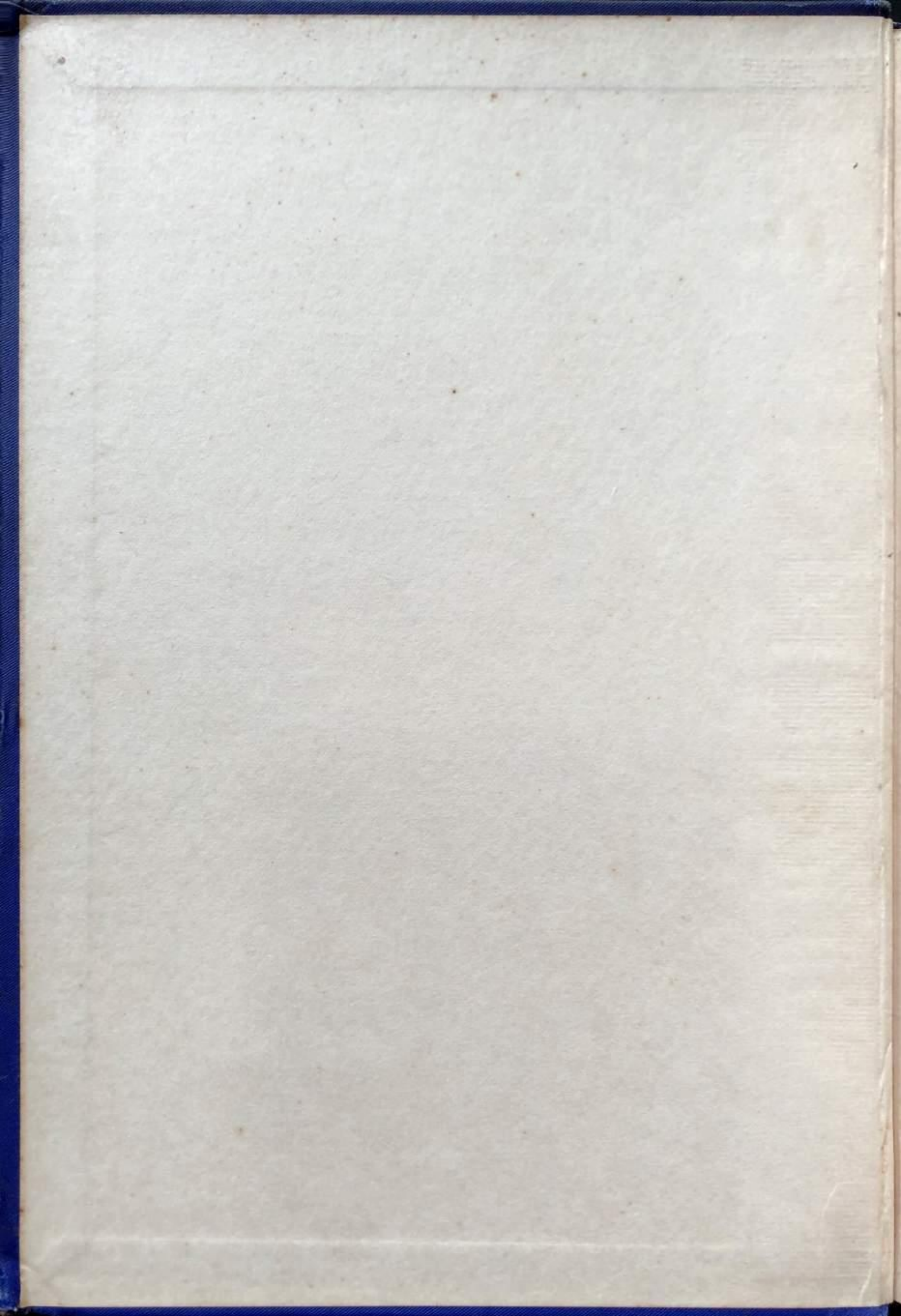
History

OF

Conjuring and Magic

EVANS



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History of Conjuring and Magic

From the Earliest Times to the End of the Eighteenth Century

By

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To the Memory of

Edward Linthicum Dent, Albert Schott, Colon Schott, Willard Fracker, Somervell Marbury, William Murdoch Lind, Edmund George Lind, William Morgan Robinson, and Harry Gottschalk Martin, who were boys with me.

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HISTORY OF CONJURING AND MAGIC

PROEM

"What, Sir! you dare to make so free, and play your hocus-pocus on us?"
—GOETHE: *Faust, Scene V.*

MAGIC!—what an alluring sound the word possesses. Immediately one conjures up a picture of an Egyptian Temple, dim, mysterious, and awe inspiring, where the priests commune with the gods amid clouds of incense; and where the occult sciences—astrology, divination, alchemy, and the evoking of spirits—are practiced; for the ancient hierophants were not only deeply versed in all that savored of the supernatural, but knew and utilized the art of natural magic, and were well-acquainted with the psychology of deception in all its ramifications.

Magic in ancient times was closely allied to religion and the practice of the healing art. Egypt, Chaldea, and Babylon were the classic homes of sorcery and magical astrology. But the leaders of Jewish orthodoxy in those days were opposed to such practices, and went so far as to persecute alleged wizards and witches with fire and sword. "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live!" says Holy Writ.

"The old magic," says Dr. Paul Carus, in his introduction to *The Old and the New Magic,* "is sorcery, or considering the impossibility of genuine sorcery, the attempt to practice sorcery. It is based upon the pre-scientific world conception, which in its primitive stage is called animism, imputing to nature a spiritual life analogous to our own spirit, and peopling the world with individual personalities, spirits, ghosts, goblins, gods, devils, ogres, gnomes, and fairies."

With the passing of so-called genuine magic or sorcery we see the rise of natural magic and conjuring. In the Middle Ages conjurers were mere strolling mountebanks who exhibited their feats at fairs, in barns, and at the castles of the nobility. Things were little better in the fifteenth, the sixteenth, and the seventeenth century; but with the dawn of the eighteenth century we behold magic rising to the dignity of a stage performance, shorn for the most part of charlatanism. Pinetti, Torrini, Breslaw, Fawkes, Comus, Gyngell, Flockton,

and Lane were the particular exponents of conjuring during this period. The nineteenth century produced a brilliant array of modern magi; such men, for example, as Bosco, Phillippe, Robert-Houdin, Comte, Robin, Anderson, Frikell, Compars Herrmann, Alexander Herrmann, Döbler, Robert Heller, Bautier de Kolta, J. N. Maskelyne, Cazeneuve, Félicien Trewey, and Harry Kellar. With the opening of Robert-Houdin's bijou theatre in Paris, on July 3, 1845, a veritable renaissance of conjuring was inaugurated. Robert-Houdin undoubtedly was the Father of Modern Conjuring, for he was the first performer to enunciate the psychology of magic and lay down the fundamental principles of the art. Others have taken up the subject since his day, and given us some really brilliant dissertations; such authors, for example, as Angelo Lewis (our beloved Professor Hoffmann), Nevil Maskelyne and David Devant, Prof. Brander Matthews, and last, but not least, Dr. Harlan Tarbell, whose *Course in Magic* goes to the very bed-rock of conjuring.

The element of pleasure that one gets in the practice of magic cannot be estimated by the madding crowd. Says Professor Triplett: "Robert-Houdin constantly refers to the fascination of conjuring. It has been said of Herrmann that he was never so happy as when he went to orphan asylums or about the streets playing his tricks on children, policemen, and shopkeepers. Kellar also assured the writer that his profession possessed an intense fascination for him." The tremendous growth of the magic art among amateurs emphasizes the foregoing statement. Magic possesses also a decided psychological and pedagogical value, as I have discovered in my own experience as a writer on educational subjects. Its historical interest is profound to all students of sociology, for it lies at the foundation of all primitive religious cults and philosophies. When well presented, it is the most fascinating and alluring of entertainments; and the clever amateur is welcomed everywhere.

In a long career as a writer on magic, I have had the pleasure of meeting on intimate terms some of the greatest magicians of the nineteenth, and the twentieth century, such as Félicien Trewey, Bautier de Kolta, Alexander Herrmann, J. N. Maskelyne, Marius Cazeneuve, Chung Ling Soo, Robert Heller, Harry Kellar, Charles Bertram, Dr. Elliott, and the late lamented Harry Houdini, whose untimely death robbed magic of one of its most brilliant exponents. The romance of their careers is a matter of history. Lucky is the modern magus who can boast of his friendship with these remarkable prestidigitators.

Peace be to their ashes!

Conjurers come and go, but magic goes on forever to delight

and fascinate its votaries. Conjurers, alas, depart hence too quickly, as witness Alexander Herrmann and Harry Houdini, who died at 52; de Kolta, at 55; Dr. Elliott, at 46; and Bertram, at 54. The celebrated Robert-Houdin died in his sixty-sixth year; he had retired from the stage some years prior to his passing from the Lesser Mysteries of Life to the Greater Mysteries of Death. Anderson, the famous "Wizard of the North," laid down his wand forever at the age of 62, a broken-hearted, disappointed man, whom fate had bludgeoned badly. But life, at its best, in this transitory world, is evanescent. In the language of the poet—

> We are like puppets in some conjurer's hands,
> Who smiling, easy, nonchalantly stands,
> And says amid the universal cheers,
> "You see this man—and now he disappears!"

Modern magic is divided by Robert-Houdin into five classes, as follows:

1. *Feats of Dexterity.* The hands and the tongue are the only means used for the production of these illusions.

2. *Experiments in Natural Magic.* Expedients derived from the sciences, and worked in combination with feats of dexterity; the combined result constituting "conjuring tricks."

3. *Mental Conjuring.* A control acquired over the will of the spectator; secret thoughts read by an ingenious system of diagnosis, and sometimes compelled to take a particular direction by certain subtle artifices.

4. *Pretended Mesmerism.* Imitation of mesmeric phenomena, second-sight, clairvoyance, divination, trance, and catalepsy.

5. *The Medium Business.* Spiritualism, or pretended evocation of spirits: table-turning, -rapping, and -writing, mysterious cabinets, etc.

Natural magic may also be divided, for the sake of convenience, into four schools, as follows: (1) The school of Pinetti; (2) the school of Robert-Houdin; (3) the school of Frikell; and (4) the school of J. N. Maskelyne. Pinetti, with his draped tables and brilliant display of apparatus, represents the classical school of conjuring; Robert-Houdin, the scientific school; Frikell, the school of hanky-panky, or pure sleight of hand, commonly divorced from apparatus; and Maskelyne, the school of magic presented in dramatic form. These four great fantaisistes exerted a potent influence on magic. Perhaps I should have included among them Bautier de Kolta, that original genius in legerdemain; but de Kolta did not create a new

school—he merely followed in the footsteps of his predecessors. For radical changes in the mystic art we must acknowledge our indebtedness to Robert-Houdin and Wiljalba Frikell. They were both men of education, keen observers; and, in the case of Robert-Houdin, possessed of great scientific talent.

In the vernacular of to-day we refer to sleight-of-hand performers and illusionists as conjurers, wizards, necromancers, and magicians, but these words in olden times connoted something quite different. When Nathan Bailey published his dictionary of the English language in 1721, he defined a conjurer as "one who is supposed to practice the vile arts of raising spirits and conferring with the devil," and "it was in that sense, and in that sense only," says Sidney W. Clarke, "that the words conjure, conjuring, and conjurer were used up to the latter half of the eighteenth century; and, further, until quite recently such words as magic, magician, necromancer, and wizard were never applied to a conjuring entertainment or entertainer." Continues Mr. Clarke:

> In earlier days a magician was one who was believed to produce wonderful effects by invoking the aid of superhuman beings or spirits; a necromancer was one who sought to read the future by pretended communication with the dead; while a wizard was one who was thought to be in close alliance with one or other of the numerous evil spirits or devils, in other words, a male witch.
>
> In investigating the history of what is now called conjuring, it is important to bear in mind the distinction between the conjurer of to-day and the conjurer, often spelled conjuror, of the past. When popular imagination peopled the universe with spirits, mainly evil, it was deemed necessary to keep those spirits in check by conjuring with words, rites, incantations and spells—the object being to drive the malevolent spirits away from the haunts of men, and to compel them to return to those remote and unknown regions whence they came and where they could do no harm. In later times the study of magic was nothing but the pursuit after wisdom, though it gradually came to be regarded as dabbling in an unholy and unlawful kind of science, and it was in such sense that the terms conjuring and magic were used down to, and long after, Shakespeare's time. In his day the performer of tricks of sleight of hand was called a juggler, never a conjurer. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century, when the constant endeavors of natural philosophers and scientists began to have an appreciable effect in demonstrating to the world that those things which had been attributed to secret and unholy arts, or to the active participation of the Devil, were only natural phenomena, that the professors of sleight of hand and innocent illusion assumed the designations of the discredited dabblers in the occult, and boldly appeared upon their stages as "conjurers" and "magicians."

But though a performer of tricks was usually termed a juggler, that word had other applications. A juggler was not necessarily a conjurer, nor even a performer of those feats of skill and dexterity that we now associate with the expression juggling. The word was often used to denote any kind of entertainer and sometimes in a sense akin to sorcerer or magician. Thus, we find itinerant

minstrels, story-tellers and acrobats described as jugglers; while many old writers, including Chaucer, ranked jugglers as magicians.

Originally, a "joglar" (derived from the Latin *joculator*; Italian, *gioculatore*; French, *jongleur*) was the servant of the troubadour; his business being to provide, on a kind of guitar, the musical accompaniment to his master's poems. Some joglars themselves became troubadours and poets; others, descending in the social scale, started out as entertainers, and became itinerant minstrels. A joglar, jonglar, jouglar, or juggler was one who amused; and the term had at first no distinct connection with amusement by dexterity or the deception of the senses. From about the year 1100 onwards we find frequent references to jugglers as entertainers of the jester or buffoon class, but, with a few exceptions, it is not until early in the sixteenth century that we get clear indications that by "juggler" was ordinarily meant one who entertained by sleight of hand, or by using the unfamiliar devices of science and mechanics to produce apparently magical results.

Generally speaking, then, from Elizabethan to almost early Victorian times, a juggler was the description of the performer we now call a conjurer, to the absolute exclusion of the latter term. Even up to the 1827 edition of Johnson's Dictionary, the lexicographer makes no mention of the modern meaning of conjurer, and a juggler is defined by him as "one who practices sleight of hand; one who deceiveth the eye by nimble conveyance."

The words "legerdemain" and "prestigior" were current in the fifteenth and the sixteenth century in connection with juggling performances, and clearly denote the class of entertainment which we now designate as sleight of hand or conjuring. The word "prestidigitator," however, is modern.

A general term for the conjurer and his art during the seventeenth and the eighteenth century was "hocus pocus," which still survives to denote trickery. It is supposedly derived from the name of an Italian juggler called Okos Bokos. Voetius, in his *De Magia* (lib. 2, *Dispp.*, p. 542), which was published in 1636, says: "Agyrtæ call this vain and idle art *Okos Bokos,* words taken from the real or imaginary name of an Italian priest or mystagogue or from some other source." The "Agyrtæ," be it known, were strolling vagabonds of ancient Greece, who practiced the arts of fortune telling and juggling.

Ben Jonson, in his *Staple of News* (1625), says: "When Iniquity came in like Hocos Pokos, in a juggler's jerkin, with false skirts, like the Knave of Clubs."

In *The Witts Recreations* (1640 edition), consisting of popular jokes of the period, we find the following epitaph on Hocus Pocus:

> Here Hocas lyes, with his tricks and his knocks,
> Whom death has made sure as a jugler's box;
> Who many hath cozen'd by his leiger-demain,
> Is presto convey'd and here underlain.
> Thus Hocas he's here, and here he is not,
> While death played the Hocas, and brought him to th' pot.

Some writers contend that hocus pocus is a corruption of *hoc est corpus,* but "this derivation," says Arthur Watson, "appears to be quite a gratuitous invention." (*The Reliquary,* July-April, 1909, p. 186.)

The literature of legerdemain is now quite extensive, but histories of magic are as scarce as the proverbial hen's teeth. Thomas Frost was first in the field with his *Lives of the Conjurers* (London, 1881), which contains many inaccuracies and is now hopelessly out of date. Next in order came myself with *Magic and its Professors* (New York, 1902), and *The Old and the New Magic* (Chicago, Ill., 1907). Harry Houdini followed with his *Unmasking of Robert-Houdin* (New York, 1908), which is replete with valuable information concerning famous conjurers contemporary with Robert-Houdin. Next we have Sidney W. Clarke, with his *The Annals of Conjuring,* which was published as a serial in *The Magic Wand* (London), during the years 1924-1928. Mr. Clarke has undoubtedly produced the most comprehensive history of magic yet written, and it is to be hoped that some day it will be issued in book form.

