opportunity, Torrini slipped the genuine watch into the Pope's pocket. The Cardinal desired that his favourite watch should be restored to him, and being asked by Torrini where he would like it to be found, curiously enough, desired it to be found in the pocket of His Holiness, hinting at the same time that he would then consider the watch to be in safe keeping. Much to the astonishment of His Holiness, amusement of the audience, and satisfaction of the Cardinal, the watch was found safe and sound in the pocket of the Holy Father. This little episode cost Torrini 1200 francs. His Holiness expressed his appreciation of Torrini's ability by writing as follows :—" I have much pleasure in stating that M. le Comte de Grisy is an amiable sorcerer."

Robert Houdin had the misfortune on one occasion, whilst making a pudding in a hat borrowed from one of the audience, to spill some spirits used in the trick, over the lining of the hat. Not observing the slight accident at the time, and pretending to set fire to a handkerchief placed in the hat, actually set fire

to the hat itself, and burnt out the lining. As he could not return the hat to the owner in that condition, he made an excuse to him, requested the further loan of the hat for use in another trick, conveyed it off the stage, and a polite note was written to the owner and pinned inside the hat, explaining the mishap; and asking his indulgence, and enclosing an order on the nearest hatter's for a new one. After this, Houdin took the hat back to the owner, remarking that time would not permit of his performing the trick he had intended, and in an undertone, requested the gentleman to read the note. This he did, and considerately took a good natured view of the accident, and acted as he had been desired. A similar occurrence happened to myself at St. James's Hall, but ended for me, a little more disastrously. I had borrowed a ring from a lady in the audience, and jokingly requested her to place a value upon it. This she did, and valued it at £4. I then tied a piece of ribbon to it, and placed the ring on a plate in full view of the audience, and proceeded to make an omelette. Having mixed the ingredients, I threw the ring and ribbon into them, and pouring a little spirits

upon them, went through the make believe of cooking the omelette in a pan. On setting fire to the spirit, there is a blaze, and a lid is placed upon the pan. When the lid is removed, instead of an omelette, a dove is found with the identical ring attached to its neck by the ribbon. All went well until I removed the cover of the pan. There was the dove surely enough with the ring tied to its neck, but during the applause of the audience, the dove flew up, round the hall, and out of an open window into Piccadilly. I never saw it or the ring again, and I had to make the best of a bad bargain, and pay the lady £4 as a compensation for her loss.

A conjurer performing the dove pan trick, desired a lad to come from the audience, to act as an assistant. After producing several eggs from the hair of the astonished boy, he asked him if he knew any kind of egg with which it would be impossible for him to make an omelette. "Yes!" answered the lad. "Do you?" said the professor, "What kind?" "'Ard boiled 'uns," replied the boy, to the discomfiture of the professor, and the amusement of the audience.

It is related of Hermann that upon going into a

market in a small provincial town, he addressed an old market woman, and desired to know the price of some eggs she had for sale. She informed him, whereupon he bought several and immediately



proceeded to break them carefully open, one at a time, and apparently extract from each a sovereign, which of course he had concealed in his hand. Pretending to place the pieces of gold into his pocket,

he requested the old lady to sell him the remainder of her eggs. This she resolutely refused to do, and after vainly attempting to persuade her, he bade her "Good morning," and went his way. On his returning to the market he was astonished to find the poor old woman sitting down there, breaking all her eggs open, in the vain hope of finding a sovereign in each. It is said that Hermann thoughtfully explained to the old lady that he had only been playing a trick upon her, and persuaded her not to demolish any more of her stock. He gave her ten shillings, and took his departure, but the tale was noised about the town, and became a good advertisement for the ensuing performances of this clever conjurer.

In these little practical jokes, it sometimes happens that the tables are turned upon the professor, and the biter bit, as in the case I am about to relate. I think Hermann's trick with the eggs must have been uppermost in my mind at the time. I had accompanied a friend into a confectioner's at a sea-side town, and whilst he was making some trivial purchases of sweetmeats, I casually asked the young lady attendant the price of some large chocolate creams, which

were in a glass dish, standing upon the counter. Pretending to sample them, I took one and apparently placed it in my mouth, though in reality I palmed it, taking another, but really the same one, I repeated the operation again and again. My friend having concluded his purchases gave the attendant a half sovereign in payment; she gave him the change, but deducted an extra shilling for the chocolate creams I had eaten. My friend remonstrated, but in vain; she insisted that "I had been feeding upon chocolate creams for the last ten minutes," and that payment should be made for them, although in reality I had not tasted a single one.

The power of transmuting metals has been sought, in all ages, by every person who has aspired to the name of alchemist. Many learned and clever men have wasted their time, health, and energies, in this vain pursuit. According to Charles Mackay, the notion appears to have been that all metals were composed of two substances—the one metallic earth, and the other a red inflammable matter, which they called sulphur. The pure union of these substances formed gold, but other metals were mixed and con-

taminated by various foreign ingredients. The object of the philosopher's stone was to dissolve and neutralise all these ingredients, by which iron, lead, copper, and all metals would be transmuted into the original gold. This is the philosophical view of this science. The humorous side I once saw illustrated in the refreshment-room at Swindon Station, Great Western Railway, while waiting for a train. A party of gentlemen were standing at the buffet, and one of them was holding forth, and expressing his opinion as to the possibility of the transmutation of metals, assuring his friends that it was within the range of possibility, and that he himself, by a series of intricate experiments, had succeeded in transforming solid metals into liquids. As his friends were incredulous, he offered to present them with a striking proof of his ability. As was usual with the alchemists of old, he desired to be supplied with the necessary metal with which to carry out his experiment. One gave him a sixpence, another a threepenny piece, and two or three of the others a few coppers. These he collected in a hat, and made some little display of enchanting the coins, the onlookers gazing at him

with astonishment, as he, with sleeves rolled up, made several and sundry passes over the hat. After a few more remarks, relative to his ability to transform solid metals into liquid, he calmly scooped the money out of the hat, and handing it over to the barmaid in attendance, ordered a brandy and soda, and drank it, remarking that it was a beautiful experiment, and asked them if they did not consider that he had succeeded. His friends then for the first time saw that they had been "sold" by this modern sorcerer. Of course it would be difficult, under the same conditions, to repeat the experiment, and therefore the wizard can give "one performance only." Under this heading, I saw lately, in *Pearson's Weekly*, a very good tale, which, with the permission of the editor, I will relate in the same words.

"A well known conjurer, who, under the present circumstances wishes to be nameless, sends the following good story of his experiences in Montana.

"Amongst other things, I had two dice boxes and two clay marbles. I called the miners round me, and proceeded to manipulate the marbles and boxes on the bar of the local saloon.

“‘Now, gentlemen,’ said I, ‘I’m no worker of miracles, I don’t heal the sick, nor raise the dead, but I’ll put this marble under this cup, and bet you a twenty it’s under the other cup. Come, who’ll open the ball?’

“Silence followed. Then a friend of mine elbowed his way to the front.

“‘I’ll bet she’s there,’ he said, and laid down his money. ‘And there she is,’ exclaimed I. ‘Here you are, here’s your cash; once in a way I’m caught just in that way. Well, who’s next? Here’s the marble, you can see it go under the cup; now, I’ll bet you either way.’

“Three rough hands were raised with three twenties, when a husky voice shouted at the edge of the crowd, ‘Hold in your bronchos, boys. I’m ‘the first man to bet.’ A burly individual, in a blue shirt and broad brimmed hat, pushed his way to the bar. ‘Now, perfesser, I’m ready fur yer; lift up yer box. There’s the ball, dead to rights—see it fellers?’ The ‘boys’ answered affirmatively.

“‘Here’s a twenty, perfesser,’ went on the husky voiced man, ‘and I bet the ball’s under that cup.

'Cause why? 'Cause I am a rational man, an' we're all rational men—we believe what we see. We seen the ball under that cup, an' it's got to be there, an' I'm bettin' it is there. If it ain't there, there's been a hocus pocus, and that kind of work don't go down with this hyer community.' The husky voiced man produced a six-shooter, about as long as a Winchester. 'In my opinion I'm betting on a dead sure thing. Lift the cup, perfesser!'

"The six-shooter was cocked with an ominous click, and the husky voiced man looked me squarely in the eye.

"I confess that I smiled in a sickly way, coughed, hesitated, and would have said something, had not a pair of determined pair of steel grey eyes given me a fair warning. The joke had gone further than I intended. I raised the box; the ball *was* there. 'I thought so,' said the husky voiced man, who pocketed the money. 'If you want to take any more bets, perfesser, I reckon the boys will accommodate ye.'

"But I didn't."

One or two good stories are told, in which cards figure prominently.

A gentleman who had been cleared out at poker several nights in succession, remarked to the person who had managed to get possession of all his money, "I don't think there can be much pleasure for you to play cards with me, there's no uncertainty about the game to make it interesting." "Oh yes, there is," remarked the other, "you see, I never know how much money you have with you, for me to win." A very poor consolation for the pigeon.

Whilst on the subject of "poker," I will mention a circumstance which happened on the other side of the "herring pond," an instance of the "biter bit," or cleverness over-reaching itself. A certain bootmaker who prided himself upon the quality of the boots he had for sale, and who, in order to advertise their excellence, and remarkable cheapness, hung a pair of his best outside his shop, pinned to them a dollar bill, with this to poker players, familiar announcement. "Three of a kind takes a pair."

A gentleman who felt conscious of his cuteness, and considered himself a fair poker player, noticing the boots with the ticket and dollar bill attached to them, entered the shop, and demanded of the shop-

keeper, if he was prepared to sell any boots in accordance with the terms quoted in the advertisement, and to dispose of them under the strict and accepted rules of poker. The bootmaker replied in the affirmative. "You understand, no 'shenanigan,'" said the "cute" one. "I buy under the strict rules of the game." "Certainly," said the shop-keeper. "Well then, show me some boots, nine's my size." After carefully inspecting several pairs, he again impressed upon the salesman, "I want no hanky panky, you know. You sell and I buy under strict poker rules." "Certainly," again replied the shop-keeper.

"Wal then," said the "cute" one, at the same time placing a couple of pairs of boots under his arms, "let me tell you that at poker three of a kind takes *two pairs*, so here's yer three dollars, and take my advice, and be a bit more careful in future." With that he was leaving the shop, when he was stopped by the shop-keeper. "Here, stay! my friend, not so fast, not so fast," said he, "I'm selling these boots under strict poker rules, and allow me to inform you that three of a kind does not take two pairs, when those two pairs happen to be both nines.—I'll trouble you for three dollars more."

Let us hope it was a salutary lesson for the "cute" gentleman, who was a little "too previous."

A gentleman, living in the suburbs of London, and returning home by train one evening, had occasion to take with him a large wickered jar of whisky, and whilst waiting for the train, placed the jar upon the platform, and left it for a moment, whilst he purchased a newspaper at the stall close by; returning, he found his jar of whisky gone, and although he made the necessary inquiries of the officials, his whisky was nowhere to be found. Whilst relating his loss to his fellow travellers in the train, one of them asked him if there was a label on the jar, or any means by which he could identify it. "No," he replied, "there was no label upon it, but happening to have a pack of playing cards in my pocket, I tied the king of hearts on the jar." "Ah, my friend," remarked one of the travellers, "that was a very foolish thing to do. Some one has come along and popped the ace on it, and taken the trick."

A graceful allusion to the ace of hearts was made by Compte, the celebrated French conjurer, when he had "passed" that card upon one of the most

beautiful women in the salon in which he was giving a performance.

“Will you be kind enough, madam, to lay your hand on your heart? You have only one heart, I presume. Pardon my indiscreet question; but it is necessary, for, although you have only one heart, you might possess all.”

Covent Garden Theatre was, as I have previously mentioned, burnt down on the last night of the pantomime produced by Professor Anderson. Some time after that occurrence, the professor was living at Gore Lodge, Fulham, formerly the residence of Charles Mathews, the comedian. He was quite a conspicuous character in the small village of Fulham, being most unconventional in his habits, etc. A friend of mine, a doctor, who was going his rounds in the village, visiting patients, once met the professor carrying a goose by the neck quite openly. After a few minutes' chat, he asked him if “that was a property goose he had saved from the fire at Covent Garden.” “No,” he replied, “it was a real property goose, as he had just invested five shillings in it, and that it was then *going* to the fire.’

The following incident occurred to a friend of mine while on tour with his own "show." I will relate it in his own words:—

"My manager and myself arrived by road, with our own van containing all our paraphernalia, very late one night at the town of Croydon, where I was billed to open with my entertainment the following day. This occurred some years back, and I forget now whether we were located at the Corn Exchange or the 'Old Theatre.' Having knocked up the caretaker we, with his assistance, got the van unloaded and 'dumped' all the 'props,' etc. upon the stage. After we had finished and found a refuge for the van and horses it was too late to get into any hotel or lodgings, so we decided to put the cabinet used in the entertainment together and to sleep in it (a thing we had done before on several occasions). I must here explain that the cabinet was a structure about seven feet by five feet and six feet high and put together with bolts from the outside. It had two doors in front and contained two large mirrors for the illusion of disappearing and re-appearing, etc. The whole was supported on six short legs with

large castors for the purpose of wheeling it on or off the stage.

We had noticed with the dim light of the lantern we had, that the stage we were on had an unusual rake forward to the footlights, so that the cabinet stood at an angle, leaning well over at the front top. However, after a pipe and a talk we decided to turn in, and with the curtains used in the fit-up we made a tolerably comfortable bed, closed the doors, and proceeded to seek what repose the novelty of the situation would allow. We had not been long in our dormitory when my companion in shifting his position started the cabinet moving, and immediately we both realised the alarming fact that it was running down the stage in the direction of the footlights, and before we had time to get up or open the doors it went with a crash into the well containing the lamps, and the top fell forward and remained hanging over the orchestra at an angle of forty-five degrees. We could not open the doors as it was partly lying on them, and we dared scarcely move for fear we might be precipitated into the pit. All this took place in pitchy darkness, and as there was no means of escape we remained in this perilous

position until ten o'clock next morning when the caretaker arrived to open the place. We made known our unpleasant predicament to him, and he speedily fetched assistance, the cabinet was righted, and we were released from our night's imprisonment."

I happened to be in company of some friends at a well known club in the North of England. One of my friends was desirous of showing me a new game of cards, a new variation of the game of poker. This necessitated the cards being brought forth, and eventually ended in my showing my friends a few tricks. During this exhibition an old gentleman, a member of the club, came into the room, and quietly looked on at the tricks. Becoming interested in them, he expressed a doubt as to whether I should be able to deceive him with the cards, as he said he knew all *these* things, and occasionally gave performances for the benefit and amusement of his grandchildren and other members of his family. I thereupon showed him some passes and tricks, and I think I may add, fairly astonished him, for he admitted that the tricks I had shown him were far beyond his ken. He then took me aside and into his confidence, and kindly told me

that I ought to practise, and I could then make my living at it. Said he : " I have seen nearly everybody who conjures, and they don't do it any better than you do, and I should think that in the course of a year or so, you would be able to earn as much as two pounds a week ; I should certainly go in for it if I were you." I must admit that I could not resist playing up to the old gentleman, and expressed doubts as to my being able to earn so large a sum weekly, but he was quite in earnest about it, and appealed to the members of the club to support him in his opinion. The joke went on until someone explained to him that I was visiting the town then for a somewhat higher fee than that named by him, and that I was already in the ranks of the profession. This led to an explanation, and after a hearty laugh, we filled the flowing bowl, and I had made a new friend.

It is not unusual for a conjurer to make use of a person in his employment as a confederate, and occasionally it is possible to make a person act in that capacity, without his being aware of the part he is playing in the deception ; this operation is fraught

with danger, and as an example of the difficulties which sometimes present themselves, I may relate the following incident. In the North of England, a certain professor of the mystic art, who had in a very ostentatious manner advertised his "Cimmerian Marvels" in his "Enchanted Psychomanteum," stationed himself just within the doors of his "Temple," that he might observe his audience as they came in. He was well muffled up, to prevent recognition, and was thus enabled to slip a "watch" unseen, into one of his patron's pockets, making him unwillingly, as he thought, a confederate and accomplice. All would have been well, had it not been that a few moments later, the visitor chanced to place his hand in his pocket, and discovered the watch, which he was well aware was not his property, but half suspecting that some trick was about to be played upon him, and shrewdly guessing that it had been placed there by someone for that purpose, quietly slipped the watch into the pocket of another person who was entering in front of him. The professor appeared and proceeded with his performance, his volubility of conversation, amiability of manner, and clever tricks, gaining for

him warm applause. At length he arrived at the trick for which he had prepared his unwilling confederate. He borrowed a watch and boldly asserted that he would make it travel along the invisible line of influence, and pass into the pocket of a gentleman in the audience. The watch after passing through various vicissitudes was eventually placed in a large muzzled pistol, the performer taking deliberate aim, fired—"There!" said he, pretending to follow its flight, "there it goes into that gentleman's pocket," pointing to the person into whose pocket he had previously placed the watch.—"Nay—Nay! not in my pocket," exclaimed the countryman, but feeling in his pockets, and pretending he had just discovered it, called out, "Ah! yes, maister, here it be sure enough, but how didst th' do it." "Ah"! said the affable professor, "that you know is *my* secret." "Well," said the countryman, "Aum a bit o' a conjurer myself," and placing his hands together as if he had the watch between them, said, "See, Oi take the watch, and say, one, two, three, pass! and theer it goes, theer," imitating the professor, "into that theer gentleman's pocket," pointing to a person some

distance from him. Surely enough, much to the professor's dismay there the watch was found. "Remarkable!" exclaimed the professor, "how did you manage that?" "Ah!" said the countryman, "thet theer is *my* secret, governor. I would na sell it for five pounds!" The professor went on with the next experiment.

Mr. Lionel Brough, the celebrated comedian, tells a very good story, illustrative of what may be done when two persons come to a mutual understanding to work together. As this touches on confederacy perhaps he will not mind me repeating it. A ragged street urchin entered a baker's shop one evening, just after dusk, and requested the proprietor to supply him with a "apenny buster." (For the information of my readers I beg to inform them that a "buster" is a small bread roll.) He was supplied with the commodity, and duly paid his "apenny." The boy then said to the shop-keeper, "My brother's outside an' if 'e knows I got this 'ere buster 'e'll want it, and take it away from me. Will yer 'ide it for me guvnor, down 'ere," pointing to the back of his neck. Struck with the plausibility of the

boy's tale, the shop-keeper came from behind his counter, and as the boy stooped in front of him, pushed the "buster" down the back of his neck. "Thank yer! guvnor, that'll do," said he, and away he went. A moment after urchin number two ran breathlessly into the shop. "'As my young brother been in, an' bought a 'buster?'" "Yes," replied the shop-keeper, "just this moment." "Did 'e 'idd it?" "Did he what?" said the baker. "Did 'e ast you to put it down the back of 'is neck?" "Yes," said the baker. "Did you do it?" "Yes," replied the baker. "Then I'm blowed if he ain't got your watch." "So he has, the young scoundrel," exclaimed the baker in a rage, and finding his watch gone rushed out of the shop after urchin number one. The moment he had gone urchin number two "sneaked the till."

✓ Arthur Roberts is remarkably quick and clever in taking advantage of any little incident which may happen, and in turning it to good account. I was taking part in a benefit performance given at one of the theatres; I think it was at the Gaiety, and "Bardell *v.* Pickwick" was one of the items in the programme. Roberts was the presiding judge, and a very

comic judge he made, refreshing himself with solemn dignity with occasional draughts from a quart pewter. The part I had to take was as one of the jurymen. There chanced to be several distinguished and popular gentlemen serving upon this special occasion, and as the usher of the court called each one by name, the person walked across the stage to the jury box, and was greeted with more or less applause by the audience, according to his popularity. Eight or nine of the jurymen had been called and answered their names and had taken the places assigned to them as jurymen. Roberts, as the president of the court, bowing respectfully to each as they passed before him. At length my name was called, and I walked on. Just before I reached the centre a pack of cards which I had with me slipped out of my pocket and were scattered about the stage. I must admit that I felt a little embarrassed. But the incident did not escape the quick eye of the judge, who rose from his seat, and with great indignation stopped me, and delivered a severe reprimand to me for daring to bring such a thing as a pack of cards into the court and into his presence, and with a few scathing remarks ordered me

to leave the court. I remonstrated with him, pleading various excuses, but he was inexorable, and I was promptly ejected by the usher of the court. I was afterwards permitted to take my place in the jury box by making an ample apology to the court.