It is an interesting fact to note than an amateur, Angelo Lewis, known to fame as Professor Hoffmann, wrote the greatest and most comprehensive work on natural magic and sleight of hand. Hundreds of amateurs have been inspired to become professionals after studying his *Modern Magic.*

Angelo Lewis was born in London on July 23, 1839, and died in that city on December 23, 1920. He was graduated from Wadham College, Oxford, with the degree of Master of Arts, and subsequently studied law. He practiced his profession until 1876, and then entered the field of journalism as a member of the staff of the *Saturday Review.* He contributed to many literary journals, and won a prize of 100 pounds offered by the *Youth's Companion,* Boston, Mass., for the best short story for boys. Finally, he took up magic as a hobby, and in 1876, under the *nom de plume* of Professor Hoffmann, brought out *Modern Magic.* In 1890 he published *More Magic,* and in 1903 *Later Magic.* A few years before his death he produced *Latest Magic,* which completed the grand cycle of conjuring treatises. Mr. Lewis also translated the works of Robert-Houdin on prestidigitation and magic, which had been out of print for many years, and thus conferred a benefit on the conjuring fraternity. He was also the author of numerous books on games. Mr. Lewis was a charming correspondent. I exchanged many letters with him. For some years prior to his death I made it a religious duty to write him a congratulatory Christmas letter.

Mr. Houdini pronounced Angelo Lewis to be "the brightest star in the firmament of magical literature." Writing of him in *Mum,* November, 1919, he said:

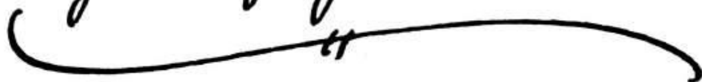
"It is difficult to conceive of Professor Hoffmann as an amateur, in view of the fact that scores of professional magicians owe their first magical inspiration to his masterpiece, *Modern Magic,* which at the time of its publication was by far the greatest book of its kind in this or any other language. At the time this book was written, Mr. Lewis was practicing law, and while he was confident that such a work was needed and would probably be moderately successful he was totally unprepared for the sudden, triumphant success which it scored, the first edition of 2,000 copies having been exhausted in *seven weeks.*

"It is quite impossible to say how many copies of this work have been printed, but Mr. Lewis made the statement some time ago that over 26,000 copies had been published, besides an even greater number of pirated volumes, from which neither the publishers nor the author received any benefit.

"The pen name of Professor Hoffmann was assumed, so Mr. Lewis says, because he feared that his professional prospects would be injured if it became known that he, a barrister-at-law, possessed such an intimate knowledge of the arts of deception."

In February, 1928, there was an exhibition of magical literature at the New York Public Library, drawn from works in its own collection, and from the private libraries of John Mulholland, Dr. Milton A. Bridges, and others. The exhibition was arranged—"stage managed," as one of the papers expressed it—by Mr. Mulholland, and attracted great attention from amateurs, professionals, and the public in general. The exhibition comprised not only books on magic, but typical playbills, posters, and wands of celebrated prestidigitators. When I expressed some doubts as to the advisability of such a display to the unsophisticated public, Mr. Mulholland wrote to me that the books were all placed in glass cases and could not be handled by inquisitive people. I subsequently learned that Mr. Mulholland was instrumental in having the subject-catalog of magical works withdrawn from the New York Public Library. Under present conditions in that institution a patron must know the name of the particular magic book that he desires to read, otherwise he cannot obtain it. Furthermore, a number of works dealing with the inner arcana of the magic art have been withdrawn entirely from circulation, and are available only to those known to be magicians.

The Grolier Club, of New York City, on March 18, 1927, also gave an exhibition of books on magic.



Part I. Genesis of Magic

"Come, show us of thy magic, Egyptian! . . . What canst thou do? Hast thou no new trick?"—H. RIDER HAGGARD: *Cleopatra.*

CHAPTER I

Thaumaturgy of the Temples

ALONG with the practice of so-called genuine sorcery in ancient times there grew up what is known as natural magic, or the production of pseudo-supernatural effects by natural means; but it was confined to the magi of the temples. The hierophants of Egypt were adepts in this kind of wizardry. "The priests of antiquity," says Dr. Norman Triplett, in his "Psychology of Conjuring Deceptions" (*American Journal of Psychology,* Vol. XI), "were the conservators of learning. They also possessed the highest knowledge, zealously preserved from profanation in the service of the gods by an impenetrable mystery. The preliminary chapters of a history of the sciences must show their magical origin; while a history of the old forms of thaumaturgical art, on the other hand, is a history of the origin of science. . . . Some of the positive sciences had their birth in the temples of the ancient religions. The miracles performed during the initiatory rites of the sacred mysteries are to be explained as physical and chemical effects." All that was known of science in those early days was in the possession of the priesthood, whose knowledge of optics, acoustics and stage machinery enabled them to produce wonders bordering on the supernatural. It is through the writings of Heron of Alexandria, Philo of Byzantium, and the Fathers of the early Christian Church that light is thrown upon the supposed miraculous occurrences of the temples; such as the phantasmagorial procession of the gods in the mysteries, the imitation of thunder in subterranean places of initiation, weeping and bleeding statues, etc.

There is an Egyptian papyrus in the National Museum, Berlin, which chronicles a magical séance given by a certain Tchatcha-em-ankh before King Khufu, B. C. 3766. The manuscript says of the wizard: "He knoweth how to bind on a head which hath been cut off; he knoweth how to make a lion follow him as if led by a rope; and he

knoweth the number of the stars of the house (constellation) of Thoth." (Westcar papyrus, XVIII dynasty.) It will be seen from this that the decapitation trick was in vogue ages ago; while the experiment with the lion, which is unquestionably a hypnotic feat, shows hypnotism to be very ancient indeed. Ennemoser, in his *History of Magic,* devotes considerable space to Egyptian thaumaturgy; especially to the wonders wrought by animal magnetism, which in the hands of the priestly hierarchy must have seemed miracles indeed to the uninitiated.

Heron, in his *Pneumatica,* describes an apparatus for opening the doors of a shrine in a temple, when a fire is lighted on an altar. The *modus operandi* is as follows: "The altar consists of an air-tight metallic box communicating by means of a tube with a spherical vessel partly filled with water. When the altar becomes hot the contained air is expanded, thereby increasing the pressure on the surface of the water, some of which is forced through a bent tube into a pot or bucket, which descends by its increased weight, thereby unwinding the cords from two spindles that perform the function of hinges to the doors of the sanctuary, at the same time winding up a counterweight. When the fire goes out the altar cools, assuming its ordinary atmospheric pressure, and the water in the pot is forced back into the spherical vessel, and the weight counterbalancing the empty pot closes again the doors of the shrine."

The ancient thaumaturgists were acquainted with the art of phantasmagoria. In the temple of Hercules at Tyre, Pliny states, there was a seat of consecrated stone "from which the god easily rose."

In the temple at Tarsus Esculapius showed himself to his worshipers. Damascius says: "In a manifestation, which ought not to be revealed . . ., there appeared on the wall of a temple a mass of light, which at first seemed to be very remote; it transformed itself, in coming nearer, into a face evidently divine and supernatural, of severe aspect, but mixed with gentleness and extremely beautiful. According to the institutions of a mysterious religion the Alexandrians honored it as Osiris and Adonis."

Professor Pepper, in his *Play Book of Science,* explains the mechanism of the foregoing illusion as follows: "The picture of a human face was reflected from a concave mirror concealed below the floor of the temple, the opening being hid by a raised mass of stone, and the worshipers confined to a certain part of the temple and not allowed to approach it." Silver was the metal usually employed for such mirrors.

Regarding the use of the concave mirror, Sir David Brewster, in his *Letters on Natural Magic,* writes: "Those who have studied the effects of concave mirrors of a small size, and without the precautions necessary to ensure deception, cannot form any idea of the magical effect produced by this class of optical apparatus. When the in-

APPARATUS FOR OPENING THE DOORS OF A SHRINE WHEN A FIRE IS LIGHTED ON AN ALTAR

struments of illusion are themselves concealed; when all extraneous lights but those which illuminate the real object are excluded; when the mirrors are large and well polished and truly formed, the effect of the representation on ignorant minds is altogether overpowering,

while even those who know the deception, and perfectly understand its principles, are not a little surprised at its effects."

The projecting of images upon smoke by means of the concave mirror was another method of evoking phantasms of the gods.

Salverte, in discussing this species of phantasmagoria, in his *Occult Sciences,* writes: "The theurgists caused the appearance of the gods in the air in the midst of gaseous vapors disengaged from fire. Porphyrus admires this secret; Iamblichus censures the employment of it, but he confesses its existence and grants it to be worthy of the attention of the enquirer after truth. Maximus undoubtedly made use of a secret analogous to this, when, in the fumes of incense, which he burned before the statue of Hecate, the image was seen to laugh so naturally as to fill the spectators with terror."

The ancient thaumaturgists boasted of their immunity to fire. They thrust their hands and arms into vessels of boiling pitch without receiving injury, and performed many other similar feats. But their supposed immunity was the result of trickery. St. Hippolytus, speaking of these seemingly miraculous experiments, says that "the magician, before thrusting his hand into a brass vessel full of pitch that appears to be boiling, places therein vinegar and natron (carbonate of soda), and on top of this liquid pitch. The mixture of vinegar and natron has the property, on the application of the slightest heat, of agitating the pitch and producing bubbles that rise to the surface and present the semblance of boiling. Previous to the operation the wizard washes his hands several times with salt water, which prevents them from getting burned even if the pitch should be really hot. If he anoints his hands with myrtle, natron, and myrrh, mixed with vinegar, and also washes them with salt water he will not be hurt. His feet will not be burned if he anoints them with isinglass." (*Philosophumena.*)

Colonel M. A. de Rochas repeated the experiment described by St. Hippolytus, but used oil instead of liquid pitch. "It produced," he says, "a complete illusion. The oil boiled in large bubbles, throwing up to the surface a white foam, without its being necessary to raise the temperature to more than 86 degrees."

Simon Magus was supposed to have been immune to fire.

According to Strabo, the priestesses of Diana Parasya, in Cappadocia, were able to walk barefooted over burning coals. Pliny says that the Hirpi procured exemption from military service by renewing the same miracle annually in the Temple of Apollo, on Mount Soracte.

Trial by fire seems to have originated in India. By means of such an ordeal the gods were appealed to for proof of innocence. The

Vedas mention it. The Greeks also were acquainted with it. In the "Antigone" of Sophocles, the Thebans, who were accused of having abetted the theft of the body of Polynices, exclaim: "We are ready to hold red-hot iron and walk through flames to prove our innocence."

Col. de Rochas, in the *Revue scientifique*, 1882, says:

"The feat of breathing fire played an important part in antiquity. By its aid the Syrian, Eunus, was able to control the insurrection of the slaves in Sicily, and Barchochebas to assume the command of the Jews who revolted against Hadrian. Both used it to make their followers believe in the divine inspiration with which they pretended to be invested, the former by the Syrian goddess, the latter by the God of Israel."

Martin del Rio, quoting Thomas Fazellus (deca. *2 rerum Sicularum*, lib. 5, cap. 2), declares that Eunus, while speaking, shot forth flames from his mouth; which feat was not to be ascribed "to Devil's magic" but to the fact that he had hidden in his mouth a nut full of sulphur and fire, by which he gave forth flames by breathing lightly on it. Del Rio also remarks that Fazellus alludes to the performance of a certain Diodorus of the same feat (cap.1, lib. 3, deca. 1).

Mountebanks, at the present time, exhibit the foregoing trick at county fairs and at circus side shows. They pretend to swallow a quantity of tow, and then breathe out smoke and sparks of fire. It is, perhaps, needless to remark that a small bit of burning tinder is taken into the mouth along with the tow. Combustion is excited by blowing with the throat, and the current of air protects the lips from burning.

The ancients are said to have constructed many remarkable automata. In some of the temples there were tripods that moved apparently of their own initiative; and figures of the gods that seemed to be endowed with life. Plato and Aristotle both speak of certain statues made by Dædalus, which not only walked, but which it was necessary to bind in order to prevent them from moving. Aristotle mentions a figure of Venus which walked, and he informs us that the motive power was quicksilver. Cassiodorus, who lived in the sixth century, speaking of the machines invented by Boethius, says: "The birds of Diomedes trumpet in brass, the brazen serpent hisses, counterfeit swallows chatter," etc.

When Christianity became the state religion of the Roman Empire, the old temple worship with its mystic rites and ceremonies was abolished. The grotesque gods of Egypt fled in affright before the White Christ. Like the classic gods of Greece and Rome they were metamorphosed into demons by the Christians. The thaumaturgists of the temples were scattered far and wide. Many of them eked out

a living by the practice of astrology and divination. With the waning of the ancient temple rites we see the gradual rise of natural magic and prestidigitation divorced from the supernatural. But the common people, who were more or less steeped in the superstitions of the past, still regarded the itinerant sleight-of-hand performers as men possessed of demoniacal powers.

The grammarian Athenæus, in his *Deipnosophistæ*, or "Banquet of the Learned" (A. D. 228), mentions a number of famous conjurers and jugglers of Greece as follows:

> The people of Histiæa and of Oreum erected in their theatre a brazen statue holding a die in its hand to Theodorus the juggler. Xenophon, the conjurer, was very popular at Athens. He left behind him a pupil named Cratisthenes a citizen of Phlius; a man who used to make fire spout up of its own accord, and who contrived many other extraordinary sights, so as almost to make men discredit the evidence of their own senses. And Nymphodorus, the conjurer, was another such man. * * * And Diopeithes, the Locrian, according to the account of Phanodemus, when he came to Thebes, fastened round his waist bladders full of wine and milk, and then, squeezing them, pretended that he was drawing up those liquids out of his mouth. And Nœmon gained a great reputation for the same sort of tricks. * * * There were, also, at Alexander's court, the following jugglers who had a great name: Scymnus of Tarentum, and Philistides of Syracuse and Heraclitus of Mitylene. (*Deipn. Epit.*, B. I. c 34, 35.)

The Encyclopedia Britannica says: "The Romans were in the habit of giving conjuring exhibitions, the most favorite feat being that of the cups and balls, the performers of which were called *acetabularii*, and the cups themselves *acetabula*. The balls used, however, instead of being convenient light cork ones employed by modern conjurers, were simply round white pebbles which must have added greatly to the difficulty of performing the trick." Robert-Houdin, in his *Conjuring and Magic*, makes a similar statement, and lets the matter rest there. Arthur Watson, in *The Reliquary*, says: "The quick movement of balls or pebbles from under cups is one of the commonest tricks. Such a trick, it has been thought, is represented in Wilkinson's *Manners of the Ancient Egyptians*, 1878, Vol. II, p. 70. Tricks with cups and balls were practiced by the Greeks, and were doubtless included in the recreations accompanying their feasts."

Athenæus, in his *Deipnosophistæ*, writes as follows of a cup-and-ball conjurer whom he saw in the theatre: "One thing I remember, and I gape with astonishment at it now, and am almost struck dumb. A certain man stepped into the midst, and placed on a three-legged table three small cups under which he concealed some little white round pebbles such as are found on the banks of rivers; these he placed one

by one under the cups, and then, I don't know how, made them appear under another cup and showed them in his mouth. * * * That man is a most mysterious performer, and could beat Eurybates of Oechalia, of whom we have heard."

Part II. Magic in the Middle Ages and in the Fifteenth, the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Century

"If this be magic, let it be an art."—SHAKESPEARE.

CHAPTER II

Superstition and Escamotage*

IN the Middle Ages, astrologers, alchemists, soothsayers, and sorcerers played a great rôle on the stage of history. Every prominent court in Europe had its "stargazer" and its searcher for the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, who dabbled, more or less, in the occult arts; and this state of affairs continued almost to the close of the seventeenth century. Europe, in fact, was magic mad. Goethe, in his great drama of *Faust,* has depicted for us, in masterly fashion, the wizard's laboratory of medieval times.

Many are the stories told of necromancers who made strange automata that were endowed with miraculous powers of speech and motion. Gerbert of Aurillac, who in 999 was elevated to the papacy as Sylvester II, is said to have constructed a talking head; and in the thirteenth century Albertus Magnus is reported to have made a similar mechanism, which was destroyed by his distinguished pupil, Thomas Aquinas. Roger Bacon, England's early scientist, and because of his discoveries reputed to be a magician, is said to have built a brazen head, under magical influences, which was to reveal to him the secret of encompassing England with a wall of brass. He was assisted in his labors by Friar Bungay, also a dabbler in occultism. According to an old chronicle, the two men repaired one evening to a wood where, in answer to their "words of conjuration," Beelzebub appeared and told them that "with the continual flame of the six hottest simples the head would have motion, and in one month space speak." Bacon and Bungay watched the brazen head for six long

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* Conjurers in France were formerly known as *escamoteurs,* and their art as *escamotage.* The word *escamoteur* comes from *escamot,* a cork ball, and has reference to the cup-and-ball trick.

weeks, but without result. Finally Bacon ordered his servant Miles to guard the android, while he and Bungay rested. At last, "after some noyse the head spake these two words, 'Time is'; and again, 'Time is past'; and therewith fell down and presently followed a terrible noyse, with strange flashes of fire, so that Miles was half dead with feare; at this noyse the two Fryers awakened. . . . 'Out on thee, Villaine,' said Fryer Bacon, 'thou hast undone us both; hadst thou but called us when it did speak, all England had been walled around about with brass, to its glory, and our eternal fames.'" (*The Famous Historie of Fryer Bacon, etc.*) And so England had to depend on the "wooden walls" of its ships instead of on walls of brass, owing to the stupidity of a serving man. Bacon's brazen head is frequently mentioned by the Elizabethan dramatists.