An unexpected accident often gives one an idea for an improvement, or the elaboration of a trick. I had included in my programme the "rising card" trick, in which three chosen cards, at the command of the persons choosing them, are made to rise up out of a glass. A king of diamonds, a nine of clubs, and an eight of hearts were the cards selected, and I had an extra eight of hearts which I had arranged to jump out of the pack. The king of diamonds was intended to rise first, but the card not coming up when desired by the lady who had chosen it, I explained to her that as it was the king of diamonds which she had selected "It would be necessary to address his Majesty in somewhat formal manner," and on behalf of the lady I desired the king to rise. Judge my astonishment when I found the eight of hearts rising instead of the king of diamonds. It immediately occurred to me what to do, the cards had been put together the wrong

way round. A friend had been talking to me and taking my attention whilst preparing the cards, hence the mistake. I looked at the lady with astonishment, and feigned that I could not understand it, and knowing that I must get the second eight of hearts out of the way I placed the first eight back again into the glass and requested the lady to try again. Once more the same effect, the eight came up again. Thus the eights were disposed. But I pretended to be still more embarrassed, and appeared to be on the point of giving the trick up as a failure, when it occurred to me to go to the side and pretend that someone was speaking to me, and as if I was suddenly reminded of something important, went to the lady and apologising to her, said it was my fault that there had been a mistake. I had quite forgotten to give her the magic wand to hold whilst commanding the card to appear. But now to make doubly sure I gave the wand to lady number two, and asked her to put my assertion to the test, by desiring her card, the nine of clubs, to appear, which she did successfully. Amidst great applause my ruse had succeeded. I now handed it to the first lady, and she was of course equally successful with her

king of diamonds. I took no further notice of the eight of hearts, except to thank the lady for having assisted me by choosing it. My trick went with greater *éclat* owing to the mistake. So the next evening I arranged that it should happen again, placing two extra cards to rise, instead of interfering with the already arranged order of the cards. When someone asked Robert Houdin by what trick he would judge the ability of a conjurer, he replied, "I should judge him by the way in which he got out of a difficulty." I trust I shall not be considered egotistical, if I say that I felt rather proud of the manner in which I "got out" of this *contretemps*, which was not a small one, especially as it was before an audience of three thousand people.

EXPLANATIONS OF A FEW TRICKS.

“Ye shall have miracles, aye, sound ones too.”—

LALLA ROOKH.

ALTHOUGH it is stated in a previous chapter of this book that persons, as a rule do not like to be disillusioned with regard to the tricks and deceptions of the conjurer, still there are many anxious to learn the inner secrets of these mysteries. It is to them that I am devoting this chapter, to explain a few devices which have proved useful to me in my profession, and may prove useful and interesting to those of my readers who occasionally practise the “mystic art.” For many years past a table with a small shelf fixed at the back of it, called a “servante,” has always been considered indispensable to a conjurer. It was looked upon as part of his equipment, but was always regarded with a certain amount of suspicion by the audience. If any object disappeared from their view, and they could give no satisfactory account of the disappearance, they naturally concluded that it went

into this table or "up his sleeve." The conjurer has had of late years to resort to some other means and the orthodox table has been in a great measure discarded, and new methods calculated to serve the same purpose, and to ensure the same effects have been devised. One of these consists of a light wire frame hinged in the centre so that it will close up flatly, and made with a bag or net forming a lining to it. This handy little contrivance is made so that it may be closed when not in use. It can very easily be attached to the back of any ordinary chair or table, and proves an excellent substitute for the old fashioned and clumsy "servante." Innumerable are the uses to which this little bit of concealed apparatus may be devoted, viz.: to conceal articles which are to be introduced into hats, boxes, etc., or to form a receptacle for any article to be vanished from a performer's hands, or to effect an exchange of any article necessary for the trick which is being performed. The conjurer using a chair in this manner creates less suspicion in the minds of his audience than if he used a table for the same purpose, and thereby heightens the effect of his illusion. Let us suppose that the

“magician” has produced several handkerchiefs by one of the methods which I shall presently explain, and his desire is to make them disappear as mysteriously as they were produced. The handkerchiefs are thrown apparently carelessly over the back of the chair to which the “bag servante” is attached. He takes the first handkerchief, and rubbing it between the palms of his hands it rolls itself into a little ball which he palms in his left hand while apparently it is held in the right. He apparently passes it mysteriously under a plate or into a box, or any place which he may have chosen, according to the *denouement* of his trick. The right hand is opened and, lo! the mouchoir has vanished. In taking up the second handkerchief from the chair with the left hand he dexterously drops handkerchief number one into the net or bag which is at the back of the chair ready to receive it, and this operation is repeated until the last handkerchief has disappeared. A small rabbit or dove can also be vanished by the aid of this net, the rabbit disappearing at the lowest point of its supposed flight, instead of at its highest, whilst the performer makes the apparently innocent action of passing behind the chair. This

kind of "servante" has also the advantage of being perfectly silent. Hartz used it very effectively in the vanishing glass of water trick. This old illusion will perhaps bear explanation. The glass used for the trick is an ordinary tumbler, but the top edge of it is ground, and a glass or talc disc fits on to it, so that the water is still retained in the glass when it is reversed. The performer desires some person from the audience to come up on the stage or platform to assist him, and hands the person a chair, with the net "servante" attached, and closed. Desiring him to be seated, the "servante" is opened. He then hands him the glass to examine if he pleases, and requests him to fill it to the brim with water from a glass jug handed to him. This he does, the professor then takes the glass from him, and in so doing places on it the glass disc, which he has in the meantime palmed. He then pours a little more water upon the disc, which has the effect of more effectually concealing it, and gives the glass the appearance of running over with water. It is then covered over with a large handkerchief, in the centre of which is concealed a cardboard disc of the same size as the top of the glass. The professor then

asks that he may be allowed to place it on the assistant's head, and in the act of bringing it up to his head drops the glass into the net, but still holds the cardboard disc through the handkerchief so that the shape of the glass is still preserved, and the audience still imagine the glass to be there. Changing his mind the professor declares that the assistant shall swallow the water, glass and all, and desiring him to open his mouth, he waves the handkerchief, the glass and water disappear. He makes the assistant rise from the chair with the idea of finding it; he searches him and cannot discover it. Moving the chair he asks him again to be seated, spreads the handkerchief on the assistant's back and finally over his head, and jokingly remarking that he suspects that he is suffering from "water on the brain," feigns to have discovered the whereabouts of the glass. He taps the assistant's head and raises the handkerchief by the cardboard disc, the shape of the glass appears and the audience come to the conclusion that the glass is there. The professor in lifting the disc with the left hand recovers the glass of water from the net, and introduces it underneath the handkerchief and shape,

and taking off the shape together with the glass disc he displays the glass full of water presumably from the assistant's head. Although this trick is a simple one (the secret of it being the glass disc palmed on to the glass of water which is then retained by atmospheric pressure), with a little *bonnement* or good "patter" it can be made extremely effective.

√ I mentioned at the commencement of this chapter that I should try and explain several methods of producing handkerchiefs. I want to confine myself to those methods which have not yet been published, and which I take it will be of most interest to the readers of these pages. It is a *sine qua non* that a conjurer performing tricks of this description should come before the audience and present his hands perfectly empty, and although personally I am adverse to the practice of baring the arms, yet it is occasionally necessary to do so, and in some species of tricks, and especially in this, it certainly considerably augments the effect produced. In the event of desiring to produce a handkerchief with bare arms and empty hands, an ingenious little piece of apparatus is sometimes used, in the shape of an extra finger,

made of tin, and painted flesh colour to match the hand. This extra finger has a kind of forked clip, with which it is fixed to the hand between the second and third fingers, and contains a small silk handkerchief. When the hands are waved about, ostensibly to show they are empty, this extra finger cannot be detected, the hands being apparently empty. When it is necessary to produce the handkerchief, the additional finger is brought into the palm of the hand, the handkerchief is extracted, and the empty finger is conveniently got rid of by palming, or by secreting it under the handkerchief produced.

Similar in effect to the foregoing is a small sheath, or clip, painted the colour of the hand, and fixed to the inner side of the second finger. When the hand is slightly bent the sheath fills up the curve made by bending the fingers, and the handkerchief is concealed underneath the sheath. After use the sheath is disposed of in a manner similar to the disposal of the additional finger.

Another piece of apparatus of the same class is a false palm made of metal, coloured also to match the hand and fastened by two clips, on the sides or edges

of the hands. This device will effectually cover and conceal two handkerchiefs, whilst the hands are being casually shown to be empty.

A handkerchief is sometimes concealed in a small leather bag about the size of a crown piece, which, being suspended by a fine thread from the thumb, hangs at the back of the hand, whilst the hands appear to the audience to be quite empty. When the handkerchief is to be produced, the hands are brought together, and the little bag swings over from the back of the hand to the front, to a convenient position between the hands, and the handkerchief is then extracted and produced. The reverse action of this bag may be utilised to vanish a handkerchief, the handkerchief being tucked into the bag whilst in the act of rubbing it apparently smaller, the bag and the handkerchief swinging over to the back of the hand, where it remains completely hidden from sight, whilst the hands are shown to be empty. This is an extremely useful contrivance, and can be bought or made for a few pence.

Another good method to produce handkerchiefs is to have, we will suppose, three coloured silk ones,

laid down the inside of the back of the right leg of the trousers, the ends protruding slightly through small holes made in the cloth. A white handkerchief is borrowed, and spread over the right knee, the first finger and thumb of the right hand takes hold of the protruding ends one at a time, and in lifting the white handkerchief, the coloured one is drawn through the aperture, under cover of it, and is produced from its folds, the operation being repeated until the three handkerchiefs are produced.

A very ingenious method of producing one handkerchief is that in which the magic wand plays a conspicuous part ; this is a purely sleight of hand feat, and when well performed is highly effective. A small silk handkerchief is wrapped moderately tightly round one end of the wand, the end of the handkerchief being tucked into its folds to prevent it unwrapping. The performer comes forward, holding the end of the wand, together with the handkerchief, in his right hand. Calling attention to his hands being empty, he places the end of the wand with the handkerchief on it, under his left arm, the handkerchief being concealed by the armpit. Showing his hands

both at the same time to be empty back and front, he takes the wand by the end, grasping the handkerchief with his right hand, taps his left hand with the wand again to show it is empty, then takes the opposite end of the wand in his left hand, drawing the handkerchief off into his right, and keeping his hand closed he taps it with the wand, and upon opening his right hand the handkerchief is discovered. I recommend this to any of my readers as a very pretty and novel opening to a handkerchief trick, and as one well worth practising by any student of sleight of hand.

A very effective trick, and one which is always accepted by any audience with great favour, whether exhibited in a drawing room, or upon a stage, is one I have styled the "Congress of Nations." The effect of this very pretty illusion is as follows:—The attention of the audience is first called to the fact that nothing is concealed up the sleeves, in fact, if it is necessary the arms may be bared before commencing the experiment. Three pieces of tissue paper of different colours are brought forward each about twelve inches square. These are given to the audience to examine,

to prove that nothing is hidden in the papers, they are then taken back from the audience, and when rubbed gently in the hands, the papers gradually disappear, and hundreds of little flags of the same colours as the papers, and each mounted upon a little stick, are seen growing, as it were, from the hands, and are distributed amongst the audience, until only two or three are held in the hand. From these the original papers are reproduced. Pretending then to have been asked for some more flags, by one of the audience who has not been fortunate enough to obtain any, the performer repeats the operation, more flags being forthcoming from his hands, they are waved slightly and a large silk Union Jack, or other flag, large enough to almost cover the performer is produced. This finish to the charming trick never fails to bring forth loud applause from the audience. The secret is simplicity itself. These little flags are about three inches long and two inches wide, and made out of tissue paper, each flag mounted on a thin stick of "bass." They are laid one on the other until there are about a gross in each packet. They are rolled tightly, the ends of the sticks clipped to a uniform

length, and then rolled up in black tissue paper. One of these packets is concealed under each lappel of the coat, the black paper preventing them from being seen. When taking the papers back from the audience, after examination, they are taken back one at a time. When two papers are in the right hand they should be held by placing the second finger outside the papers, towards the audience, the remaining fingers held behind the papers, nearest the performer. In the act of reaching out the left hand to obtain possession of the third paper, the right hand is in a natural position over one of the packets, and it can be very easily taken from the lappet of the coat, quite unobserved, by the fingers of the right hand, which are hidden from the audience, and under cover of the papers; the flags are unrolled behind the papers, and, as they make their appearance, the sheets of tissue paper, including the black tissue paper round the flags, are rolled tightly in the right hand and palmed. To re-produce the papers, the right hand is brought towards the tops of the two or three remaining flags in the left hand, and the papers produced from them and spread out to the

audience, the black paper being squeezed up tightly and dropped to the ground amongst the falling flags. The operation is repeated in a similar manner, but of course the left hand takes the packet out from the lappet on this occasion. The large flag is concealed in the vest or side pockets of the coat, whichever is most convenient to the performer; by keeping a dozen or two flags of the second packet in the hands, opportunity is afforded to obtain the large flag, which should be tightly rolled, in such a manner that by holding the two corners of the top of the flag it unfurls and opens immediately at one pull. The papers of the second packet are palmed until the large flag is spread over the body, when they can be easily placed unobserved in one of the performer's pockets. The best method of keeping the packets in position behind the lappets of the coat is to stick a large pin through about a quarter of an inch of the cloth under the lappet, the point end of the pin sticking upwards unprotected, the packets can then be hooked on and will be perfectly safe, and when taken with an upward movement will easily slip off the pin, and not drag or disarrange the coat. Before

trying the experiment, the flags should be placed in position before a looking glass. The proper length of the sticks will then be arrived at, and the position of the pins can be regulated.

I will explain a card trick, with which I have always been very successful, and that causes a deal of wonder amongst almost every class of audience. I prepare a half sheet of letter paper by painting upon it a large number, which fills the whole side of the paper. We will suppose the number I select to be 27, and upon another half sheet of paper I write in pencil four figures, one under the other, which amount when added up to 27. We will suppose the figures written on my paper to be 8, 9, 7, 3, both of these papers are folded three times till they are about two inches square. The large number 27 I have in the right pocket of my trousers, and the paper with the untotaled figures upon it in a small pocket of my coat. I commence by desiring some ladies of the audience to select cards, and four cards are chosen, or rather forced upon them. I request them to keep them for the present, and not to let anyone see them, especially myself. I then take an envelope from my table and

take from it a clean half sheet of letter paper. I ask a gentleman to place a figure upon it, but to be careful, in doing so, that I shall not see it. This he does. I ask him to double the paper in halves, and pass it to another gentleman. He in turn places another figure underneath the one already written. A third, and also a fourth, do the same. I ask the fourth gentleman to draw a line underneath the figures and to double the paper again and again. In the meantime I secretly palm the paper with the untotaled figures upon it, and substituting it for the original paper, hand it to a fifth gentleman and desire him to add the figures up, and place the total under the line already placed there by the fourth gentleman. This he does, and writes the total 27 down on the paper. Not having seen the figures previously, he naturally thinks they are the figures written by the four previous gentlemen, and does not suspect the paper to have been prepared beforehand. I ask him to double the paper up, and in the meantime I palm the large number 27, and giving him the envelope to examine, I, holding the paper upon which he has just written the total of the numbers, exchange it for the

large number, handing him the paper again as he thinks, but really giving him the paper with the large 27 upon it. I ask him to place it in the envelope and seal it up, and place it in his breast pocket, to take care of it. I now introduce a small top having certain numbers painted upon its sides, somewhat like a teetotum. This top is loaded in an ingenious manner, so that when a person spins it any number can be made to come uppermost, by previously pointing an index spot on the top to the number required. I ask that some person will be good enough to spin the top once or twice, to prove that it does not always show the same number in order to negative the idea that the top is prepared. At the third spin I announce that whatever number now falls uppermost will be the same as, and indicate the total of, the pips upon the chosen cards, also the total of the figures written upon the paper by the four gentlemen. I then turn the index spot to the number 27, someone spins the top, and number 27, of course, turns up. The pips upon the cards chosen are counted and amount to 27. I ask the fifth gentleman what was the total of the figures he added up. He replies 27 (of course it was).



SPRINGING THE CARDS.

In order to verify his statement I ask him to show the total in his own handwriting. He opens the envelope and there is the big 27 staring him in the face, much to his amazement, and the astonishment of the audience. Loaded dice may be used in this trick if a top cannot be procured. I have tried both, and I much prefer the top.

My aim in these particular pages of my book being to give my readers an insight into some of the tricks of a conjurer, which do not fall precisely under the heading of apparatus tricks, explanations of which have been published *ad nauseam*, and also to explain those tricks which are more dependent upon little artifices or "fakes" to use the term by which they are technically known. Since the time of Anderson, and until only quite recently, the inexhaustible bottle trick was performed by using a black tin bottle, divided into several compartments ending in a series of small tubes in the neck, and which contained the various wines. The wines were kept in the various compartments by placing the fingers over some small holes in the body of the bottle until a particular wine was asked for; one of the fingers would then be

raised, and on the air being thus admitted, the wine would flow from the neck of the bottle into the glass. A great improvement upon this trick is the production of various wines or coloured waters from a clear white glass decanter, and even ink or milk at the same time, should they be desired by the audience. This looks a very mysterious trick indeed, as the various colours come from a decanter containing only clear water, and as one glass only is used, which, if necessary, can be washed and wiped by one of the audience, before the production of the colour or wine asked for. The method of performing this illusion is as follows: The decanter should be a large one to hold about a quart, and the top or lip of it should be quite flat. It looks better for the decanter to have a stopper in it at the commencement of the trick. This decanter should be filled with water, with about half a gill of whisky mixed with it, together with a tea-spoonful of carbonate of soda, and the top of the decanter should be wiped perfectly dry. The colours are produced by means of aniline dyes, which, for the benefit of my reader I

may as well say should be procured in crystal form, from a drysalter's. To represent the various wines, which may be asked for by an audience, the following colours will be most useful—emerald green, canary yellow, pomona, ponceau, Bismarck brown, and black. These should be separately dissolved in a little water and glycerine, and a little honey added. These should be ground together, until they assume the consistency of thick gum. A small spot of each is then placed round the top or lip of the decanter at equal distances, a rather wide space being left to form a channel for the water to pass through when poured out alone and free from colour. It is, of course, necessary to remember the proper order of the colours round the top of the decanter. All is now ready. When any particular colour is required to represent the wine desired, the decanter is held in such a manner that the water may run over that particular colour, with which it mixes as it flows into the glass. In case milk be asked for, undiluted Goulard's extract (*liquorplumbi*) must be previously placed in the bottom of another glass. As it is clear, like water, it cannot be seen, but when the water from the decanter is

poured into the glass, it mixes with it immediately, and produces a liquid exactly like milk. This would not be the case except for the carbonate of soda which is placed in the water. The spirit must not be forgotten when pouring in the water, as this dissolves the glycerine quickly, and the colours then wash completely off the top of the decanter. It is always wise to rinse the glass used for the colours in a glass bowl as the audience then see that no chemical is placed in the glass, and they have very little suspicion of the "fake" round the lip of the decanter. This is a very pretty trick and causes great astonishment.

Some little time ago I wanted particularly to include the sand trick in my programme. In this experiment different coloured sands are mixed in a large bowl or basin of water, and are afterwards brought out of the water in handfuls, dry, and each colour separate, the audience choosing the order in which the different sands shall be taken out of the bowl. Upon the occasion to which I refer, time would not permit me to prepare the trick in the old method of adding fat to the sand when hot, but a means occurred to me which I used then, and have since

used very successfully, a method which is simple, easy to work, and easily prepared, and good enough to deserve an explanation *in extenso*. I commence by showing an ordinary hand basin to the audience, and handing it to a person to examine. This always causes a great deal of merriment, though I really cannot tell why, unless it is that a person sitting in the stalls, and holding a large basin with both hands, looks somewhat droll. I turn up both my shirt sleeves, and taking back the bowl, the person having satisfied himself as to its genuineness, half fill it with water from a pitcher. I then bring forward two large bags, each containing about two quarts of sand, one holding red sand, the other white. I hand two small plates to persons in the audience, and taking out a handful of sand from each bag, pour it on both of the plates. Having thus satisfied the audience that the sand is genuine, I pour the sand off the plates into the water, and then add several handfuls alternately from each bag, stirring it round in the water, which, of course, then assumes a muddy appearance. Asking a gentleman if he will assist me, I take a handful of the wet sand, and putting it on a plate, I request

him to separate the red sand from the white, and give him at the same time two clean plates upon which to put the separated sands. Naturally enough he will not undertake the task. I then assure him of the simplicity of my request, and proceed to exemplify it. I desire the audience to tell me which sand they would like me to produce first. Let us suppose the red is chosen. Dipping my hand into the bowl, I stir the water round, and take out a handful of sand, hold it over a plate, and a shower of perfectly dry red sand trickles on to it. This is repeated with white sand with similar result. The solution of this seemingly wonderful experiment is this. (Preparatory to performing the trick, I wrap up a handful of each sand in a piece of goldbeater's skin, making a packet a little smaller than a hen's egg. I twist the top round once or twice, and tie it tightly with a piece of thin twine. I cut the superfluous goldbeater's skin off with a sharp pair of scissors, and seal each packet with sealing wax, just sufficient to prevent the water percolating through into the sand, using different coloured wax to denote the colours of the sand within the different packets.