In the Middle Ages necromancers pretended to raise the shades of the illustrious dead, as well as those of the denizens of the demon world, notwithstanding the anathemas of the Church.

Benvenuto Cellini, goldsmith, sculptor, and man-at-arms, relates in his celebrated autobiography some very curious experiences he had with a magician in Rome. Desiring to learn something about the black art, he consulted a Sicilian monk who was a professed adept in magic. Together they repaired with another companion to the ruins of the Colosseum at midnight. The monk drew a magic circle on the ground, burned incense in a brazier, and presently demons were seen emerging in the smoke. The fright of Cellini was complete. He did not doubt the reality of the conjurations. Evidently the cunning monk had a confederate concealed among the ruins who operated a concave mirror or a magic lantern, which cast painted images upon the smoke of the incense. If the reader doubts the use of a magic lantern at this period, the following will convince him: The Encyclopedia Britannica, in speaking of Cellini's adventure, says: "The existence of a camera at this latter date (middle of the sixteenth century) is a fact, for the instrument is described by della Porta, the Neapolitan philosopher, in his *Magia Naturalis* (1589). And the doubt that magic lantern effects could have been produced in the fourteenth century, when the lantern itself is alleged to have been invented by Athanasius Kircher in the middle of the seventeenth century, is set at rest by the fact that glass lenses were constructed at the earlier of these dates,—Roger Bacon, in his *Discovery of the Miracles of Art, Nature, and Magic* (about 1260), writing of glass lenses and perspectives so well made as to give good telescopic and microscopic effects, and to be useful to old men and those who have weak eyes."

Chaucer, in his *House of Fame,* Book III, speaks of "appear-

ances such as the subtil tregetours* perform at feasts"—images of hunting, falconry, and knights jousting, with the persons and objects instantaneously disappearing.

To add to the superstitions of the epoch, we have witchcraft, a terrible delusion that led thousands to the stake. The Middle Ages were haunted by the "Witches' Sabbath." It is a relief to turn from this sombre picture of human folly to the strolling jugglers and gypsies of the period, who practiced prestidigitation for the amusement of the people. They were a joyous set of vagabonds who wandered all over Europe, forming a sort of guild of their own, and keeping the secrets of their art strictly to themselves, except when forced to divulge them to some magistrate or great lord, in order to escape charges of sorcery and witchcraft.

The better to enhance the effect of their tricks the nomadic conjurers of the Middle Ages, and later, often pretended to be aided by familiar spirits, thereby rendering themselves liable to punishment by the religious and the secular authorities. Treatises combating these pretensions to genuine sorcery were issued from time to time by students of natural phenomena, the scientists of the sixteenth and the seventeenth century.

Roger Bacon, in his epistle *De secretis operibus artis et naturae et de nullitate magiae,* says: "Whatever is beyond the ordinary course of nature or art is either superhuman or a pretense and full of fraud, for there are men who create illusions by the rapidity of the movements of their hands, or by the assumption of various voices, or by ingenious apparatus, or by performing in the dark, or by means of confederacy, thus showing to men many wonderful things which do not exist. Anyone who investigates the matter will find the world full of such things, for jugglers perform many deceptive feats by the dexterity of their hands."

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* Another term applied to sleight-of-hand performers in early days," says Mr. Clarke, "was tregetour; from the old French *trasgeter,* which meant to cause to pass, or to throw across. Though a tregetour was occasionally ranked as a juggler it would be more correct to say that he corresponded more nearly to the performer we now call an illusionist. He appears to have been the first to use for the purposes of entertainment the elementary scientific principles then re-emerging from the gloom of the Dark Ages, and, like the priests of the Egyptian temples, to have utilized the rediscovered secrets of acoustics and optics, and, perhaps, chemistry, for the production of marvels. Dr. Skeat, in a note to his edition of Chaucer's works, draws a distiction between the juggler and the tregetour, by explaining that the former was one who amused people, either by playing, singing, dancing, or tricks requiring sleight of hand, while a tregetour was one who brought about more elaborate illusions by the help of machinery or mechanical contrivances. We find mention of tregetours as early as the year 1300, and from the fanciful and exaggerated accounts of their marvels given by contemporary writers it is deducible that they had at their disposal a rude form of magic lantern, were acquainted to some extent with the properties of mirrors and lenses, and were skilled in the utilization of clock work or other mechanical means for working automata."

Bacon does not discredit the existence of real magic, but combats the false ascription to it of phenomena that are explicable by natural means. He was one of the early workers in science, and possessed a laboratory where physical experiments were conducted. The common people and many churchmen accused him of sorcery and he was compelled to go to Rome to clear himself of the charges brought against him.

"In the Middle Ages," says Arthur Watson, "conjuring formed one of the accomplishments of the lower kinds of minstrels and jugglers, and cup-and-ball tricks are referred to in an old fabliau, where two minstrels relate what they are able to perform. The second of the two minstrels has included in his repertory some feats of conjuring, among which is included a cup-and-ball trick. 'Well know I,' says one of the two—'Well know I the cork ball, and to make the beetle come alive and dancing on the table; and so I know many a fair table game, the result of dexterity and magic. I know how to play with the cudgels, and so I know how to play with the cutlasses, and with the cord and the rope.' "

A cup-and-ball trick is shown in a woodcut by Hans Burgkmair, from an edition in German of Petrarch's *De remediis utriusque fortunae,* published in Augsburg in 1532, though the plates used date from about 1520. Another trick of the same kind is exhibited in a book entitled *Hocus Pocus Junior,* published in 1635, with some indications of the way in which a ball lies concealed between two cups, one of which fits into the other. A similar representation is given in a German book of pastimes entitled *Das Zeitkurtzende Lust- und Spiel-Haus.*

Reginald Scot, in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft,* writes as follows: "The true art (therefore) of juggling consisteth in legierdemain, to wit, the nimble conveiance of the hand, which is especiallie performed three waies. The first and principall consisteth in hiding and conveying of balles." (Chapter XXII.) In the next chapter he sums up the manner of legerdemain with the ball by saying: "Concerning the ball, the plaies and devices thereof are infinite, in so much as if you can by use handle them well, you may showe therewith a hundred feats; but whether you seeme to throw the ball into your left hand, or into your mouth, or into a pot, or up into the aier, and it is to be kept still in your hand."

Rabelais speaks of Panurge, who had "little cups, wherewith he played very artificially, for he had his fingers made to his hands like those of Minerva or Arachne."

If a consensus of opinion were taken as to the oldest sleight-of-hand trick in the world, it would undoubtedly be in favor of the cups

and balls. Angelo Lewis, in his *Modern Magic,* proclaims this feat to be "the groundwork of all legerdemain." The paraphernalia used in performing the trick are very simple, viz.: Three tin cups, the ordinary wand, a lot of small cork balls, and some large balls stuffed with hair and covered with cloth. The object of the experiment is to produce the balls apparently from the wand, known as Jacob's rod, and make them successively appear and disappear underneath the cups. The combinations that can be formed are seemingly endless. "It is by no means uncommon," says Mr. Lewis, "to find spectators who have received more elaborate feats with comparative indifference become interested, and even enthusiastic, over a brilliant manipulation of the cups and balls." The cup-and-ball trick is not suited to the modern stage, because the spectators are seated too far away from the magician to appreciate the effects. But when the conjurer performs in a small room or hall the experiment is an ideal one. A bastard form of the cups and balls is known as "thimble-rig," which is used as a means of fleecing the unsophisticated rustic at country fairs and on race courses. The mathematicians Ozanam and Guyot did not disdain to write treatises on cup-and-ball conjuring.* All books on the art of magic contain chapters on this subject.

In the sixteenth century conjurers were little more than strolling gypsies or vagabonds. Reginald Scot, in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584), enumerates some of the stock feats of these mountebanks: such as "swallowing a knife; burning a card and reproducing it from the pocket of a spectator; passing a coin from one pocket to another; converting money into counters, or counters into money; conveying money into the hand of another person; making a coin pass through a table or vanish from a handkerchief; tying a knot and undoing it by the 'power of words'; taking beads from a string, the ends of which are held fast by another person; making a coin pass from one box to another; turning wheat into flour by the 'power of words'; burning a thread and making it whole again; pulling ribbons from the mouth; thrusting a knife into the head of a man; putting a ring through the cheek; and cutting off a person's head and restoring it to its former position."

The sixteenth century in England, one of the most glorious in her history, was nevertheless a superstitious epoch. Witchcraft, sorcery and magic, which were believed in to an incredible extent, lent a terrible though thrilling interest to life. The Elizabethan stage portrays for us this interest in the occult arts, as may be seen in Shakespeare's *Mac-*

* Guyot: Récréations mathématiques et physiques.

beth and *The Tempest.* In *Macbeth* we have the weird scenes with the three witches. In *The Tempest,* Prospero appears in the character of a conjurer, with Ariel as his assistant. In scene 3, Act III, Ariel, in the guise of a Harpy, claps his wings upon a table, whereupon the banquet vanishes.

The mountebanks of the period, men skilled in sleight of hand, fire eating, sword swallowing, etc., were in demand for stage shows.

Says Dr. Louis B. Wright, in his *Juggling Tricks and Conjuring on the English Stage before 1642*:

> The Elizabethans delighted in the dexterity of the juggler and the supernatural mysteriousness of the conjurer; playwrights and producers appeased the

Cup-and-Ball Trick
From an Old Print

> popular appetite for shows and spectacles by inserting juggling and conjuring acts into play performances, frequently without regard for dramatic structure or plot requirements.
>
> The art of jugglery or legerdemain early reached a high degree of perfection; the tricks included sword-playing, juggling with coins and balls, illusions of various sorts, mind-reading, and other exhibitions so marvelous that suspicion of black art at times fell upon jugglers and conjurers.

In the old play *Wily Beguiled,* a juggler entertains the spectators before the play begins. As the Prologue advances to speak his part, the juggler inquires: "Will you see any tricks of legerdemain, sleight of hand, cleanly conveyance, or *deceptio visus?* What will you see,

gentlemen, to drive you out of these dumps?" "Begone," says the Prologue, but the juggler remains to recite his accomplishments, and performs the illusion of making the title-board disappear and another stand in its place.

In *Grim the Collier of Croydon,* a harp (St. Dunstan's) is made to sound on the wall of the room without being touched.

In the *Two Merry Milkmaids,* the Prologue announces:

> . . . 'Tis a fine Play:
> For we have in 't a Coniurer, a Devill,
> And a Clowne too.

In Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush,* a juggler asks:

> Will ye see any feats of activity,
> Some Sleight of hand, Legerdemain? hey pass!
> Presto, be gone there!

He then proceeds to do conjuring tricks with bullets, which he extracts from the noses of the clowns who are watching him; he also juggles money from their pockets, etc.

To quote further from Dr. Wright:

> A play that illustrates the lust for spectacle and conjuring shows is *The Devil's Charter.* In addition to the legitimate use of magic for the sake of atmosphere and dramatic motive, scenes of conjury and deviltry are greatly emphasized. Pope Alexander is presented as a master of the black art. A conjuring monk calls up a spectacle of sulphurous smoke and devils; Alexander conjures up a king riding upon a lion or dragon; the last scene is filled with devil play and thunder. The chief interest in the play lies in the spectacular scenes of horror called up through the machinery of conjuring.
>
> A play that depends upon a similar interest in conjury, devil play, and clownery is the *Birth of Merlin.* A Saxon magician calls up Hector and Achilles to fight. Act V. begins with a scene of pure vaudeville in which the old trick of finding coins and taking coins from another's pocket is staged; Merlin and his "little antick Spirit" mystify the clown and the audience with this legerdemain. In the same act Merlin calls up a fight between a white and a red dragon.

That the magicians of the seventh century were well acquainted with the art of phantasmagoria and mechanical illusions admits of no doubt.

Stage decapitation illusions were very popular during the Elizabethan era. Reginald Scot devotes a section of his *Discoverie of Witchcraft* to them. The section is headed: "To cut off one's head, and lay it on a platter, etc., which the jugglers call the decollation of John Baptist." Ady, in his *A Candle in the Dark,* also explains the mystery.

Says Dr. Wright:

> From the extant evidence it is clear that Elizabethan dramatists employed juggling and conjuring tricks to a now generally unrealized extent, and that popular interest in conjury and magic led to this interest being capitalized in spectacular shows on the stage. From the court to the rowdy Red Bull, audiences delighted in the trickery of jugglers. At court and on the most plebeian of the public stages there was the same interest in the unusual. This Renaissance penchant for the strange and out-of-the-ordinary made magic and jugglery favorite entertainments, both on and off the stage. The texts of the plays give many examples of this diversion, but, without doubt, the juggler and conjurer appeared more frequently on the stage than extant records can prove. Players took over and adapted to their use certain tricks of jugglers with a resulting increase in realistic detail. In other cases, players and playwrights simply inserted extraneous exhibitions of jugglery and conjury in order to satisfy the popular craving for sensational shows. This willingness to comply with public taste helps to explain many of the incongruous violations of dramatic structure in Elizabethan drama.

The swallowing of swords and daggers has been a favorite trick with jugglers and conjurers. Apuleius, in his *Metamorphoses,* says that he saw at Athens before the Painted Colonnade, a juggler on horseback swallow a sharp two-edged sword. Ludovicus Vives, in his Commentary on Augustine (de C. D. lib. 10, cap. 16), writes of conjurers (circulatores) who "to the great fear and horror of spectators swallow swords and vomit forth a power of needles, girdles, and coins." Wier, in *De Praestigiis,* 1566, speaks of jugglers who pierce their cheeks and arms with daggers and bodkins without drawing blood.

Scot cites tricks of this kind, such as "to thrust a bodkin into your head without hurt"; "to thrust a bodkin through your toong, and a knife through your arme—a pittifull sight, without hurt or danger"; "to cut half your nose asunder, and to heal it again presently without any salve."

Some instruments for knife tricks are represented by Scot in his *Discoverie of Witchcraft.* It is an interesting fact to note, at this juncture, that Scot's work was the first serious attempt to initiate the public into the secrets of conjuring. Says Sidney W. Clarke, in his *The Annals of Conjuring*:

> The story of *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* is one of the romances of literature. Reginald Scot was a country gentleman, who, in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, resided on a small estate near Smeeth in Kent. He had been educated at the University of Oxford, and his books, for he wrote more than one, show him to have been a studious and widely read man. As a Justice of the Peace he was present at the Assizes at Rochester in 1581, when a poor woman, Margaret Simons, was tried on a charge of witchcraft. Scot was so struck with the cruelty of such a prosecution that he determined to devote himself to demon-

strating the foolishness of the popular superstitions about witchcraft and the wonders said to be wrought by means of diabolic assistance. After three years' labour he published *The Discoverie of Witchcraft.* The book created a sensation and was vigorously denounced by the Divines and other believers in witchcraft. James I, when he ascended the throne in 1603, caused all the obtainable copies to be seized and burned by the common executioner, which accounts for the extreme rarity of the first edition. The book was reprinted in 1651, and again in 1665, with additions.

It occurred to Scot that it would be a telling argument against the then prevalent idea that anything out of the common, anything that could not readily be explained and understood, was due to the intervention of the Devil or his satellites, if he could show that the jugglers, the popular entertainers of the day, did quite as wonderful things as those attributed to witches and other persons supposed to be in league with Satan, and did them by entirely normal and explainable means. At this time Scot had no practical knowledge of conjuring, but he set himself to learn the secrets of the art. He found an able teacher in John Cautares, a Frenchman living in London, to whom he refers as "a matchless fellow for legerdemain," and as having "the best hand and conveyance, I think, of any man that liveth this day"; and the section of his book which he entitled "The Art of Juggling Discovered" contains the result of his enquiries and lessons, and revealed for the first time in print the chief and outstanding tricks exhibited by the juggling fraternity.