Two of each of these packets I have concealed in the large bags of sand, and in the act of taking the sand out of the bags, I introduce the packets of sand into the bowl. This is easily effected under cover of the loose sand, and they cannot be seen lying at the bottom of the water, in consequence of its muddy appearance. When the desired colours are asked for it is only necessary in obtaining a handful of sand, to get hold of one of the proper packets, bringing it out with the hand closed, shaking the water off the hand the packet is now squeezed, this breaks the skin, and the sand runs out perfectly dry upon the plate. Placing the hand again into the bowl as if to rinse it, the skin cover is left in the water, or can be palmed away whilst wiping the hands with a towel. After the skins are disposed of, a person from the audience may try to take some dry sand from the bowl, this, of course, he will not succeed in doing, nor will he find anything suspicious in the basin, but the feat can be repeated immediately by the performer by gaining possession of another packet, which he has secreted in one of his pockets, or concealed upon a table under cover of some article such as a towel or

a plate. The packets can be also made up using waxed paper, if they are not required to stay long in the water.

Occasions sometimes occur when it is of advantage to cause a handkerchief to disappear in the sight of the audience. To accomplish this, specially prepared handkerchiefs are made by soaking fine muslin or cambric repeatedly in a solution of magnesium. These are technically known as flash handkerchiefs and when ignited vanish with a brilliant flash, leaving scarcely any trace behind, much in the same manner as the well known lightning paper. One of these handkerchiefs may be hung upon a fine wire in full view of the audience, and when touched presumedly by the performer's wand, but really a glass rod heated at one end and substituted for the wand, it ignites and disappears instantly in a flash of flame. Another method by which the same effect may be produced, except that the handkerchief disappears from the performer's hand, is by using what is known as a "Faust flash" instead of the glass rod. To prepare a flash of this description, some fine glass vaccine tubes must be procured, and filled with sulphuric acid, after

which the ends of each tube are fused together by simply holding the ends in a gas flame. Next a powder consisting of two parts of chlorate of potash, and one of powdered sugar is procured. A small sheet of lightning paper of about the size of a cigarette paper is then taken, and a tiny quantity of gun cotton about the size of a pea, pulled out lightly and made fluffy, is laid on the paper. A tiny portion of the powder, about as much as would cover the half of a threepenny piece is spread upon the gun cotton, with the point of a pen-knife, one of the tubes of acid is then laid on the powder, and the whole is rolled carefully up, like a small cigarette, and the ends screwed round to prevent any powder or the small glass tube from slipping out. A flash thus prepared can be laid on the table ready for use, and when wrapped lightly in a corner of a flash handkerchief, and held between the first and second fingers and thumb of the right hand, a slight pressure of the thumb is only necessary to snap the tube, the acid in it mingles with the chlorate of potash and sugar which ignites the gun cotton, consumes the lightning paper, and thus conveys the fire to the handkerchief, which is

also instantly consumed. These flashes are used on the stage by Mephistophelian demons, etc., to cause a flame to appear with a snap of the fingers upon making their entrances, hence their name "Faust flashes." I have made mention in a previous chapter of these flashes being used by Mr. Toole in the burlesque of "Fa(u)st and Loose," and the accident which subsequently occurred, for which I hold myself partly to blame, should be guarded against by the performer.

A very effective trick, and one which never fails to gain great applause when neatly performed, is that in which a card chosen from a new pack, is found again by stabbing it with a pen-knife, the performer being blindfolded throughout the whole of the trick.* The method of presenting this startling although simple illusion is as follows :—A person is desired to come upon the stage, or if the trick is being performed in a drawing-room, to the performer's table, in which case he should be requested to stand behind the table to the left of the performer and facing the audience. Having procured the assistance of such a person, the per-

* See Frontispiece.

former lays an open pen-knife upon the table and calls attention to a perfectly new pack of cards, still in the duty wrapper and unopened. Having a large pocket handkerchief at hand (it may be borrowed from the audience if preferred) the performer then requests the erstwhile assistant to blindfold him. When the latter has done so, and assured himself that it is "impossible for the performer to see," the performer hands him the new pack of cards, and asks him to take off the wrapper, to shuffle the pack, and select from it any card he likes, this he does, and hands the performer the remainder of the cards. With a view to make the experiment more interesting to the audience, he is requested to hold the card up, so that it may be seen by everybody. This is also advisable, as there can then be no doubt as to the identity of the card chosen, and it also gives the performer an opportunity to slightly "bridge" the remainder of the cards, which are then handed back to the assistant, with a request that he will replace the chosen card in the pack. This he does and hands them again to the performer, who by holding the cards rather low down, can see them by looking downwards through the

opening made by the projection of the nose, and is thus enabled to "make the pass" at the chosen card, which having been out of the pack, when the remainder were "bridged," remains perfectly straight and unbent. The chosen card will then be on the top of the pack, and the name of it can be seen at a glance by slightly raising it with the little finger of the left hand. The cards are then straightened, and the performer, as if a sudden thought occurred to him, asks the assistant to shuffle them, at the same time "palming" two or three cards, including the top or chosen card (it is easier to take off two or three cards than to take one card only). The remainder of the pack is handed to the assistant to shuffle, giving them to him with the right hand which contains the "palmed" cards. Having shuffled them he hands them back to the performer, who now replaces the palmed cards upon the top of the remainder, and to convince the assistant that he has not left the chosen card on the top of the pack, makes the pass at the middle of the pack, keeping the little finger of the left hand upon the chosen card, and takes off the *then* top card, and asks

if that is the one chosen. The assistant of course replies negatively. Making the pass again, this time bringing the chosen card back to the top, he transfers the cards to his right hand, and shows him the bottom card, and asks if that is the one. He replies again, No ! Having satisfied the assistant and the audience that the chosen card is neither top nor bottom of the pack, the performer places them upon the table, and desires the assistant to divide them into two or three heaps, artfully suggesting three. Care must now be taken that the cards are not shuffled or disarranged and the performer must keep his eyes, though still bandaged, upon the heap which has the chosen card on the top of it. He now asks the assistant to hand him the knife which is lying on the table (the performer presumably not being able to see) and then that he will direct his hand with the knife in it to one of the heaps. The cards are then carefully slipped with the point of the knife, one at a time, and spread over the table, care being taken to keep in sight the chosen card. The performer drops the knife upon the table and places his hands on the cards, the right hand on the chosen card, and he asks

that the assistant will place his hands on the backs of the performer's hands and mix the cards together with him. The performer is thus enabled to protect the chosen card. When the cards are mixed, he asks for the knife again, and holding the assistant's right hand with his left, he flings the knife down amongst the cards sticking it into one; he asks if it has pierced a card, and upon receiving an affirmative reply, he declares that it should have stabbed the chosen one. Placing the assistant's right hand on the performer's forehead as if reading his thoughts, he calls out the name of the card, and on being informed by the assistant that he has devined the correct name of it, he takes the handkerchief off his eyes (see frontispiece), pushes away the remaining cards from the knife, showing that one only has been stabbed, and pulling the knife out of the table, lo! the chosen card is found fixed to its point. To present this trick successfully the performer must not be at all nervous, and being blindfolded must make his "passes" neatly and dexterously. The whole illusion is dependent upon the *savoir faire* and address of the performer,

and as it has a very startling effect, is well worth the practice necessary to ensure a satisfactory result.

I have been asked so many times to give an explanation of that wonderful illusion of M. Buatier de Koltas, "The Vanishing Lady" (or, as it was known to the Parisians, "L'escamotage en personne vivante"), which I had the pleasure of first introducing into England, although it had been previously presented to Parisian audiences. Several books and papers have already given an *exposè* of the trick, yet I feel compelled to inform my readers of the method in which this illusion was performed by myself. As many of my readers will doubtless remember my presenting it to the public at Messrs. Maskelyne and Cooke's, at the Egyptian Hall, I will describe it as nearly as possible as it was shown there. Although, since then, I have performed it in somewhat different manners, and with several variations, the original method was never surpassed. It will be necessary in the first place to describe the construction of the chair, from which the lady vanishes. The chair is made of solid wood, and although it has the appearance of being made with a cane seat and back, the

seat and back are in reality only covered with cane work, glued to the black wood. In the illustration (Fig. 1) the chair will be seen as it appears to the audience before the commencement of the trick. In Fig. 2 will be seen the various parts extended, and

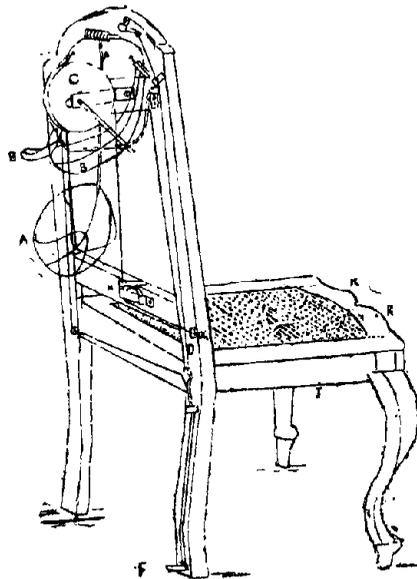


Fig. 1.

forming the shape of the medium to be “vanished.” Fixed at the back of the chair there is a wire head piece A, a wire work form of basin shape, to represent a head when covered with a veil, and two wire work shoulder pieces B, which work on a thin iron bar or

pivot C. Attached to one end of the bolt is a pulley wheel G, about four inches in diameter; running round this wheel there is a strong cord passing

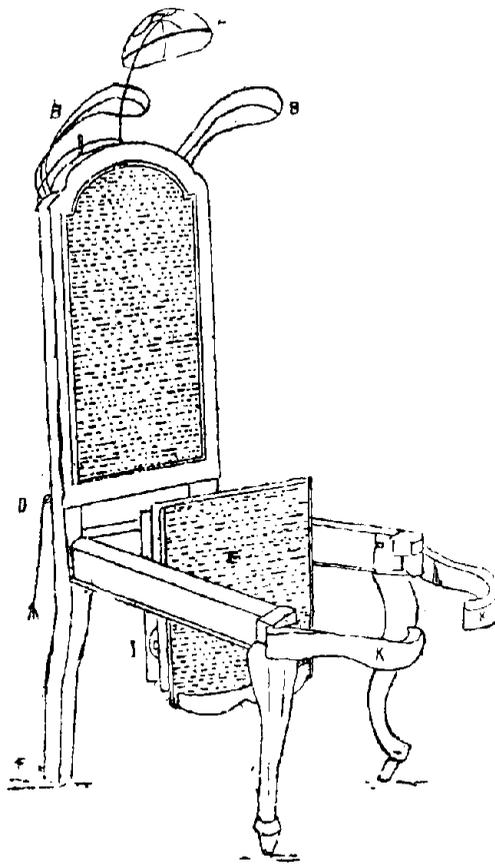


Fig. 2.

through an eye at H, and terminating in a knot at D. The cane seat E is in reality a trap hinged at the back, and opening downwards, which, when closed,

is fixed with a spring catch and secured with a bolt at I. In the front of the chair is a double scroll, which looks as if made to give a finish to the chair; but these scrolls can be pulled forward from their centre, and will come out so that when they are covered with the veil, they represent the knees of the lady medium. When pulled out they are held in the required position by two light spring catches, and will stay in that position until released by the performer. A wire runs down the back of a leg of the chair, and is attached to the spring catch which holds up the head and the shoulder pieces, and is also attached to the knee pieces by a wire running along the inside of one of the sides of the chair, both wires terminating and being attached to a pedal at the bottom of the chair leg at F. The newspaper which is shown to the audience, and which is afterwards spread upon the floor of the stage, ostensibly to prevent the lady from disappearing through the stage, is made with a trap in it which possesses elastic hinges. This trap is made in a sheet of cardboard pasted between two sheets of the actual newspaper, and cut with a sharp knife, so that it

will open and shut. When shown to the audience, the paper is held with the trap towards the performer, the fly sheet hanging over the trap, covering it from view of the audience. When spread on the stage the trap is undermost, and the loose, or fly sheet, of the newspaper being uppermost is lifted up and drawn backwards, giving the appearance of a whole newspaper spread out on the stage. The trap in the newspaper exactly fits over a trap about fourteen inches square, cut in the stage, opening downwards, and when closed is secured by an easy working, but strong, bolt, the exact place being found by two marks upon the stage corresponding with two upon the paper. The lady is introduced, and enters into some appropriate conversation with the performer, who unfolds and exhibits the newspaper, of course keeping the trap towards himself. He then lays it upon the stage, taking care that the marks on the paper correspond with those on the stage. The chair is then placed over the trap; the lady is asked to be seated, and the performer, to heighten the effect of the illusion, goes through the form of apparently sending her to sleep by holding a bottle containing a fluid under her nostrils, although

she is in fact, very wide awake indeed at this moment. A large silk veil, seven feet square, is then exhibited to the audience, having a hook sewn exactly in the centre of it, with which to "vanish it," as described presently. Holding the veil by the corners, the performer raises it high enough in front of the lady to hide her for an instant. At that moment she pulls the cord D. This elevates the head piece A and brings the shoulder pieces B B over her shoulders; the veil is laid over these and pinned behind the head-piece, and then pulled down to the floor, thus enveloping everything; she pulls out the knee pieces which remain fixed outside her knees and support the veil. By a preconcerted signal, the trap is now opened in the stage and the lady draws the bolt I; the seat of the chair falls downwards while she supports herself by the sides of the chair. The performer, pretending to hear some one say that the lady had gone, raises the veil again as high as the knees, just to show that she is still there. On his pulling it down again, she instantly drops through the paper trap and the trap in the stage on to a platform two feet ten inches below the stage. Standing on this, she pushes up the seat

of the chair, which shuts with a slight spring catch. The trap is then closed securely. As all this takes but a few seconds the audience imagine that the lady is still under the veil. The performer then pulls down his right sleeve a stout cord, having a loop at the end, which he fixes in the hook on the veil, while at the same time he unpins the veil with the left hand. On his touching the pedal F with his left foot, the head and shoulder pieces fly back behind the chair, the knee pieces or scrolls spring back to their original positions as part of the ornamentation of the chair and the veil disappears, completely, up the performer's sleeve. As the "vanishing" of the veil was the most difficult part of the trick to accomplish, I will give a description of the method: I wore a dress coat made rather full under the arms, and an imitation waistcoat, shirt front and collar which were all sewn into the coat; I wore no shirt or undervest, and had a strip of cuff (really a collar) sewn in the cuff of my coat. On my right wrist I had buckled a wide leather strap and a stout cord a quarter of an inch in diameter, attached to it, terminating at the other end in a loop, the length of the cord being the same as the distance between my

wrists, when my arms were extended. This cord passed up my right sleeve, across my chest, and down my left sleeve, and through a brass lazy pulley which was strapped on my left wrist ; attached to the loop of the thick cord, and in a running loop, was a thin black cord, which came back up my left sleeve, across my chest, and passed down my right sleeve and terminated in a loop through which I kept the little finger of my right hand. When about to make the veil vanish, I walked up the stage as if to see that all was prepared, and looked mysteriously about. This gave me an opportunity to take the loop off my finger, and pull down the thin black cord, which would, by closing in my arms, enable me to draw the loop of the thick cord down my right sleeve into my hand. Dropping the thin black cord upon the floor, where it is not noticed, I hooked the loop of the thick cord on to the hook of the veil, and upon extending my arms the veil flew with great rapidity up my right sleeve, across my chest and down my left sleeve, until it was stopped by the lazy pulley on my left wrist. The veil was made of red sarcenet, and had a black border six inches

wide to it, so that if by accident a small piece of the cloth should protude for an instant, the black would not be so noticeable as the red silk would be. The flight of the veil is very rapid indeed. Some of the audience hazard an opinion that it must be pulled off the stage, others declare that it disappears through the back scene, few indeed, imagining for a single moment that it would be possible to get so large a square of material unseen up the sleeve. The trick, in my opinion, is nothing, unless the veil is made to disappear. The beautiful part of the trick, which consists of appearing to lift the lady wrapped in the silk veil, and throwing her into space, is otherwise lost. I think this is the most perfect stage illusion ever invented, and one for which M. Buatier deserves unmeasured credit.



CHARLES BERTRAM AND FAMILY.

HINTS TO AMATEURS.

I ENTER upon this chapter with some diffidence, as so much has already been written upon the subject, and instruction to amateurs has been given in nearly every book upon conjuring which has been published. So many valuable hints have been supplied from time to time by authors of experience, that very little beyond my own private opinion, and the results of my own experiments are left for me to explain.

First let me presume that my reader knows nothing whatever about the "mystic art;" and that he has developed a desire to become sufficiently proficient in conjuring to be able to give a performance of, let me say, an hour's duration, for the amusement of his personal friends only. This will for a time, no doubt, satisfy his ambition, although the probability is, that if he is fairly successful in his performances before his friends, he will soon aim at giving a public exhibition of his powers, probably for a school-room bazaar, or for some other charitable object, in which

he or some of his friends or relations may be interested. My advice to such an one is to commence by learning the most rudimentary principle of the art. If he can learn how "to palm a coin" (a florin is the best), so perfectly that he can deceive another person as to which hand contains it, and learns how to "make the pass" with a pack of cards perfectly, he will have mastered two most important factors in the conjurer's art. His hand will also soon become accustomed to holding larger objects than coins, and articles such as eggs, balls, gloves; etc., will be made to disappear with equal facility. In spite of the Italian proverb, which says, "He who reads rules," I do not think that any person would become a conjurer by reading only, but there are many excellent treatises upon the subject which I heartily recommend the embryo conjurer to read carefully. A good elementary work upon the subject, one which will give the amateur all the instruction he requires, is "Modern Magic," by Professor Hoffman, which may be followed by reading "More Magic" by the same author. In these two books, Prof. Hoffman fully explains the various methods of palm-

ing coins, etc., and if the neophyte will, before attempting anything in the way of a programme, content himself with mastering first, the palming of a coin and also "making the pass" perfectly with the cards, there will be nothing in conjuring too difficult for him to accomplish as far as the manipulative portion of the art is concerned. To learn how to palm a coin, constant practice is necessary, and every opportunity of practice should be seized; for instance, when making a payment or taking up change. I do not mean for a moment to infer that a person should ostentatiously palm a coin before every person with whom he comes in contact; but he can secretly palm it at many odd times, and so make the palm of the hand grow accustomed to the feeling of the coin in it, until it becomes almost like another finger in its susceptibility and dexterity. In my own case, the constant practice has caused the muscle of my right palm to become so strong, and yet so delicate, that by contracting the palm I can project a palmed half crown more than a yard in the air, or into my left hand, or across a table with force sufficient to break a glass at that distance. To practise the pass with the cards, the

mode of making which I have fully explained in a previous chapter, care should be taken to make it noiselessly, and the practice obtained by standing before a looking glass and executing the various movements, will be found invaluable to the student. As this pass is the absolute ground work of all card tricks, too much care and attention cannot be bestowed upon it, with a view to reaching perfection in its execution. Let us now suppose that the student has made sufficient progress in the elementary portion of the art, and has arrived at that stage when he desires to put into practice the passes which he has learnt; that he succeeds in dexterously changing cards, that he can make the "one hand pass" and that he can not only palm a coin, but several coins at a time, and that an egg or a billiard ball and such like articles are capable of being manipulated by him with equal ease. The next thing necessary for him, is to arrange the tricks he has chosen for his programme, so that the tricks will follow each other in an appropriate sequence. It is also well when arranging a programme to arrange it if possible so that the performer need not leave the sight of his