It is evident from what Scot says that, however popular the jugglers' performances may have been, there was a prevalent opinion that their wonders owed something to unlawful and unholy means, an idea he was at pains to combat. He says, "Confederacy and legierdemaine done for mirth and recreation, and not to the hurt of one's neighbour or to the abusing of God's name, are, in my opinion, neither impious or altogether unlawful. Such are the miracles wrought by jugglers, consisting in fine and nimble conveiance, called legierdemaine; as when they seeme to cast awaie or to deliver to another that which they reteine still in their own hands; or conveie otherwise." * * *

For over two hundred years compilers of books of tricks stole from Scot's pages, and the majority of the numerous booklets on conjuring issued in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century are largely made up of matter *lifted* from his book.

Reginald Scot's book is very rare. Harry Price, of the American Society for Psychical Research, is the proud possessor of a first edition of the *Discoverie of Witchcraft* (London, 1584). His copy was obtained from a bookseller who purchased it at the Yatton Court sale (Herefordshire, England). The auctioneer at the sale stated that it was positively known that Shakespeare had consulted many of the books in the library of Yatton Court. "The subject matter of this famous work on anti-witchcraft," says Mr. Price, in *The British Journal of Psychical Research* (November-December, 1927), "is recognizable in several of Shakespeare's plays." Mr. Price also has in his library a copy of Pierre Massé's *De l'imposture et tromperie des diables, devins, enchanteurs, sorciers . . . et autres . . . qui*

The diſcouerie of witchcraft,

Wherein the lewde dealing of witches *and witchmongers is notablie detected, the* knauerie of coniurors, the impietie of inchan*tors, the follie of ſoothſaiers, the impudent falſ*hood of couſenors, the infidelitie of atheiſts, *the peſtilent practiſes of Pythoniſts, the* curioſitie of figurecaſters, the va*nitie of dreamers, the begger*lie art of Alcumyſtrie,

The abhomination of idolatrie, the hor*rible art of poiſoning, the vertue and power of* naturall magike, and all the conueiances *of Legierdemaine and iuggling are deciphered:* and many other things opened, which *haue long lien hidden, howbeit* verie neceſſarie to be knowne.

Heerevnto is added a treatiſe vpon the *nature and ſubſtance of ſpirits and diuels,* &c: all latelie written *by* Reginald *Scot*, Eſquire.

1. Iohn. 4, 1.

Beleeue not euerie ſpirit, but trie the ſpirits, whether they are of God; for manie falſe prophets are gone out into the world, &c.

1584

Title-page of the First Edition (1584) of Scot's *Discoverie of Witchcraft.*

From the National Laboratory Collection.

abusent le peuple (Paris 1579). What Scot's *Discoverie* is to England. Massé's work is to France. (Mr. Price has the largest and most comprehensive library on magic and allied subjects in the world.)

FLORIAN MARCHAND

From an Old Print

According to Clarke, Gonin was the first French conjurer recorded by name. He lived in the reign of Francis I (1515-47). Several of his descendants were noted for their dexterity as prestidigitators. "Indeed, the name," says Mr. Clarke, "came to be generally adopted by performers (like that of Bosco some centuries later), and

gave a phrase to the French language—*Un tour de Maître Gonin* being applied to any artful or cunning device. A grandson of the original Gonin was a conjurer in the reign of Charles IX (1560-1574), and in the first half of the seventeenth century another Gonin was wont to display his skill on the Pont Neuf in Paris, where, about 1590, Jean Salomon, better known as Tabarin, the inventor of chapeaugraphy, did tricks to attract people to the booth of Montard, a vendor of quack nostrums."

The conjurer of the sixteenth century, and even of later date, wore about his waist a sort of bag, called *gibecière,* from its resemblance to a game bag, ostensibly to hold his paraphernalia. While delving into this bag for various articles to be used in his tricks, the magician succeeded in making substitutions and secretly getting possession of eggs, coins, balls, etc. It was a very clumsy device, but indispensable for an open-air performer who usually stood encircled by the spectators. Finally, the suspicious-looking *gibecière* was abandoned by all save strolling mountebanks, and a table with a long cloth substituted. This table concealed an assistant, who made the necessary transformations required in the act by means of traps and other devices. Comus, the elder, in the eighteenth century, abandoned the long table covers and the concealed assistant for the *servante.* But his immediate competitors still adhered to the draped table, and a whole generation of later conjurers, among whom may be mentioned Comte, Bosco and Phillippe, followed their example.

Toward the close of the seventeenth century three conjurers appeared who performed tricks with water, viz., Manfré, or Manfréde, of Malta; Jean Royer, of Lyons, and Florian Marchand, of Tours, France. Manfré is depicted in an engraving of the period in the Germanische Museum, at Nuremberg (reproduced in Hampe's *Fahrende Leute,* p. 119), sending forth three separate streams from his mouth before a company of spectators. There are likewise shown in this picture nine vessels for the reception of different colored liquids produced by the magician. Between an angel and the sun are the words, *Solus sicut sol;* and under the angel, the words, *Fama volat.* Another angel presents the magician with a laurel wreath, which is the *præmium virtutis.* The Nuremberg Museum has also an advertisement of Manfré's show, headed *Fama volat,* announcing that the conjurer, in addition to his water tricks, would lift a stone weighing 700 pounds by the hair of his head, and other remarkable experiments. I quote from *The Reliquary* (July, 1909, pp. 179-80) as follows:

"It is said of Manfré that he could perform his water tricks four times a day. He had a vessel full of lukewarm water and fifteen or

twenty glasses brought to him. First he opened his mouth in order to show that he had nothing between his teeth; then from his mouth came red wine, water, brandy, rosewater, orange water, white wine, and the like, which could all be recognized by the taste; but it was noticed that on every occasion he began with red wine. Sometimes, after taking water to the extent of twenty glasses, he would squirt it aloft from his mouth like a fountain. Cardinal Richelieu imprisoned Manfré and threatened to hang him if he did not prove that his tricks were performed by natural means and not by magic. Manfré revealed the *modus operandi* in secret, and was set free."*

* Grosser Schauplatzes Lust- und Lehrreicher Geschichte, Part II, Section 126, p. 96.

CHAPTER III

The Crystal Gazers

ROMANCE, poetry and superstition are woven about the history of crystal gazing. It is very ancient indeed. In the Guimet Museum, of Paris, may be seen the mummy of Myrithis, a female necromancer, exhumed in Egypt, in 1892. It was discovered clothed in a yellow robe and a mantle of purple silk, and the head was decorated with fibres of the palm, symbol of regeneration. In the folds of the mantle were found various curious articles, such as a papyrus covered with hieroglyphics, a sistrum, a figure of Isis, two figures of Anubis, several small vases, and last, but not least, an ivory mirror, designed for magical practices. This mirror, convex in shape, was enclosed in an ivory box. The frame surrounding the mirror was pierced with three holes, each containing a small peg. The holes were designed to filter the light.

Fourteen centuries have winged their flight since Myrithis, the Egyptian pythoness, practiced her art of divination with the mirror in the shadowy temples of Mizraim. Dynasties since then have risen and fallen; the temples lie in broken fragments; the mighty Memphis is but a dream. But the mystic science of the initiates still continues. Today in New York, London, and Paris, we find devotees of the magic mirror and the crystal sphere. Experimental psychology has claimed it as a legitimate subject of study. Sometimes a mirror of metal, glass, or gypsum is used; sometimes ink, poured into the palm of the hand; sometimes a bottle of water; but most frequently a ball of rock-crystal. "In Japan," says George F. Kunz, in his *The Curious Lore of Precious Stones,* 1913, "the smaller rock-crystals were believed to be the congealed breath of the White Dragon, while the larger and more brilliant ones were said to be the saliva of the Violet Dragon. As the dragon was emblematic of the highest powers of creation, this indicates the esteem in which the substance was held by the Japanese, who probably derived their appreciation of it from the Chinese. For the Japanese, rock-crystal is the 'perfect jewel,' *tama;* it is at once a symbol of purity and of the infinity of space, and also of patience and perseverance."

The High Priest of the Jews was evidently acquainted with divination by crystal vision, according to many of the old rabbinical authors. The breast-plate which he wore upon ceremonial occasions was

the medium. Upon this golden plate were twelve precious stones, each one inscribed with the name of one of the tribes of Israel. The High Priest invoked the name of Deity, and prayed for an answer to his petition. The answer was given by "certain letters engraven on the stones of the breastplate becoming peculiarly, prominently lustrous, in proper order, so as to be read by the High Priest into words." (McClintock and Story's Cyclo. Bib., Vol. X, p. 679.)

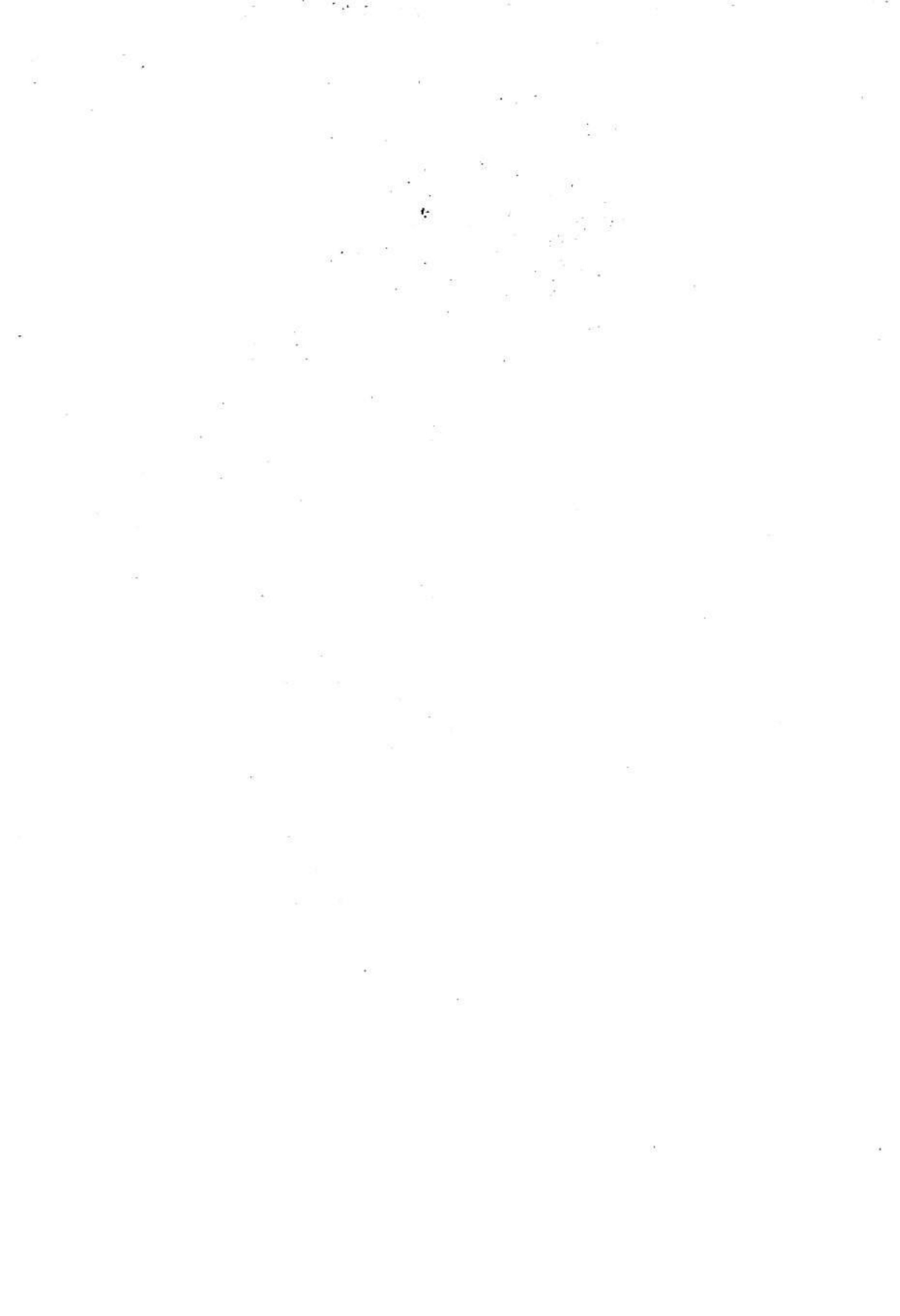
The early Christian Church denounced *specularii*—that is to say, people who gazed into these forbidden glasses for the purpose of divining winners in the chariot races. The Earl of Surrey, the poet, was shown his distant lady-love in a mirror.

In the reign of Queen Elizabeth of England there is a famous example of attempted divination by means of the magic mirror, namely, that of Dr. Dee and his factotum, Edward Kelly.

In the year 1555, there lived at Mortlake, England, a celebrated astrologer and alchemist named Dr. John Dee, who was frequently consulted by Queen Elizabeth on affairs of state. He often cast horoscopes for her and the Earl of Leicester. The haughty queen once condescended to pay him a visit at his house, to view his museum of curiosities, manuscripts, etc., which he had picked up in his travels on the Continent. An interesting account of this celebrated person is to be found in Mackay's *Popular Delusions*. He says:

Astrology was the means whereby Dr. Dee lived, and he continued to practice it with great assiduity; but his heart was in alchemy. The Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life haunted his daily thoughts and his nightly dreams. The Talmudic mysteries, which he had also deeply studied, impressed him with the belief that he might hold converse with spirits and angels, and learn from them all the mysteries of the universe. Holding the same idea as the then obscure sect of Rosicrucians, some of whom he had perhaps encountered in his travels in Germany, he imagined that, by means of the Philosopher's Stone, he could summon these kindly spirits at his will. By dint of continually brooding upon the subject, his imagination became so diseased, that he at last persuaded himself that an angel appeared to him, and promised to be his friend and companion as long as he lived. He relates that one day, in November, 1582, while he was engaged in fervent prayer, the window of his museum looking toward the West suddenly glowed with a dazzling light, in the midst of which, in all his glory, stood the great angel Uriel. Awe and wonder rendered him speechless; but the angel, smiling graciously upon him, gave him a crystal sphere and told him that whenever he wished to hold converse with the beings of another world, he had only to gaze intently upon the ghost-crystal, and they would appear in it, and unveil to him all the secrets of the future. Thus saying, the angel disappeared. Dee found from experience that it was necessary that all the faculties of the soul should be concentrated upon the crystal, otherwise the spirits would not appear. He also discovered that he could never recollect the conversations he had with the angels. He therefore determined to communicate the secret to another

Dr. John Dee



person, who might talk with the spirits, while he (Dee) sat in another part of the room, and took down in writing the revelations obtained from the denizens of the celestial sphere. He had at this time, in his service, as his assistant, one Edward Kelly, who, like himself, was crazy on the subject of the Philosopher's Stone. There was this difference, however, between them, that while Dee was more of an enthusiast than an impostor, Kelly was more of an impostor than an enthusiast. . . . No sooner did Dee inform his factotum of the visit he had received from the glorious Uriel, than Kelly expressed such a fervor of belief, that Dee's heart glowed with delight. He set about consulting his crystal forthwith.

Edward Kelly made a complete dupe of the unsuspecting Doctor, and exercised a baneful influence over him. He had commenced his rogueries early in life. He had been a notary and had had the bad luck to lose both of his ears for the crime of forgery. This degrading mutilation would have ruined his career as an adept of Rosicrucianism and alchemy, had it been known, so he always wore a close-fitting black skull-cap, which descended over both of his cheeks. This funereal looking head-gear completely concealed the absence of his ears. Kelly lived four years with Dr. Dee who never discovered the secret.

The fame of the spirit communications spread far and wide, even to the Continent of Europe, where there were many disciples of Albertus Magnus. Many noted persons made pilgrimages to the gloomy old mansion at Mortlake, to interview Dr. Dee, and have their horoscopes cast. Possibly to enhance his reputation, Dr. Dee let it be noised about that he had discovered the Elixir Vitæ among the ruins of Glastonbury Abbey, Somersetshire.

Dee and Kelly next went to Poland in the train of a wealthy Polish nobleman, Albert Laski, Count Palatine of Siradz. The Count had become infatuated while in England with the pretensions of the alchemist and ghost-seer, Dr. Dee, and entertained him royally in his palace near Cracow. Dee and Kelly busied themselves in the Count's laboratory, endeavoring to transmute the baser metals into gold, and occasionally consulting the crystal for information from the denizens of the celestial sphere. Count Laski had eventually to mortgage his estates to find pabulum for the crucibles of Dee and Kelly, as well as for the hungry stomachs of their wives and children. When ruin stared him in the face he suddenly awoke from his dream of gold-making. He got rid of his dangerous guests who wandered about Poland for a while, pursuing their trade of astrology and alchemy, until they finally quarrelled. This was the end of the spirit communications through the crystal. An old and broken man, Dr. Dee returned to his native land, where he died in poverty in the year 1608, in the reign

of King James I, and was buried in the chancel of the parish church at Mortlake.

Dr. Dee was born in London in 1527, and went to Cambridge University at an early age. His close application to study and his enthusiasm for mathematics and philosophy were so great that he could have made one of the first scholars of the age; but his brilliant mind was diverted to the occult sciences, to magic and astrology, and he left the University and went to Louvain, where he came into contact with many kindred spirits—disciples of the Rosy-Cross, searchers after the Philosopher's Stone, etc. On his return to England he had degenerated into a necromancer like the medieval Dr. Faustus.

Dr. Dee, in his mystical operations, used a crystal ball, as stated, also a disk of polished cannel coal. The former, known as the "shew stone," or "holy stone," which he claimed was given to him by an angel, is now in the British Museum. It is a beautiful sphere of smoky-quartz and came into the possession of the Museum in 1700, along with the Cottonian Library. The disk of cannel coal is now owned by one of the noble families of England. The Royalist poet Butler, in his *Hudibras,* thus celebrates this mirror:

> "Kelly did all his feats upon
> The devil's looking-glass, a stone."

In Robert Green's old play *Honourable History of Frier Bacon and Frier Bongay,* first printed in 1594, mention is made of a *glass prospective,* constructed by Bacon, which enabled two Oxford students to witness a fatal duel between their fathers in distant Suffolk. In the play Bacon makes the following admission:

> This glasse prospective worketh manie woes; . . .
> End all thy magicke and thine art at once. . . .
> So fade the glasse, and end with it the showes
> That Nigromancie did infuse the cristall with.

John Lambe, an astrologer and protégé of the Duke of Buckingham, was set upon by a London mob and fatally hurt for calling up phantoms in a crystal glass and for other alleged feats of sorcery.

The English antiquary, Elias Ashmole, in 1652, wrote as follows:

"By the magical or prospective stone, it is possible to discover any person in what part of the world soever, although never so secretly concealed or hid, in chambers, closets, or caverns of the earth, for there it makes strict inquisition; in a word it fairly presents to your view even the whole world, wherein to behold, hear, or see your desire. Nay, more, it enables man to understand the language of the creatures, as the chirping of birds, lowing of beasts, etc.; and to convey a spirit

into an image, which, by observing the influence of the heavenly bodies, shall become a true oracle. And yet this is not in any way Necromantical or Devilish, but easy, natural and honest." (Theatr. chem. britt. 1652.)

In the days when astrology and alchemy were accepted beliefs among philosophers, magic mirrors were made of the so-called *electrum,* an alloy of the seven known metals. Says Prof. H. Carrington Bolton, the chemist, in a paper read before the American Folk-Lore Society, in 1892: "The metals named after the planets were thought to absorb and retain certain celestial influences, and hence a combination of them was especially efficacious for producing magical effects; a vessel made of this electrum immediately indicated the presence of any poisonous body introduced surreptitiously by beginning to sweat on the outside. Of this electrum were made amulets, charms, magic finger-rings (and these are still offered for sale in New York City), seals, figures, bells, medals, and mirrors."

To quote from an article in the *Occult Magazine*:

> In the ancient books of magic we have not only the formula for the making of a magic mirror, but also the recounting of the discipline that the would-be seer must first inflict on himself. "Ye shall do no fleshy action nor sin during the period. Ye shall perform many good works of piety and mercy."
>
> And the prescribed prayers and invocation were to be repeated, devoutly and unweariedly, for many days before the mirror could become possessed of the necessary power from on high, before the Angel *Anæl* or *Answerer* (whose significant name occurs so often in the ceremonies of divination and questionings of the spirit world) could enter into it, and impart to its owner something of his supernatural knowledge.
>
> A. E. Waite, to whose tireless researches English students of the occult owe so much, has told us in his *Ceremonial Magic* all about the wonderful Mirror of Solomon—cabalistic in its origin, but of high repute in all revivals of magic in any age and any land. It consisted of a circular plate of steel, slightly concave, and inscribed at the four corners with four sacred names—the ink being the blood of a white pigeon.
>
> Again and again, during the first consecration of this mirror, Anæl was to be entreated with prayers and burning of incense. The mirror was to be breathed upon, and the sign of the cross made. But when Anæl had once appeared (the usual shape he took was that of a beautiful child!) it was afterwards enough, in resorting to the mirror, to summon him in a few words, such as "Come, Anæl, come! May it be thy good pleasure to be with me!"

The great traveler, Lane, speaks of such divination among the modern Egyptians by means of ink held in the palm of the hand. As Andrew Lang puts it: "There is, in short, a chain of examples, from the Greece of the fourth century B. C., to the cases observed by Dr. Mayo and Dr. Gregory in the middle of the nineteenth century, and

to those which Mrs. De Morgan wished to explain by *spiritualism.*" In the opera of "Parsifal," by Richard Wagner, the necromancer, Klingsor, sees in a magic mirror the approach of the young knight.

Max Dessoir, the German psychologist, writes as follows concerning the magic mirror (*Monist,* Vol. I, No. 1):

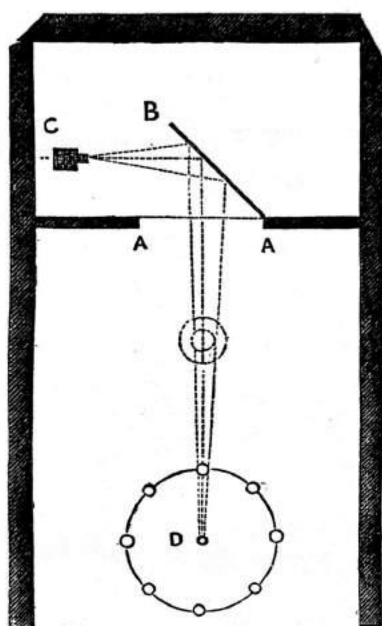
"The phenomena produced by the agency of the magic mirror with regard to their *content* proceed from the realm of the subconscious; and that with regard to their *form* they belong to the category of hallucinations. . . . . Hallucinations, the production of which is facilitated by the fixation of shining surfaces, do not occur with all persons; and there may be a kernel of truth in the tradition which designates women and children as endowed with especial capacities in this respect. The investigations of Fechner upon the varying vividness of after-images; the statistics of Galton upon hallucinatory phantasms in artists; and the extensive statistical work of the Society for Psychical Research, appear to point to a connection of this character. . . . . Along with the inner process the outward form of the hallucination requires a brief explanation. The circumstance, namely, which lends magic-mirror phenomena their salient features, is the sensory reproduction of the images that have sprung up from the subconsciousness of the scryer. The subterranean ideas produced do not reach the surface as thoughts, but as pseudo-perceptions."

Charlatans, who possess no psychic powers whatsoever, often make use of the crystal globe in order to impress their dupes. Modern magicians, in their exhibitions of pretended telepathy, do the same for the sake of the *mise-en-scène* and the psychological effect on the spectators, for example, Mr. Thurston, Mr. Alexander, etc.

Sir Walter Scott, in his *My Aunt Margaret's Mirror,* relates the story of a charlatan who deceived a client into the belief that she saw in a magic mirror the simulacra of events happening at a distance. Sir Walter does not attribute the affair to telepathy or any psychic quality, but frankly states that the phantasmal appearances were accomplished by physical means; in other words, through the medium of a trick mirror. In his *Boy's Playbook of Science,* Prof. John H. Pepper thus describes the mechanism used to produce the foregoing or similar illusions:

"A long and somewhat narrow room, hung with black, is used for the experiment, with a large mirror placed at one end, and so arranged that it will turn on hinges like a door. Upon the floor at the other end of the chamber, is described the magic circle, in which the spectators are placed. The percipients, after being confined within this circle, are directed to gaze intently into the mirror (they may even

be ordered singly to fetch a skull from a table near the mirror, and whilst doing so to look full into the glass and then return to the cabalistic circle). After absolute silence has been enjoined by the wizard, soft music is played by concealed musicians and the room is lighted up for a brief period by a green flame, in order to produce a ghastly effect.



A — Opening in room.

B — Mirror drawn back to an angle of 45°.

C — Magic lantern.

D — Magic circle.

MAGIC MIRROR

"The spectators, at this stage of the séance, are surprised to see that the mirror no longer reflects surrounding objects, but reveals in its surface the images of things or persons foreign to the environment. These simulacra are small and faint at first, but gradually become larger and larger. They are made visible when a concealed confederate gently draws the mirror from its position parallel with its frame to an angle of 45 degrees, and throws upon it, from the side, a picture from a magic lantern (or some combination of concave lenses) which he manipulates properly to produce the required effects. The reflecting angles of the mirror having been well planned beforehand, only the persons seated within the magic circle are able to see the picture."

It is more than probable that Nostradamus, the famous necromancer and astrologer, used some such device as the above when he showed to Marie de Medicis the likeness of her future husband in a magic mirror.

Part III. Magic in the Eighteenth Century

"Now there are fine tales in the volumes of the Magi—in the iron-bound, melancholy volumes of the Magi."—EDGAR A. POE: *Silence—a Fable.*

CHAPTER IV

Fantaisistes of the Fairs and Theatres

I.

IN THE eighteenth century we see magic attaining the dignity of a stage performance, but not completely shorn of charlatanism. Men of education, like de Grisy and Pinetti, took up the conjurer's wand, ancient symbol of necromancy, and gave entertainments that were very mystifying. The majority of conjurers of this era, however, performed in booths at fairs and in small rooms in cities, advertising their wares in bombastic fashion. Some of them had portable theatres like de Grisy.

The most notable conjurer in England in the early part of the eighteenth century was Isaac Fawkes. Thomas Frost, in his *The Old Showmen and the London Fairs* (London, 1874), has something to say about Fawkes, but records nothing concerning his early history. After a brilliant career as a showman at old St. Bartholomew's Fair, and in the city of London, Fawkes died May 25 or 29, 1731, and was buried in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields parish church. It is recorded in the first volume of the *Gentleman's Magazine* that on the 15th of February, 1731, the Algerine Ambassadors went to see Mr. Fawkes, who, at their request, showed them a prospect of Algiers, "and raised up an apple-tree, which bore ripe apples in less than a minute's time, which several of the company tasted of."

"This was one of his last performances," says Hone, in his *Every-day Book,* "for, in the same volume (*Gentleman's Magazine*), his name is in the list of 'Deaths,' on the 25th of May, that year, thus: 'Mr. Fawkes, noted for his dexterity of hand, said to die worth 10,000 pounds.' The newspapers of the period relate that 'he honestly acquired it by his dexterity,' and add, that it was 'no more than he really

deserved for his great ingenuity, by which he surpassed all that ever pretended to that art.' "

In the year 1733, we find the younger Yeates exhibiting his "incomparable dexterity of hand" on Southwark Green. He was in partnership with a man named Warner. An advertisement of 1735 tells us that they "continue to entertain the public every evening, at the Royal Exchange, with their inimitable performances, commencing with Yeates junior's dexterity of hand, in which he is in general allowed to surpass all who now appear in Great Britain."

One of the popular conjurers of this period was Nicholas Philippe Ledru, a Frenchman, who called himself "Comus." He was born in 1731, but in what part of France, I have been unable to discover. Concerning him Sidney W. Clarke, in his *The Annals of Conjuring,* says: "Comus was spoken of as a skillful performer in 1762, when he had booths at the fairs in Paris, where he exhibited experiments of a semi-scientific nature."

Comus appeared in London in December, 1765, where he presented his "physical, mechanical, and mathematical recreations" in a large room on Panton Street. He gave two performances a day, and charged five shillings for admission. Among other wonders he advertised that he had a machine which enabled two persons "to communicate their thoughts to each other by an instantaneous and invisible operation." In February, 1776, he announced that he would exhibit his "Learned Mermaid," "Educated Clock," "Perpetual Magnetic Motion," and many others too tedious to mention. Speaking of him, the *Gentleman's Magazine,* for May, 1766, says: "The Sieur Comus, during his stay in London, has by his dexterity acquired no less than £5,000 ($25,000), most of which he will carry off with him." That was a considerable sum for an itinerant wizard, who did not perform in theatres, to make in those days. As Mr. Clarke remarks, "No wonder he returned the next year, and again in 1770, to this city of gold, where, by the way, the then customary earnings of a conjurer were said to be four guineas a day."

In 1777, and for some years afterward, we find the Sieur Comus giving his magical séances in Paris at a little theatre on the Boulevard du Temple. He exhibited before the French Court with considerable acclaim, and before the Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria, in 1779. Comus accumulated quite a large fortune. In the Reign of Terror of the French Revolution, he was imprisoned, but managed to evade the "Red Widow," as the guillotine was called by its bloodthirsty admirers, and died in a comfortable feather bed, in 1807, leaving considerable money to his daughter.

G. Lenôtre, in his *Tribunal of the Terror, a Study of Paris in 1793-1795,* gives the following interesting anecdote of Comus, taken from M. Lavaux's narrative, *Les Campagnes d'un avocat ou anecdotes pour servir à l'histoire de la Révolution:*

"The 9th of Thermidor set free those of my clients whom I had placed in reserve. Sweet recollection! My hair has whitened since then, yet it still makes my heart beat quicker.

"One of them was Ledru, surnamed Comus, a celebrated conjurer of the Boulevard du Temple. He had been arrested because a sum of 80,000 francs had been found at his house in a safe, where it had been ever since the Regency. He had received this fortune from his mother, who had inherited it from her grandfather; and he was keeping it as a dowry for his only daughter. Full of joy at finding himself free, Comus had the additional pleasure, on returning home, of finding his treasure intact."

Lucky conjurer to escape the guillotine—he certainly owed a debt of gratitude to his lawyer, M. Lavaux.

Another French magician, Rollin, was not so fortunate in escaping the embraces of the "Red Widow." After acquiring a snug fortune, he purchased the Château of Fontenay-aux-Roses, in the department of the Seine, and retired to private life, but in 1793 he was denounced to the Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris, and was beheaded. When the warrant for his execution was read to him, he remarked grimly: "That is the first paper I cannot conjure away."

In 1768 we find Jonas performing three times a week at the Angel and Crown in Whitechapel, London. In 1771 his entertainments were given at a room in Chandos Street. He also gave many private séances at the houses of the well-to-do. He speaks in his notices of "his amazing dexterity of hand with watches, money, cards, and particularly with a basin of water, never before exhibited in this kingdom," etc. He had to advertise himself as "the famous Jonas (who is the real and only Mr. Jonas)," for a rival had sprung up calling himself by that name. In one of his notices, the original Jonas announced that he would "perform the pigeon by giving leave to any gentleman to hang a live pigeon on a string, and Mr. Jonas will cut the head off by cutting on the shadow, so that the body shall fall on the ground, and the head shall remain on the string. Mr. Jonas will stand at a distance from the live pigeon, as a surprise to the spectators." This is an imitation of a reputed feat of the ancient necromancers. In the year 1773, Jonas opened a new exhibition in James Street, Covent Garden. His fame was shortly eclipsed by the celebrated Breslaw, and he dropped out of public sight and mind. Whether

his labors brought him a fortune like Fawkes and Pinchbeck is not known.

Contemporary with Jonas were such small fry as Boaz, Cosmopolita, and Ray. The conjurers of this period (at least in Great Britain) did not rank very high in social estimation.

Breslaw, a clever German, advertised that he would exhibit his "astonishing dexterity and deception, in the grandest manner, at his commodious home, the third door from Mr. Pinchbeck's, in Cockspur Street, facing the lower end of Haymarket." He said that his room was "prepared with pit and boxes in the most elegant and grand manner," and illuminated with wax candles. The charges for admission were five shillings, and half-a-crown. His programme announced amazing feats with pocket pieces, rings, sleeve buttons, purses, snuff-boxes, swords, cards, hours, dice, letters, thoughts, numbers, watches, and last, but not least, a trick with a leg of mutton.

For nine successive seasons Breslaw gave his conjuring entertainment in Cockspur Street; but after 1773 it was given sometimes on alternate evenings at other places—in 1774, in the ballroom of the King's Arms, near the Royal Exchange; in 1776, at Marylebone Gardens; in 1779, at the King's Head, near the Mansion House.

Breslaw, while playing at Greenwood's Rooms, Haymarket, in 1781, made the following announcement:

1. Mr. Breslaw will exhibit a variety of new magical card deceptions; particularly, he will communicate the thoughts from one person to another, after which he will perform many new deceptions with letters, numbers, dice, rings, pocket-pieces, etc. 2. Under the direction of Sieur Changée, a newly invented small chest, consisting of three dimensions, will be displayed in a most extraordinary manner. 3. The famous Rossignol, from Naples, will imitate various birds, to the astonishment of the spectators. 4. Mr. Breslaw will exhibit several new experiments on six different metals, watches, caskets, gold boxes, silver machineries, etc.

In 1778 Breslaw advertised to perform the "Magic Clock," the "Sympathetic Bell," and the "Pyramidical Glasses."