audience. Having chosen his tricks and made up his programme, I might now venture to say a word or two respecting his dress. In days gone by, the magician and sorcerer affected a long black velvet robe covered with hieroglyphics and signs of the Zodiac and tied at the waist with a girdle: he wore a tall conical hat, and was armed with a long staff or wand some six feet in length by means of which he led his audience to believe he performed his incantations and worked his pretended miracles. This costume is now quite obsolete. The conjurer takes his position as an entertainer, and his accepted costume is ordinary evening dress; I say ordinary, though it is so only for the audience, since it must have an arrangement of pockets, quite indispensable to the up-to-date conjurer. With regard to these pockets great care should be taken as to their arrangement, their positions must be properly and accurately adjusted, and this can only be done when the clothes have been fitted. The trousers should have in addition to the ordinary pockets, which by the way should have large openings so that the hands may be easily admitted, a small patch pocket upon

the back of each leg five inches across and four inches deep, in such a position that when the arms are hanging loosely and the hands are closed, the knuckles may just touch the top edge of the pocket without in any way necessitating the bending of the body. These pockets are known as "pochettes." Another pocket should be so placed upon the left hip, at the back, so that when the arm is bent and the hand placed upon the hip, the fingers will touch the opening of the pocket. It should slope slightly downwards and be large enough to hold a pack of cards easily while allowing them to project about half an inch. So much for the trousers pockets, a very important item. The waistcoat should have a buckle at the back level with the lower edge of the waistcoat, and made so that it may be tightened or loosened according to necessity. This will be found to be very useful when "vesting" any article, and I prefer it to the elastic band which is sometimes used to tighten the edge of the waistcoat. The coat should have a pocket in each tail, right across the inner side and about five inches deep, the openings sloping downwards about an inch to the outer edges. The top edge or openings of the pockets

or “profondes” as they are called, should be about an inch below the openings of the “pochettes.” A horizontal pocket should be placed in each breast flap of the coat, about ten inches long and five inches deep ; some performers have these pockets made vertically, the edges coming nearly level with the edge of the coat lap, about ten inches in the opening, and going back under the arms about ten inches, and sloping downwards about an inch from front to back ; they are principally used for concealing fish bowls, rabbits, etc.—but the first mentioned will be found the most useful for general purposes ; thus equipped, the performer will be prepared as far as his dress is concerned for almost any ordinary trick. Should occasion arise when he would need any other arrangement of pockets, he must depend then upon his own inventive ability to supply the want.

An indispensable adjunct to a conjurer is his “magic wand.” At first the tyro will find that it is always in his way, if he has not already mislaid it when it is most wanted, but after using it for some time, he will grow so accustomed to its presence, that without it he will feel most awkward. It is of the greatest possible

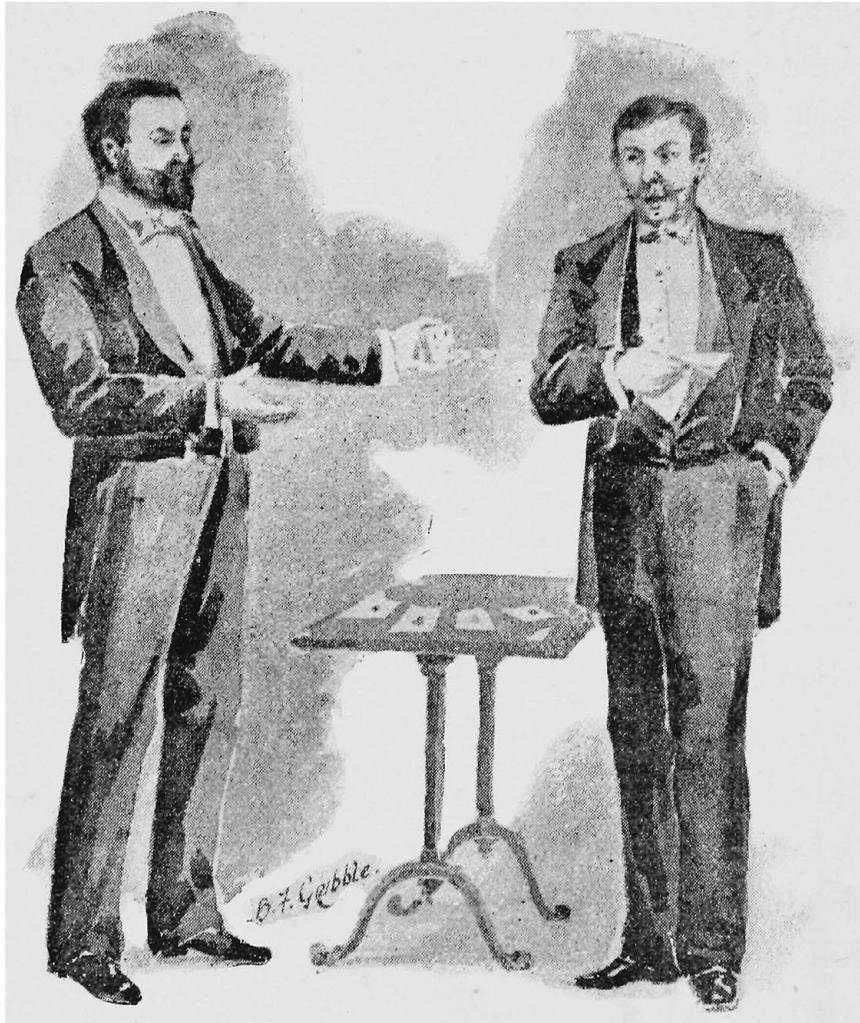
service to a conjurer: should he have an article palmed, holding the wand gives a *raison d'être* for keeping the hand closed, until the opportunity occurs for getting rid of the palmed article; without the wand the hand would look a trifle awkward and suspicious. A person in the audience may be indicated with a graceful wave of the wand without the least offence being given, whereas to point to a person without the wand, would in all probability be considered extremely rude. The conjurer, when emphasising any remark he is making, gesticulates with his wand, pointing here, and pointing there with it, and it takes off any appearance of awkwardness which might otherwise exist; in fact it becomes him in very much the same manner as a "swagger stick" does a guardsman. Outside a conjuring performance, no ordinary person would for a moment believe that the touch of a wand, a simple stick, would have any power whatever to make any article appear, change or vanish, yet, when some mystic effect has been produced by the conjurer, presumably by the touch of his "magic wand," the imagination of the spectator is so affected, that he not being able to give any other explanation

of the seeming mystery, is fully persuaded that the magic wand had something to do with it. I have on many occasions asked ladies, under some pretence or other, to favour me by holding my wand for a moment ; many times they have declined, and if sometimes by any chance, they have consented, they have taken the wand from me so reluctantly, as to lead me to believe that they supposed it possessed some mysterious and potent power, and that they thereby might be affected in some way through its agency. This goes to prove that some of the spectators believe somewhat in the mystic property of the wand, and the supernatural power of the hand that wields it. I have seen performers using a wand made with two silver serpents coiled round a tortoisehell stick, and surmounted by a large ivory death's head—a very massive and elaborate arrangement indeed, and others using a massive silver plated bâton, something like a Lord Mayor's Mace in miniature ; these massive wands seem to me to be out of place in the hands of a conjurer, the mystic touch of a necromancer could hardly be imagined to be given to a delicate article with an unwieldy instrument, heavy enough

to break open an ordinary packing case. No! I think that the less pretentious the wand, the more the idea of mystery is conveyed, and I would recommend the reader to provide himself with a plain polished ebony wand, a little more than half an inch in diameter, and about sixteen inches in length, no attempt at ornamentation being at all necessary.

The student must now consider something, which, to my mind, is of the utmost importance, of as much importance even as the manipulative elements in the art of conjuring; he must not be content only to be perfect in his digital skill, but he must have some knowledge of how to present his illusions to his audience, and to make his performances agreeable and entertaining. To accomplish this the student must become an actor, he must have the ability of talking to his audiences, and of acting the part of a wizard, he must fully believe in his own powers, and must, for the time being, lose his personality, and as fully enter into the character of a necromancer as any actor who sinks his identity in the character he is representing. He must have sufficient relevant patter to make his audience thoroughly and distinctly

understand what he is doing, and it must be sufficiently interesting to hold the attention of his audience, so that his performance may be entertaining from beginning to end, and not be marred by a dull or flagging moment. To be a good conjurer one must be a good entertainer, patterer and elocutionist, and I venture to assert, that it is not so much the trick itself, but the manner of presenting it, which makes it successful. The finest manipulative trick ever invented will go for nothing before an audience unless it is accompanied with appropriate "patter," or, as the French term it, *bonnement*, whilst the simplest trick, enhanced with skilful acting, and distinctly entertaining patter, will attain the greatest amount of recognition. As with acting, so it is with conjuring. Two persons essay to play the character of "Hamlet." They both repeat identically the same words, but one plays the character, whilst the other only "mouths" it. Two persons perform identically the same trick; with one, the illusion, if it can be so called, is finished in a few minutes, falls flat and becomes a dismal failure, whilst the other garnishes the trick with appropriate talk, thoroughly impresses



THE "FOUR ACE" TRICK.

upon his audience what he, from time to time, is doing, seizes his opportunities, makes his points and concludes his illusion amid great applause, and yet the two persons have been performing identically the same trick. I do not hold with a "patter" which is brimful of weak puns and jokes; a pun may be occasionally dropped in as if unconsciously made, and an immediate apology given for it—but to inflict upon an audience a series of puns, is wearisome, uninteresting, and monotonous, and will spoil any trick, no matter how good it may be. I have heard a performer let off a pun or joke in about every ten words of his conversation, grimly laugh at his joke himself as each was evolved, whilst his audience looked blankly at him, and wondered what the poor man was talking about.

The audience must be entertained as well as deceived, and to this end the performer must first arrange the *heads* of what he is about to say. Each explanatory part of his trick must be distinct from another. There must be nothing irrelevant in his conversation; he should feel himself somewhat superior to his audience, and quite master of the

situation ; although at all times deferential, he must get hold of the audience, rivet their attention, and interest them, and when he has thus far succeeded, he will be able to do almost as he pleases with them, within reason.