Breslaw was undoubtedly the first conjurer on record to feature "second-sight" in his performances. He so established himself in the hearts of amusement-loving Englishmen that he remained in England for forty years, dying in Liverpool in 1803. On his retirement from the stage he published his *Last Legacy*, an exposition of his conjuring tricks and apparatus.

Contemporary with Breslaw was Flockton, who was better known as a showman than as a magician. He gave a variety show in 1769 at Hicksford's Concert Room, Panton Street, but legerdemain was not

included in the programme. In 1780, he gave exhibitions of fantoccini, with conjuring feats, at a room in the same street. His wonderful clock, his fantoccini, and his performing monkey did more to enhance his fame than did his legerdemain. In fact, he was said to have been an indifferent magician. But he managed to accumulate five thousand pounds, the whole of which sum he divided at his death between the different members of his company who had traveled from fair to fair with him for many years. Flockton died on April 12, 1794, in Camberwell. He bequeathed his show and apparatus to his assistants, Gyngell and the widow Flint.

Gyngell was popular at the English fairs. His programme embraced card tricks, scientific experiments, Chinese shadows, performing dogs and birds, tumbling and slack wire feats, and the musical glasses. He died in 1833, according to Thomas Frost, and was buried in the parish churchyard of Camberwell.

Other magicians of the period were Robinson and Lane. One of Lane's bills contains the following doggerel:

> It will make you laugh, it will drive away gloom,
> To see how the egg it will dance round the room;
> And from another egg a bird there will fly,
> Which makes the company all for to cry:
> "O rare Lane! Cockalorum for Lane! Well done Lane!—
> You are the man."

A second Comus, who appeared in London in June, 1793, was a coiner of hard words for his tricks. He advertised among other experiments "the 'Teretopæst Figure' and the 'Magical House'; the like never seen in this kingdom before, and will astonish every beholder."

"The 'Teretopæst Figure,'" says Frost, "was described as automatic, but, as it appeared on a table, bowed to the audience and then vanished, reappearing and disappearing any number of times, a yard above the table, the description may be doubted. It may fairly be suspected to have been the reflected image of a child, made to appear in that position and vanish at will by the aid of a concave mirror."

When performing in Bordeaux, France, November, 1805, Comus II advertised that he would play piquet while blindfolded and would defeat his adversary. He also announced that a member of the audience would be permitted to fire a loaded pistol at Madame Comus, who would parry the ball with a fencer's foil.

Comus II, at this period of his career, called himself "Premier Physicien de France." It is said that he died poor and forgotten in 1820.

Following Comus II we have another Frenchman, Conus or Con-

nus, whose real name was Cotte. He appeared in 1789 and 1790, in London, where he gave entertainments in a room at No. 31 in the Haymarket. Among other novelties he advertised that he would by sleight of hand convey his wife, who was five feet eight inches high, under a cup, in the same manner that an escamoteur does a ball. There is no record extant that the ingenious Conus ever attempted to execute this remarkable feat; his announcement was simply a mystification in rather bad taste, or, as we moderns put it, an "advertising dodge."

"Conus excelled," says Mr. Clarke, "in the manipulation of the cups and balls, using large copper balls instead of the usual light cork *muscades,* which added greatly to the difficulty of the various moves and passes." He invented the card trick known as the "Traveling Aces," or the "Multiplying Aces," which was one of the favorite experiments of Comte. Conus died in 1836.

Philip Astley, the founder and proprietor of Astley's Theatre, Westminister Bridge Road, London, at one time in his career varied his equestrian feats by assuming the rôle of a magician. In 1785, he published a little book on conjuring, in which he claimed to have invented the gun trick as early as 1762. It is entitled *Natural Magic, or Physical Amusements, Revealed by Philip Astley, Riding-Master,* etc. Astley, whose career was a chequered one, was born in Newcastle-under-Lyme, England, in 1742. He learned the trade of cabinetmaker, but abandoned it for soldiering. In 1759, he joined General Elliott's regiment of light horse, became rough-rider and breaker-in of horses, and rose to the rank of sergeant-major. Having distinguished himself at the battles of Emsdorf and Friedburg, he obtained his discharge from the army, returned home, and inaugurated an exhibition of horsemanship in an open field in Lambeth, London. In 1770, he opened an equestrian theatre in the same city, and eventually established a similar one in Paris. When the French Revolution broke out, his Parisian amphitheatre was converted into barracks, Astley then reentered the English Army and served with distinction under the Duke of York. In 1794 his London theatre was burned down, but he rebuilt it. Says the Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1885):

> After the peace of Amiens, Astley returned to Paris, presented his claims before the First Consul, regained possession of his theatre, and obtained payment of rent for the whole period of its occupation by the troops of the Revolution. With great difficulty he made his escape from Paris upon the issue of the decree for the detention of all English subjects in France. In 1803, his London amphitheatre was again destroyed by fire, Astley's loss being estimated at £25,000. Forthwith he laid the first stone of a new building, which was completed in 1804. Astley now retired from active management in favor of his son, receiving, however, one clear half of the annual profits.

He subsequently constructed another amphitheatre, called the Olympic Pavilion, but lost £10,000 on the venture.

Astley died in Paris at the age of 72, and was buried in the cemetery of Père-la-Chaise.

II.

In the year 1798, Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, a Belgian optician and illusionist, created a profound sensation in Paris with his unique phantasmagoria, which he first presented at the Pavillon de l' Echiquier, but afterwards gave in an abandoned chapel of the Capuchin convent, near the Place Vendôme. This ancient place of worship was situated in the middle of a vast cloister crowded with tombs and mortuary tablets. A more gruesome spot could not have been selected for such a spectral exhibition. The chapel was shrouded in black. From the ceiling was suspended a sepulchral lamp, which emitted a ghastly flame. In the center of the place was a brazier filled with burning coals. After a harangue on ghosts, witches, sorcery, and magic, the lamp was extinguished and Robertson threw upon the fire various essences; whereupon clouds of smoke arose.

At the evocation of the magician, the phantoms of Voltaire, Mirabeau, Rousseau, Robespierre, Danton, and Marat appeared. The shade of Robespierre was exhibited rising from a tomb. A flash of lightning, vivid and terrible, struck the ghost, whereupon it sank down into the ground and vanished. At the conclusion of the entertainment, Robertson remarked to the spectators: "I have shown you, citizens, every species of phantom, and there is but one more truly terrible spectre—the fate which is reserved for us all!" In an instant there appeared in the center of the room a skeleton armed with a scythe. It grew to colossal proportions and gradually faded away.

One evening a spectator, avowing himself to be a Royalist, called for the shade of the martyred king, Louis XVI. Here was a dilemma for citizen Robertson. Had he complied with the request and invoked the royal ghost, prison and possibly the guillotine would have been his fate.

But the wizard was foxy. Suspecting a trap on the part of a police agent in disguise who had a spite against him, he replied as follows: "Citizens, I once had a recipe for bringing dead kings to life, but that was before the 18th Fructidor, when the Republic declared royalty abolished forever. On that glorious day I lost my magic formula and fear that I shall never recover it again."

In spite of Robertson's clever retort, the affair created such a sensation that on the following day the police prohibited the exhibition

and placed seals on the optician's boxes and papers. However, the ban was soon lifted, and the performances were allowed to continue.

Robertson probably made use of a magic lantern, rolling upon a small track, to create his spectral effects. Pushing this contrivance backward and forward caused the images to lessen or increase, to recede or advance. The images were projected upon smoke and not upon a screen.

Poultier, a journalist, and one of the representatives of the people, who witnessed the show when it was given in the Pavillon de l' Echiquier, wrote an amusing account of it in *L'Ami des lois,* 1798 (du 8 Germinal au VI—28 March, 1798), as follows:

A decemvir of the Republic has said that the dead return no more, but go to Robertson's exhibition and you will soon be convinced of the contrary, for you will see the dead returning to life in crowds. Robertson calls forth phantoms, and commands legions of spectres. In a well-lighted apartment in the Pavillon de l' Echiquier I found myself seated a few evenings since, with sixty or seventy people. At seven o'clock a pale, thin man entered the room where we were sitting and having extinguished the candles he said: "Citizens, I am not one of those adventurers and impudent swindlers who promise more than they can perform. I have assured the public in the *Journal de Paris* that I can bring the dead to life, and I will do so. Those of the company who desire to see the apparitions of those who were dear to them, but who have passed away from this life by sickness or otherwise, have only to speak; and I will obey their commands." There was a moment's silence, and a haggard-looking man, with dishevelled hair and sorrowful eyes, rose in the midst of the assemblage and exclaimed: "As I have been unable in an official journal to re-establish the worship of Marat, I should at least be glad to see his eidolon." Robertson immediately threw upon a brazier containing lighted coals two glasses of blood, a bottle of vitriol, a few drops of aquafortis, and two numbers of the *Journal des hommes libres,* and there instantly appeared in the midst of the smoke, caused by the burning of these substances, a hideous livid phantom armed with a dagger and wearing a red cap of liberty. The man at whose wish the apparition had been evoked seemed to recognize Marat, and rushed forward to embrace the vision, but the ghost made a frightful grimace and disappeared. A young man next asked to see the phantom of a young lady whom he had tenderly loved, and whose portrait he showed to the worker of all these marvels. Robertson threw upon the brazier a few sparrow's feathers, a grain or two of phosphorus, and a dozen butterflies. A beautiful woman, with her bosom uncovered and her hair floating about her, soon appeared, and smiled on the young man with the most tender regard and sorrow. A grave-looking individual sitting close by me suddenly exclaimed, "Heavens! it's my wife come to life again," and he rushed from the room, apparently fearing that what he saw was not an illusion.

Robertson was born in Liège, Belgium, in 1763, and died in Batignolles (Paris), in 1837. He left some highly interesting memoirs, entitled *Mémoires récréatifs et anecdotiques* (1830-1834). He invented the parachute for balloons, and served in the French army under Gen-

eral Jourdain, as Commandant des Aérostiers. He rendered excellent service with his balloon in observing the movements of the enemy.

Robertson realized a snug fortune out of his ghost show and other inventions. His automaton figure, "Le Phonorganon," uttered two hundred words in the French language. In his memoirs he describes a species of optical toy, called the phantascope, for producing illusions on a small scale. This may give a clue to his spectres of the Capuchin convent. It is also interesting to note that in the year 1794 he addressed a memorial to the French Government proposing to construct gigantic burning glasses *à la* Archimedes, with which to set fire to the English fleets, at that period blockading the French seaports. A commission composed of Monge, Lefèvre, Gineau, and Guyton de Morveau was appointed to investigate the scheme, but nothing came of it.

"In 1796," says Mr. Clarke, "Robertson produced an acoustic deception, whereby questions whispered into a horn attached to a suspended casket of glass were answered by an invisible woman. This apparatus, which was subsequently improved upon, was exhibited all over Europe as 'The Invisible Girl.'" As this trick has been described in so many old books on magic, notably in Sir David Brewster's *Letters on Natural Magic,* I will not explain it here.

III.

Jacob Philadelphia (variously known as Philadelphus Philadelphia and Meyer Philadelphia) was one of the famous conjurers of the eighteenth century. He flourished principally between the years 1760 and 1780. In the literature of the period frequent mention is made of "the tricks of Philadelphia and Pinetti," but comparatively little is known about the life and adventures of Philadelphia. He left no memoirs like Robertson, and he had no enemies to execrate him in their writings as did Pinetti. Sidney W. Clarke, in his *The Annals of Conjuring,* says that Philadelphia was either a German or a Polish performer, and that his real name was Jacob Meyer. Thanks, however, to the researches of Harry Houdini and Ottokar Fischer the curtain of the past is partly lifted, and we have a few facts concerning the old-world magician that are of interest. In the Houdini collection is a rare engraving of Philadelphia, printed in Nuremberg, Germany, in 1773, with the following inscription: "Jacob Philadelphia, born in Philadelphia (Pa.), on the 14th day of August, 1735." Mr. Houdini agrees with Mr. Clarke that Philadelphia's real name was Jacob Meyer, and says further that he was born of orthodox Hebrew parents.

According to the *Artisten-Lexikon,* compiled by Signor Saltarino,

Düsseldorf, 1895, Meyer was born in 1721. On becoming converted to Christianity, he changed his name to Philadelphia, the city of his birth. He made his début as a magician in 1757, and traveled extensively in Europe. In 1772, he appeared before Catherine II of Russia, and subsequently before Mustapha III, Sultan of Turkey. He met with disaster in Berlin, and had to leave Germany by order of Fred-

PHILADELPHIA

(From the Houdini Collection)

erick the Great—some say because he boasted that he could by clairvoyant power read the thoughts of the King, others because he was an agent of the Illuminati, like Cagliostro, and hence dangerous to the state. He was living as late as 1795, for in that year he paid a visit to the High School of Pforta. Like Pinetti, Philadelphia made pretensions to the occult, and, perhaps because of that fact, was often ridiculed by well-informed critics. Prof. George Christopher Lich-

tenberg, of the University of Göttingen, Germany, who was a noted physicist and considerable of a humorist, played a practical joke on Philadelphia, when the latter arrived in the university town in the winter of 1777, that proved the conjurer's undoing. Before Philadelphia could issue his play bills, Lichtenberg wrote an advertisement purporting to emanate from the magician, and had it printed and posted all over the town. He did not wish the wizard to perform in Göttingen. The announcement was so absurd that Philadelphia decided not to incur the ridicule that might be heaped upon him if he ventured to give his show, and so he decamped from the place—to the disappointment of the university students, who, to use an Americanism, doubtless "had it in for him." The *Dublin University Review* (Vol. I, 1833, page 482) contains a translation of Lichtenberg's advertisement, which begins as follows:

> The admirers of supernatural physics are hereby informed that the far-famed magician, Philadelphus Philadelphia (the same who is mentioned by Cardanus, in his book *De Natura Supernaturali*, where he is styled "The envied of Heaven and Hell"), arrived here a few days ago by the mail (coach), although it would have been just as easy for him to come through the air, seeing that he is the person who, in the year 1482, in the public market at Venice, threw a ball of cord into the clouds, and climbed upon it into the air till he got out of sight.
>
> On the 9th of January, of the present year (1777), he will commence at the Merchant's Hall, publico-privately, to exhibit his one-dollar tricks, and continue weekly to improve them, till he comes to his five-hundred-guinea tricks, amongst which last are some which, without boasting, excel the wonderful itself, nay are, as one may say, absolutely impossible.
>
> He has had the honour of performing, with the greatest possible approbation, before all the potentates, high and low, of the four quarters of the world; and even in the fifth, a week ago, before Her Majesty Queen Obera, at Otaheite.
>
> He is to be seen every day, except Mondays and Thursdays, when he is employed in powdering the heads of the Honourable Members of the Congress of his countrymen at Philadelphia; and at all hours, except from eleven to twelve in the forenoon, when he is engaged at Constantinople, and from twelve to one, when he is at dinner.

And here follows a list of the most nonsensical tricks to be accomplished by the renowned wizard, Philadelphia, which rivals Artemus Ward's advertisement of Dr. Lynn's marvels.

Leo Rullman, of New York City, has one of Philadelphia's original German play-bills, in which the conjurer makes the following announcement:

> With High Government permission a greatly respected public is hereby given notice that the mechanical and mathematical artist, Meyer Philadelphia, has just arrived here [Luneberg, Germany], and will on Wednesday, the 20th;

Thursday, the 21st; and Friday, the 22d, of April [no year given], have the honor to show fifty new productions of his skill and entertain during his sojourn here with interesting art.

He finds it necessary to include in this notice a reminder that he is not to be placed in the class of charlatans and imitators, or to be compared with them, as he dares without boasting to say that his skill has been applauded by the Royal Imperial as well as by the Prussian and Swedish Courts with gracious acceptance. He therefore flatters himself that he will be appreciated and applauded here at Luneberg.

Philadelphia advertises to perform the "Cask of Bacchus," the "Magic Ink Bottle," innumerable tricks with cards, etc. The first experiment he describes as "a figure of Bacchus, with a wine-cask under his arm." After pure water has been turned into the cask, "any spectator may order what he wishes, wine or liquor, and the Bacchus will himself draw it from the cask without the artist's hand touching it."

Philadelphia makes the singular announcement in the foregoing play-bill that on paying extra any spectator will be permitted to come upon the stage and sit near the magician's table.

It is a pity that we do not know more about Philadelphia, for he was undoubtedly a clever showman. After 1795 he disappears from the stage of life. In what obscure corner of Europe he took refuge in his old age is unknown. Conjurers sometimes have a strange way of vanishing, as was the case with Charlier, Verbeck, and Guibal, who flourished in the nineteenth century.

IV.

Gustavus Katterfelto—conjurer, quacksalver, and natural philosopher! Little is known about this strange enigmatic character, who appeared in England in the eighteenth century, and aroused public interest and curiosity to the highest degree by his clever showmanship. He claimed to be a son of a Prussian colonel of hussars (of the famous Death-Head Hussars) and to have traveled as a magician on the Continent for sixteen years, before making his début to a London audience in the spring of 1781 at Cox's Museum. According to his own account he had the honor of appearing before the Empress of Russia, the Queen of Hungary, and the Kings of Prussia, Sweden, Denmark, and Poland; but there is no documentary evidence extant to prove this statement. Prior to his appearance in London, Katterfelto was an unknown quantity. Thomas Frost, in his *Lives of the Conjurers,* says: "Katterfelto, whatever his pretensions to skill and dexterity as a conjurer may have been, was the first of the profession to give a philosophical character to his entertainments, and avail him-

self of the resources afforded by science for the purpose of illusion. He commenced with a philosophical lecture, which occupied an hour. This was followed by an entertainment of two hours duration, a different lecture and series of experiments being given on each evening of the week."

Katterfelto, clever impostor, claimed, like the wizards and witches of old, to be aided by a familiar spirit, in the shape of a black cat, which always appeared at his performances, and which, from time to time, he pretended to consult. In Jones' Biographical Dictionary, 1822, is the following: "Doctor Katterfelto was an eccentric sort of quack philosopher, who for several years beguiled the good people of England with an exhibition of experiments in electricity, etc., which he called 'Wonderful Wonders,' insinuating that his practices were magical, and performed under the supernatural agency of a black cat, his constant companion on these occasions." Had this alleged professor of the black art lived in the seventeenth century, the witch-finders, especially that ingenious gentleman, Mr. Matthew Hopkins, Witch-Finder-General of England, who sent so many poor old men and women to the stake, would have had him by the heels in quick order. "Doctor" Katterfelto and his black cat would have gone up (or down) in black smoke. But the clever professor of physics and prestidigitation fully realized that the reign of wizards and witches was over; except perhaps in some of the remote rural districts of England and Scotland where superstition dies hard. Among other scientific wonders he exhibited the solar microscope. He showed deceptions with cards and coins, mechanical boxes, etc., and last, but not least, exposed the tricks of gamblers for the edification of those who tempted fortune with pasteboards and dice. The eighteenth century being an age of gambling, this information was no doubt vastly appreciated by those who went to the "doctor's" shows. In the summer of 1782, Katterfelto gave his entertainment at No. 22 Piccadilly, and later on at No. 24 Piccadilly. "He continued," says Frost, "to perform at the same place throughout 1784, announcing himself, moreover, as the inventor of phosphorus matches and selling them wholesale and retail at the place of exhibition."

Katterfelto appeared before George III and his court at Windsor Castle in July, 1782. In 1783, he advertised all his philosophical and mathematical appliances for sale at £2,500, declaring that they were worth £4,000, and "would be very valuable to a school like Harrow or Winchester, as many young gentlemen would reap very great advantages from them." But he seems to have obtained no bidders for his paraphernalia. We do not know whether the black cat was included

among the things to be sold or not;—perhaps not. At the height of Katterfelto's popularity, a burlesque of his show was brought out at the Haymarket Theatre, in which he was characterized as "Doctor Caterpillar." In 1785, he made a tour of the provinces with varying fortune. His absurd pretensions to genuine magic got him into difficulty in some places, and he was actually imprisoned as a vagrant and impostor at Shrewsbury. According to Jones' Biographical Dictionary, Katterfelto died at Bedale, in Yorkshire, on November 25, 1799. At the height of his career he attracted much attention on account of his clever advertising. He was about five feet ten inches in height,

KATTERFELTO
From an Old Print

rather gaunt in appearance, and wore in his entertainments a long black cloak and a square velvet cap like Doctor Dee. With magic wand in his hand and black cat by his side he must have presented a somewhat weird appearance. That he was a clever showman is unquestioned. Despite the ridicule heaped upon him, he "held the public eye" with his illustrated lectures on the sciences and his feats of dexterity with cards, etc.

In the year 1831, the *London Mirror* published an article on Katterfelto, by a writer named Dunhelm, who claimed to have met the "awesome doctor" in the city of Durham, about the year 1790 or 1791. The conjurer, at the time, appeared to be about sixty years of age. "His traveling equipage," says Dunhelm, "consisted of an old rum-

bling coach, a pair of sorry hacks, and two black servants who wore green liveries with red collars, but the colours were badly faded by long usage.

"Having secured a suitable room for his show, Katterfelto sent his black servants around the town, with trumpets and handbills, to announce his astonishing performances, which in the day time included a display of the solar microscope, and in the evening an exhibition of electrical wonders, during the course of which the conjurer introduced his *two* celebrated black cats, generally denominated the Doctor's Devils—for, be it understood, our hero went under the dignified style and title of 'Doctor' Katterfelto. Tricks with cards concluded the evening's entertainment.

"I attended two of the Doctor's séances. The first night I remember was extremely wet, and I composed the entire audience. I was invited behind the curtains to the fire, on one side of which sat the great wizard himself, his person being enveloped in an old green, greasy roquelaire. His head was decorated with a black velvet cap. On the other side of the fire-place sat Mrs. Katterfelto and her daughter, in corresponding style of dress—that is to say, equally ancient and uncleanly. The family appeared, indeed, to be in distressed circumstances. Having been admitted behind the scenes, I had an opportunity of inspecting the conjurer's apparatus, but the performance was postponed to another evening. On the next night of the Doctor's appearance he had a tolerably respectable auditory."

Sidney W. Clarke declares that Katterfelto was rather a quack doctor than a conjurer. He says, in his *The Annals of Conjuring*: "Katterfelto's main object was the sale of cure-all nostrums, and his exhibition room was open from 10 a. m. to 5 p. m. for that purpose; the virtues of the remedies being demonstrated by means of microscopic slides and pseudo-scientific experiments. . . . Katterfelto appears to have been the first performer in England to dub himself 'Doctor' and 'Colonel,' titles which were for long to be the trademarks of the conjurer, and it is possible that he may have been the first public entertainer to present the famous gun trick in England."

And so ends the chronicle of Katterfelto, the Conjurer with the Black Cat! Both conjurer and cat are picturesque figures in the literature of magic, and we could not very well do without them.

V.

This is the story of a conjurer who outwitted a curious cardinal, and became famous.

Comte Edmond de Grisy, who toured Europe under the name of

"Torrini," was a clever magician. His father, Comte de Grisy, was killed at the storming of the Tuilleries, while defending the person of his king, Louis XVI, from the mob. Young de Grisy, who was in Paris at the time, succeeded in passing the barriers in disguise, and traveled to the ancestral château in Languedoc, where he dug up a hundred louis which has father had concealed for any unforeseen accident—for France was in the throes of the Great Revolution. To this money the young Royalist added some jewels left by his mother. With this modest sum he fled to Italy, where he studied medicine. But he abandoned the long gold-headed cane of the medico of the period for the wand of the magician, under the most peculiar circumstances, as related in the memoirs of Robert-Houdin.

De Grisy had an adventure at Rome which is well worth relating. He was requested to perform before Pius VII, and ransacked his brains to devise a trick worthy of a Pope. On the day before the mystic séance, he happened to be in the shop of a prominent watchmaker, when a lackey came in to ask if His Eminence the Cardinal de ———'s watch was repaired.

"It will not be ready until this evening," answered the watchmaker. "I will do myself the honor of personally carrying it to your master."

The lackey retired.

"That is a handsome watch you have there," said de Grisy.

"Yes," replied the jeweler, "it is valued at more than ten thousand francs. It was made by the celebrated Bréguet. Strangely enough, though, only two days ago, a young man offered me a precisely similar timepiece, constructed by the same artist, for one thousand francs. He is a prodigal and gambler, belonging to a noble family, who is now reduced to selling his family jewels."

Like a flash of lightning a scheme for working a splendid mystification passed through de Grisy's mind. He nonchalantly remarked:

"Where is this young rake to be found?"

"In a gaming house, which he never quits."

"Well, then, I will buy this masterpiece of Bréguet's. Have the kindness to purchase it for me, and engrave upon it the Cardinal's coat-of-arms, so that it will be a replica of His Eminence's chronometer."

The jeweler, assured of de Grisy's discretion and honor, though probably suspecting the use to which the timepiece would be subjected, immediately left his shop, and returned after a little while with the gambler's watch.

"Here it is," he cried. "Tonight I shall have it ready for you."

At the appointed hour he brought the two watches for de Grisy's inspection. They were fascimiles. The conjurer took his purchase, and the next day appeared at the pontifical palace, where a most distinguished audience greeted him. The Pope sat on a dais; near him were the cardinals in their brilliant robes of crimson.

After performing a series of magical feats, de Grisy came to his *pièce de résistance*. The difficulty was to obtain the loan of the Cardinal's watch, and that without asking him directly for it. To succeed, the conjurer had recourse to a ruse. At his request several watches were offered him, but he returned them as not suited to the experiment.

"I desire a timepiece, that will be easily identified. I should prefer one of rather large size," remarked de Grisy.

"Cardinal de ———," said His Holiness, "oblige me by lending your watch to M. de Grisy."

With great reluctance the Cardinal handed his precious chronometer to the conjurer. It seems he placed great value on its exaggerated size, alleging, with a considerable show of reason, that works act better in a large case.

In order to prove the solidity and excellence of the chronometer, de Grisy let it fall to the ground. A cry of alarm arose on all sides. The Cardinal, pale with rage, bounded from his chair exclaiming: "This is a sorry jest, sir!"

"Do not be alarmed," said de Grisy, "the watch will escape scatheless from its many trials." He handed the broken timepiece to the Cardinal. "Do you recognize this as your watch?"

The prelate gazed anxiously at the coat-of-arms engraved inside of the case, and replied, with a profound sigh:

"Yes, that is my watch."

"You are certain of it?"

"Quite certain! But I seriously doubt your power to restore it."

"We shall see!" exclaimed the conjurer.

De Grisy's assistant now brought in a brass mortar and pestle. The watch was cast into the mortar and pounded to atoms. Some magic powder was poured into the receptacle and a torch applied, whereupon there was a detonation, followed by a cloud of smoke. The spectators were invited to examine the ingot of gold—all that remained of the precious chronometer. Pius VII peered curiously into the mortar. De Grisy, seizing the opportunity, adroitly popped the duplicate timepiece into a pocket of the Pope's robe. At the proper moment he pretended to pass the ingot into the Pontiff's pocket, which resulted in the discovery of the Cardinal's watch, made whole again.

This clever feat of escamotage created a great sensation in Rome, and drew crowds to de Grisy's performances.

De Grisy seemed doomed to misfortune. His young son was killed accidentally by a spectator at an exhibition of the pistol trick at Strasbourg. A real bullet got mixed up with the false bullets, and was loaded into the weapon. De Grisy was tried and convicted of "homicide through imprudence," and sentenced to six months' imprisonment; at which time his wife died. On his release he assumed the name of Torrini, which was that of his brother-in-law and faithful assistant. He retired to the provinces of France, and never appeared again in the large cities. He died a broken-hearted man at Lyons.

De Grisy traveled around the country in a big van, which could be converted into a miniature theatre at a moment's notice. It was built on the telescopic plan, and could be drawn out to a considerable length. Robert-Houdin, in his memoirs, gives a fascinating account of this portable playhouse.

De Grisy, who was a skillful performer with cards, as Robert-Houdin testifies, invented a trick which he called "The Blind Man's Game of Piquet." While blindfolded he would play piquet and defeat adepts at the game. This trick was one of the features of his entertainments, and always gained him great applause. The secret consisted in substituting a prepared pack for the ordinary pack used. After the spectator had shuffled the cards and handed them to de Grisy to cut, the conjurer would rest his hand momentarily upon the pack, while he made some observation to his opponent. Then it was that the substitution was artfully effected by means of a "magic box," which the prestidigitator had concealed in the sleeve of his coat. Pressure upon the table caused a spring in the box to shoot out a prepared pack of cards, while a pair of pincers at the same time seized the recently shuffled pack and drew it up into the hidden receptacle. This ingenious piece of apparatus de Grisy had obtained from a gambler named Zilbermann.

While attempting to cheat an opponent, the apparatus had hung fire, and Zilbermann was detected in *flagrante delicto*. A duel was the result, and Zilbermann was mortally wounded. He sent for de Grisy, whose conjuring abilities he greatly admired, and presented him with the box. Soon afterwards he died.

De Grisy never used the apparatus except in his conjuring performances. He was a man of honor and not a *chevalier d'industrie*.

VI.

One afternoon, near the close of the eighteenth century, the king of Prussia, known to posterity as Frederick the Great, rode through the streets of Berlin toward one of the city gates. He was dressed in a faded blue uniform, the breast of which was besmirched with snuff; his carriage, shabby and out of date, rumbled heavily over the cobblestones. Just ahead of him was a magnificent equipage, drawn by four superb white horses, and driven by a coachman in handsome livery, with footmen, in plush and powder, clinging behind. Inside the coach sat a gentleman attired like a nobleman of the highest rank, his breast covered with chivalric orders. When the gate was reached the elegant carriage passed slowly through, while the soldiers presented arms and the drums beat. Wondering what was the cause of the delay, the king of Prussia looked out of the window of his ancient vehicle and beheld the guard turn out.

"Go," he said to an aide-de-camp, "and see who the person is who receives such honors from my grenadiers. He must be a foreign ambassador, a prince of the realm, or one of my generals."

The aide-de-camp, who rode on horseback at the side of the monarch's carriage, dashed ahead after the coach-and-four of the supposed ambassador. Presently he returned to the king, and said:

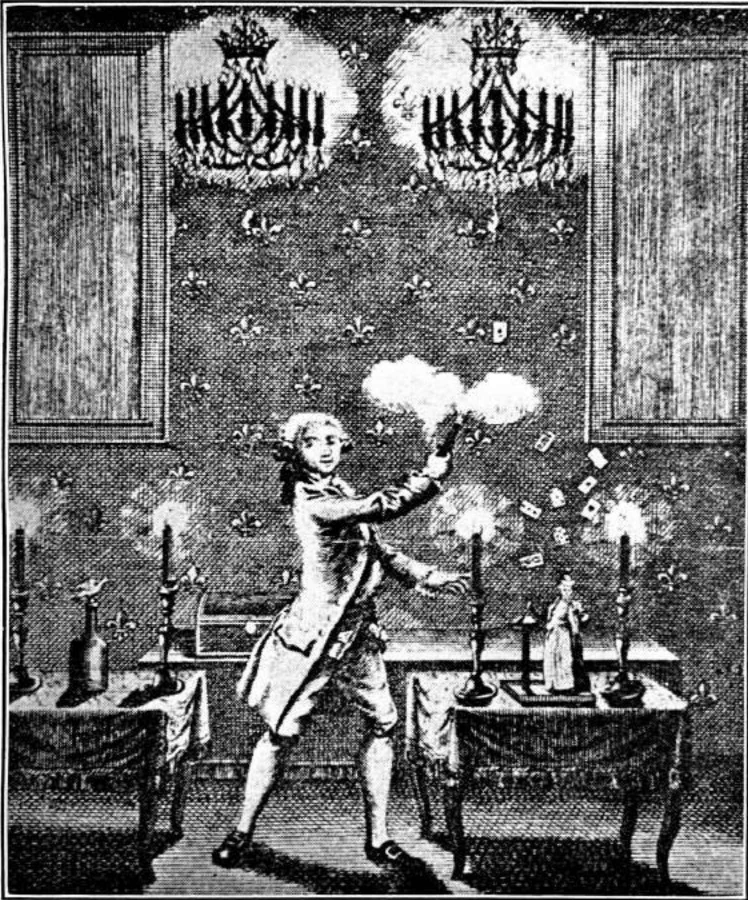
"Your Majesty, the gentleman is none other than the Chevalier Pinetti, the celebrated Italian conjurer, now performing at one of the theatres of Berlin."

The king frowned heavily, and muttered something about the confounded impudence of theatrical folk. The following day, a court chamberlain called on Pinetti with an order, signed by Frederick II, commanding him to pack up his magical paraphernalia and leave the city in twenty-four hours. It seemed that Berlin was not large enough to hold two reigning sovereigns—the King of Prussia and the King of Conjurers. One or the other had to go to the wall.

The foregoing anecdote we have on the authority of Etienne-Gaspard Robertson, the Belgian optician and illusionist, who wrote the interesting *Mémoires récréatifs et anecdotiques* and knew Pinetti intimately. It is a good story and illustrates the characteristic vanity and self-conceit of the Chevalier.