Every actor tries to "get his audience," as it is termed, every barrister, preacher and orator knows the value of it, and does the same, and experience teaches them the moment they are successful. I do not believe in learning "a patter," word for word, as an unexpected remark from one of the audience, or the slightest contretemps would throw the performer out of his verbal groove. To have the heads of the conversation, or patter, clearly defined ; and to fill in as circumstances require, is much more advantageous. It might be necessary for a beginner to write out completely all he is going to say, but I think if he adopts the plan of learning the "heads" he will be able to "pad" them with appropriate extempore small talk, and find that his conversational ability will pull him through. Nearly every movement necessary to the working of a trick should be covered by patter, and with it appropriate action and movements, which

should also be carefully studied. Let us suppose that it is required to take some article from one of the "pochettes," a suitable attitude should be assumed so as to cover the movements, and a remark made which will divert the attention of the audience at that moment from the necessary action. The same applies when it is necessary to get rid of an article by depositing it in one of the *profondes*, a suitable cover must be made both by word and gesture. The student will find it also a great advantage to recite occasionally ; it will make him familiar with the sound of his own voice, and give him more confidence, when addressing his audiences in his conjuring performances. I presume that it is needless to say that great care must be taken to be, under all circumstances, deferential and exceedingly polite to ladies, and great discretion must also be exercised by the young conjurer so as to use only such words and remarks as will not appear to be impertinent or out of place when addressed to persons of mature age. No opportunity should be made use of, no matter how great the temptation, to make a witty sally or retort, if it is calculated to cause pain, or wound the feelings of any of the

audience. The beginner must practically arrange his "patter" to suit himself (that which suits one person will not suit another), and if he confines himself to making it explanatory, genial, polite and interesting, interspersed with a little good humour, he will do all that is necessary, and it will be found to be far preferable to a quantity of burlesque rubbish, which is rarely appreciated by an audience, and is often taken as an insult to their common sense.

In making up his programme, the beginner will find it very much to his advantage, if he keep the "properties" used in each trick quite separate, that is, suppose a knife is required in two tricks, in different parts of the programme, it will be better to have two knives than rely upon making one do. The one might be used in the first trick, but it would probably be found to be mislaid when required for the second trick. It will be found to be more reliable to have the "props" for each trick placed together upon a table at the back of the scene or behind a screen, before commencing the performance; everything needed is then at hand, the performer's mind is at

rest as far as the "props" are concerned, he will have less anxiety, and far more confidence.

Try also in arranging a programme to make the tricks blend, if possible, and run in a kind of sequence, that is, if a handkerchief is borrowed some little sleight can be performed with it *en passant*, such as apparently stretching it, or tying a mystic knot in it. These little touches will not be found to be out of place. Or suppose a hat takes a prominent part in a trick, something should be taken from it immediately it is in the performer's hands, this is likely to secure the attention of the audience and make them more interested in the trick to follow, for after all it is necessary for the audience to be on the *qui vive*. Nothing is more depressing than to perform to an audience which only takes a "languid" interest in the proceedings, and which does not care two straws what becomes of the borrowed watch or handkerchief, as the case may be.

The amateur must not be at all nervous, and there is really no reason whatever why he should be, if he will only think for a moment of the advantage he holds over the audience, who are not aware of what the

denouement of the trick is to be, and the performer, in case of any slip, can finish the trick in any manner he thinks best. Should any part of the trick go wrong, he must not dream of admitting to an absolute failure, but bracing himself up make the best of a bad bargain, and bring the trick to some kind of conclusion, even though it be a weak one, and far different from that intended. Here also is the advantage of not declaring beforehand what is about to be done, as in case of failure the finish can be arranged to suit the exigencies of the moment.

I once remember an amateur conjurer giving a performance at a bazaar, and the *piece de resistance* of his programme was the celebrated rope tying trick, which at that time was causing somewhat of a sensation. He was a thin little gentleman, about forty years of age, a most inoffensive looking little party, exceedingly nervous, and whilst giving his performance, conveyed the idea that he felt that he was intruding; he was very generous, and always ready to give a performance for any charitable purpose. After he had performed one or two tricks of the usual conjuring order, he at length came to the

trick of the evening—the rope tying. Upon the platform he had an elaborate tent erected to act as a cabinet, this was ornamented with deep bullion fringe, with an arrangement of cords and tassels, to raise or lower the front curtains which were to hide him from the view of the audience, during the crucial part of the performance of the trick. Producing a long length of cord, he timidly requested someone to come upon the stage and to bind him securely to a chair. An athletic looking gentleman went up and commenced to tie him; he made knot after knot binding him hand and foot, round his neck went the rope, drawn tightly down the back of the chair, pinioning his arms, and eventually using up all the rope in the tying operation. He was lifted into his tent by the tyer and a friend of mine, and announced his intention of freeing himself from his bonds, and emerging from the tent in the space of three minutes. The curtains were drawn by my friend, and the tyer returned to his seat, the pianist played a selection, and five minutes passed, ten minutes elapsed, then a quarter of an hour. The pianist still played, the audience gave evidence of becoming impatient, but no one emerged from the

tent. Eventually my friend thought he would take a peep inside the tent to ascertain the cause of the delay. There to his astonishment he found the poor little man, crying, and looking the picture of helpless misery; he had not been able to move any part of the cord, or untie a single knot, and he would have in all probability stayed there until now had not my friend come to his assistance by cutting the cords and freeing him. Then what was he to do! he would not face the audience, so he took my friend's knife, cut a slit in the back of the tent, and what is commonly called "hooked it" out of the back, my friend apologising for him, pleading "sudden indisposition."

Nothing, however, would induce him to give another conjuring performance, and although he was a very enthusiastic amateur, I believe this experience quite cured him of any further desire to pose as a conjurer, he gave it up altogether, and has never since given a performance.

Occasionally it happens that a person will do all that lies in his power to spoil a conjurer's trick, yet on the other hand there are a great many who try to heighten

the effect of his illusions by giving exaggerated descriptions of them ; this proceeds, no doubt, from a great desire to be kind and generous when speaking of a favourite performer, and to make him appear much more clever than he really is, but this same kindness is sometimes apt to lead to an embarrassing situation as the following may illustrate. I occasionally perform a trick in which I produce a billiard ball apparently from my wand, this I make into two balls and then into three, then back again into two and into one, and then change the colour of it, and eventually make it disappear altogether. The secret of the trick is that I have the first ball palmed in my right hand and pretend to take it from my wand, and the remainder of the balls are produced by the perfectly natural means of taking them from my pockets, of course unseen, if possible, by the audience. I had been performing this trick one evening at the Theatre Royal, Bury St. Edmunds, and had returned to the hotel where I was staying the night. I entered the coffee-room, unseen by two gentlemen in evening dress who were conversing. I soon found out that they were speaking of myself, and one was explaining

to his friend the trick he had seen me perform at the theatre. He said, "I never saw such a thing in my life! there he stood, with his arms perfectly bare, and his hand stretched out like this (suited the action to the word), everybody could see that there was nothing in his hand, then he took his stick and rubbed it on the middle of his palm, like this (here he made a movement as if tickling his own palm) and there was a white billiard ball growing out of his hand, this he placed upon his table, and tickled his hand again and a red ball this time appeared (his sleeves rolled up all the time) then he rubbed his hand again with the wand and a yellow ball appeared, and so on until he had produced the whole set of pool balls and displayed them on his table." Upon hearing this I thought it time to retire in case the gentleman "spotted" me and asked me to corroborate his statement.

I used to give a performance at the house of a well known gentleman in London, two or three times a year, and I don't remember ever going into his house without hearing this remark made loudly to his butler, "Wize, is that Bertram?" "Yes, sir." "Lock up all the silver spoons then!" Not that I

imagine he had any idea of losing any of his spoons, but it was his joke, and the way it pleased him to show his appreciation of my slight ability. One finds it very difficult to get a proper explanation of a trick from any person, unless he be a conjurer who knows all the points of it. There is always a missing link, a something lost sight of, or an exaggeration which materially alters the complexion of the illusion when explained, hence the conflicting accounts one hears of the "Mango Tree Trick," which, by some, is said to be performed without the performer ever going near it, or touching it under any pretence whatever after having once planted the seed, a statement which is as absurd and ridiculous as the account given by some other persons that "crushed ants were mingled with the soil, which gave it the property of hastening the growth of the mango, so much so that it could actually be seen to be growing inch by inch."

I was told sometime since by a pupil of mine, who has since blossomed into the front rank of prestidigitateurs, that when I had been performing the "Aerial Mine" illusion, that he on more than one

occasion thought he actually saw the coins coming through the air into my hands. I do not think this was because I performed the trick any better than others, but I believe that I aided the illusion more by my facial expression, and the reality of my look as I pretended I saw the coin coming towards me.

On many occasions I have been asked if I found it necessary to practise much, in order to keep up a degree of proficiency in the art, and if so, how long daily did I devote to this purpose. Of course it is an advantage to rehearse a little, especially before performing a new trick for the first time, but I very rarely practise in the same sense in which one speaks of a musician practising an instrument. *Once the inevitable passes are acquired*, the practising can be done as one walks in the streets. It is the plot of the trick, or the sequence and combination, which it is most desirable to study. This can be thought out at odd moments, combinations suggest themselves, the power of making the various passes and changes being taken for granted. When I produce a new trick or a fresh combination, I generally think it well out, run it through just once or twice, using sometimes only

imaginary apparatus, and then make a dash at it during a performance one evening. By acting in this manner one is apt to take matters a little more *au sérieuse*, and the experience thus gained before an audience usually decides the fate of the trick by the way it is received. It enables me to judge whether it is capable of improvement or not, and if so, alterations suggest themselves, which would in all probability never be arrived at by any amount of private practice. Of course a study of positions, etc., before a looking glass is very advantageous to a performer, either amateur or professional, but I find that my public and private performances supply me with plenty of opportunities for rehearsing effects, and to occupy the stage for forty-five minutes without leaving it, and keep amused from one to five thousand people daily, is about as much practice as I feel I need. In the case of an amateur it is of course quite another matter; he has not the opportunities for this class of experience and practice, so that I should strongly advise him to privately practise his passes, etc., over and over again before a looking glass, and go through each trick in its entirety time after time,

until he feels himself quite proficient and sufficiently confident to produce them successfully before an audience.



CHARLES BERTRAM.

L'ENVOIE.

I will now say farewell to my readers for the present. I had no idea that I should ever presume to attempt the authorship of a book, but can only leave it to readers to say whether they are satisfied with my attempt to thank them for having borne so patiently with me. On my own behalf I can only say—



“ISN'T IT WONDERFUL!”

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