The Chevalier Pinetti was undoubtedly the most celebrated conjurer of the latter part of the eighteenth century. It is supposed that he was born in 1750, in Orbitello, Italy, a small fortified town lying in the foothills of what was the Grand Duchy of Tuscany. According to Houdini, he was the son of a village innkeeper named Luigi

Merci. Pinetti advertised himself under many grandiloquent names and distinctions as follows: Pinetti Willedal de Merci, Professor and Demonstrator of Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, Chevalier of the Order of St. Philip, Geographical Engineer, Associate of the Royal Academy of Sciences and Belles-lettres of Bordeaux, Financial Council-



CHEVALIER PINETTI

lor to H. R. H. Prince of Limbourg-Holstein, Pensioner of the Court of Prussia, etc. He is first heard of while traveling through the provinces of Germany in 1780. Pinetti appeared in Paris in the winter of 1783-84, at the Théâtre du Menu-Plaisirs du Roi. At this period the general public showed a marked predilection for all kinds of mystical and inexplicable exhibitions, which had been awakened by Cagliostro and Mesmer. Pinetti thoroughly understood how to make the most

of this bent of mind, and succeeded in setting Paris in ecstasy, as well as becoming himself a model for all contemporary and succeeding necromancers for a long time. Though without fine or regular features, his physiognomy possessed much distinction; and his manners were excellent. It is probable, however, that the latter were acquired rather than innate; for extremely bad taste was betrayed in his frequently wearing on the stage the uniform of a general, decorated with numerous orders. "He was given to inordinate boasting and self-advertising," says a critic of the period; but this might be construed as evidence of good showmanship.

In all probability Pinetti began life as a professor of physics, for the bent of his mind was scientific. In his entertainments he frequently exhibited electrical and chemical experiments. He possessed inventive faculties of a high order, and founded a school of magic which had many imitators. His repertoire consisted almost entirely of his own inventions, and eclipsed those of contemporary conjurers. His rope-tying feats were the prototypes of the cabinet evolutions of modern mediums.

In 1784, Pinetti went to London, where he engaged the Haymarket Theatre for the winter season, and announced in the newspapers that he would exhibit "the most wonderful, stupendous, and absolutely inimitable, mechanical, physical, and philosophical pieces, which his recent deep scrutiny in these sciences and assiduous exertions have enabled him to invent and construct." He also advertised that the Signora Pinetti, while blindfolded, would "guess at everything imagined and proposed to her by any person in the audience." The teachings of Mesmer and the sorcery of Cagliostro had prepared the London public to receive the alleged clairvoyance of Signora Pinetti.

In August, 1796, Pinetti appeared in Hamburg, at the French Theatre, where his receipts were considerable. Later on we find him in Berlin meeting with great success.

Pinetti saw carefully to the comfort of his patrons, and heightened the effect of his skill by every available means. The eyes of the spectators were dazzled by the splendor of the scenic accessories. In the middle of the stage, upon a superb carpet, stood two massive tables, which served in the performance of the experiments. They were covered with scarlet cloths, bordered with broad stripes of dark velvet, richly embroidered in gold and silver. Further in the background stood a larger and a smaller table with the same decorations and with relatively slender and elaborately carved legs. Close to the rear of the stage, with a cover extending to the carpet, was a very long table, which was set forth with magnificent candelabra and brilliant appa-

ratus. The above-mentioned tables were not moved from their places. In the center of the stage, hung from the ceiling an immense chandelier of crystal with countless wax candles. The artist made his entrance and exit through silken hangings.

The following account of some of Pinetti's feats is translated from *Les Mémoires secrets,* January 1, 1784:

M. Pinetti's tricks are varied and surprising, and though he is a foreigner and not very familiar with our language he succeeds in pleasing our audiences, which have included many personages of high rank. His best trick is a small golden head, about as large as a nut, which, on being placed in a glass and covered with a silver lid, answers by its motions any question addressed to it. The device that the conjurer calls "Le Bouquet philosophique" is a plant made of small branches of an orange tree with fresh and natural leaves. He puts it under a crystal shade, sprinkles it with a few drops of some special liquid, when the leaves unfold, flowers appear, and finally fruit. The illusion is excellent.

A canary is taken from an egg and made to appear dead or alive at command. M. Pinetti cuts off the head of a live pigeon, by an electric shock, which appears to be communicated through a strip of ordinary paper; he performs fifty, a hundred, even a thousand tricks that one cannot describe, and he promises a still greater marvel—an artificial canary that will warble tunes. M. Pinetti stays in view of the audience during all his experiments, and it is hard to discover how he effects communication between himself and the various articles used in his entertainments.

He next shows a new pack of cards and requests a number of spectators to think of cards. The pack is then placed in a small silver box, open at the top and supported on the neck of a bottle, which has been previously examined by the audience. The apparatus is put on an isolated table, and when the conjurer commands the chosen cards jump from the pack.

In this latter experiment we see that the famous rising-card trick was known to the conjurers of the eighteenth century, but I doubt very much the statement that the spectators were requested to think of the cards. In all probability they were asked to draw cards from a pack, replace them and shuffle the pack. Comte presented this trick in a very dramatic form.

Henri Decremps, of the Museum of Paris, endeavored to reveal the Chevalier's tricks. He published his first so-called exposé, *La Magie blanche dévoilée,* in Paris in 1784, and followed it in 1785, 1786, 1788 and 1789 with other brochures, in which he attacked the celebrated conjurer in the most bitter manner.* Among other accusations he called him "pilferer"—whether because Pinetti stole tricks

* The names of these books are as follows: *Supplément à la magie blanche dévoilée*, 1785; *Testament de Jérôme Sharp*, 1786; *Codicille de Jérôme Sharp*, 1788; and *Les Petites aventures de Jérôme Sharp*, 1789.

from the repertoires of other magicians or from his own (Decremps'), the reader is not informed. Decremps was an amateur, and his explanations of Pinetti's wonders are largely guesswork.

The Chevalier Pinetti retired to Russia with a considerable fortune. Becoming interested in aeronautics, he dissipated his money in building and experimenting with balloons. This gifted man was scarcely fifty when he died. Robertson, when traveling in Russia, met the widow Pinetti at Bialystok, and purchased from her a medallion set with diamonds, and a ring which the Czar had presented to her husband.

VII.

Other conjurers of the eighteenth century were Romain, who billed himself as "Le Fameux Romain," and performed with undraped tables; Chanderi, master of cups and balls, who exhibited at the Paris fairs, about 1713: "Le Fameux Paysan de Nord-Hollande," who visited Paris between 1746 and 1753; and Ollivier, who flourished from about 1790 to 1820. Ollivier astonished Napoleon I with the "Flying Coin Trick." "He performed," says Mr. Clarke, "with his arms bare to the elbows, and is, I believe, the first sleight-of-hand artist to be specially mentioned as having done so. From this it may be inferred that by this time the *up his sleeve* notion had become prevalent."

The romantic eighteenth century—the age of philosophy and refined skepticism as well as of mysticism and magic—was also prolific in automata; not only marvelous genuine automata which simulated the actions of human beings and animals, but equally wonderful pretended androids, etc., such as those exhibited by Pinetti and von Kempelen. Ingenious mechanics spent a lifetime putting together intricate pieces of clockwork to amuse the public.

In 1738 M. Jacques de Vaucanson exhibited three remarkable automata in Paris, viz: (1) A player of the German flute; (2) a player of the tambourine; and (3) an artificial duck. Says Robert-Houdin:

"Though noble by birth, de Vaucanson exhibited his automata at the fair of Saint Germain and at Paris, where his receipts were enormous. He is also said to have invented a loom on which a donkey worked cloth; this he made in revenge upon the silk weavers of Lyons, who had stoned him because he attempted to simplify the ordinary loom. . . . It is also said that he invented for the performance of Marmontel's *Cleopatra* an asp which fastened itself with a hiss on the bosom of the actress who played the principal character. On the first performance of the tragedy, a jester, more struck by

the hissing of the automaton than by the beauty of the tragedy, exclaimed, 'I, too, am of the asp's opinion!' "

De Vaucanson's automata were ingenious, but they were out-classed by those of Jacquet-Droz and his son, Swiss watchmakers, who produced the "Writing Figure" and the "Drawing Figure." These wonderful androids were exhibited all over Europe and the United States. Among the famous makers of automata of the eighteenth century was Christopher Pinchbeck, who was born about 1670, possibly in Clerkenwell, London. He was a clockmaker and inventor of the copper and zinc alloy called after his name. In *Applebee's Weekly Journal,* for July 8, 1721, it was announced that "Christopher Pinchbeck, inventor and maker of the famous astronomico-musical clocks, is removed from St. George's Court [now Albion Place], St. Jones's Lane [i. e. St. John's Lane], to the sign of the 'Astronomico-Musical Clock' in Fleet Street, near the Leg Tavern. He maketh and selleth watches of all sorts, and clocks, as well plain, for the exact indication of time only, as astronomical, for showing the various motions and phenomena of planets and fixed stars."

Says the Dictionary of National Biography (London, 1896):

> Christopher Pinchbeck was in the habit of exhibiting collections of his automata at fairs, sometimes in conjunction with a juggler named Fawkes, and he entitled his stall, "The Temple of the Muses" or "Multum in Parvo." *The Daily Journal,* of August 27, 1729, announced that the Prince and Princess of Wales went to the Bartholomew Fair to see his exhibition, and there were brief advertisements of the show in the *Daily Post* of June 12, 1729, and the *Daily Journal* of August 22 and 23, 1729. Pinchbeck died on November 18, 1732, and was buried on November 21, in St. Dunstan's Church, Fleet Street. . . . In a copy of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, printed in 1732, page 1083, there is an engraved portrait (of him), by I. Faber, after a painting by Isaac Wood.

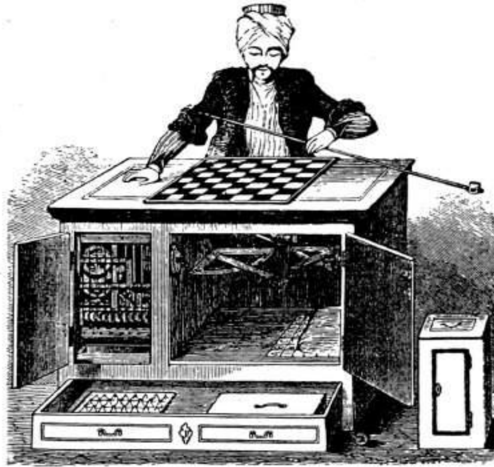
Pinchbeck left two sons, Edward and Christopher, Jr. The latter became a famous inventor. The elder Pinchbeck, as stated above, joined forces with Isaac Fawkes, the conjurer. Mr. Houdini had several rare pictures of Fawkes in his collection, as well as a handsome mezzotint of Pinchbeck.

After the death of Fawkes, his son carried on the business, with Pinchbeck the elder as his partner. Young Fawkes evidently did not take a very active part in the entertainments, for we read of Pinchbeck as performing the sleight-of-hand feats. Possibly Fawkes, Jr., was too young to appear. Eventually, however, we hear of him as traveling on his own account, and still later as being in partnership with one of Pinchbeck's sons.

Pinchbeck, Sr., was a man of remarkable ability. The Dictionary

of National Biography devotes considerable space to him; but the ingenious Fawkes is passed over with bare mention as a "juggler named Fawkes." Pinchbeck's masterpieces in the amusement line were his musical clock; mechanical moving pictures; artificial view of the world, with dioramic effects; singing birds; and possibly the apple tree. In the apple tree illusion Mr. Houdini saw the germ of the orange tree trick of Robert-Houdin.

In the year 1769, Baron Wolfgang von Kempelen, of Pressburg, in Hungary, built his famous chess-playing automaton, which for a long time puzzled all Europe, to say nothing of America.

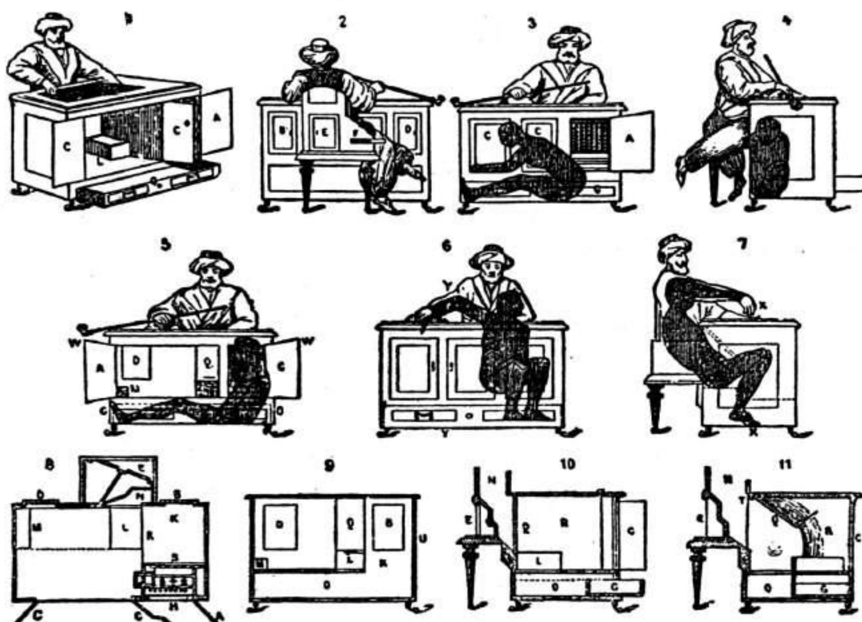


THE AUTOMATON CHESS PLAYER

"The chess player," says Conrad W. Cooke, in his *Automata Old and New* (London, 1893), "was a life-size sitting figure dressed as a Turk, and having before it a large rectangular chest or cabinet, on the top of which were a chessboard and a set of chessmen. The seat on which the figure sat was attached to the cabinet and the whole was on castors, so that it could be wheeled about the floor. When the automaton was exhibited, M. von Kempelen began operations by opening the doors of the cabinet so as to show its contents. It must, however, be recalled that these doors were opened in succession, and never all at the same time; but whichever door was opened, nothing could be seen but wheels, levers, connecting rods, strings, and cylinders. After this the doors were closed and locked, the machinery was wound up, and the figure was ready to play a game of chess with anyone who would challenge it. On commencing the game, the figure moved its head, and seemed to look at every part of the board. When it checked the king, it nodded its head three times, and when it threat-

ened the queen it nodded twice. It also shook its head when its adversary made a false move, and replaced the offending piece. It nearly always won the game, but occasionally lost."

In von Kempelen's day, the person selected to play with the automaton sat at the same chess-board with it; but Maelzel, who later on acquired it, had the machine separated from the audience by a rope and the player was seated at a small table, provided with a chess-board, some ten or twelve feet away from the Turk. Maelzel, acting for the human player, repeated his move on the chess-board of the automaton;



THE AUTOMATON CHESS PLAYER—THE SECRET REVEALED

and when the latter moved, made the corresponding move on the board of the challenger. The whirring of machinery was heard during the progress of the game, but this was simply a blind. It subserved two purposes: First, to induce the spectators to believe that the automaton was really operated by ingenious machinery; second, to disguise the noise made by the concealed confederate in the cabinet as he shifted himself from one compartment to the other, as the various doors were opened and shut in succession. No machinery could possibly be constructed to imitate the human mind when engaged in playing chess, or any other mental operation into which the indeterminate enters and which requires reflection. But the majority of people who witnessed the evolutions of the so-called automaton did not realize this fact, and pronounced it to be a *pure machine*—hence its great

vogue in the amusement world. Two famous brochures were written to explain the *modus operandi* of the chess player: one in 1789, by J. F. Freyherre, of Dresden; and one in 1921, by Professor Willis, of London, entitled *An Attempt to Analyze the Automaton Chess Player of M. de Kempelen, with an Easy Method of Imitating the Movements of that Celebrated Figure.*

Edgar Allen Poe, the apostle of mystery, also wrote an exposé of the automaton, when it was exhibited by Maelzel in Richmond, Virginia.

Signor Blitz, the conjurer, who was intimate with Maelzel, having frequently given entertainments in conjunction with him, says, in his *Fifty Years in the Magic Circle,* that the chess player was a pseudo-automaton and that the concealed assistant in Maelzel's time was a broken-down chess expert named Schlumberger, who at one time eked out a meager living in Paris by giving lessons in chess.*

On March 26, 1804, von Kempelen died, and his son sold the automaton to J. N. Maelzel, the inventor of the metronome, who took it to America. Maelzel died in 1838, while *en route* from Cuba to the United States, and was buried at sea. The chess player was sold at public auction in Philadelphia, and was purchased by Dr. J. K. Mitchell, who eventually deposited it in the Chinese Museum of that city. In 1854, the museum was burned to the ground, and the famous android, which had defeated at chess the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria and Napoleon I of France, was burned to ashes.

Robert-Houdin, in his autobiography, relates a most romantic story about von Kempelen's chess player, the accuracy of which has been seriously challenged. But I give it for what it is worth.

In the year 1796, a revolt broke out in a half-Russian, half-Polish regiment stationed at Riga, the capital of Livonia, Russia. At the head of the rebels was an officer named Worousky. The revolutionists were defeated in a pitched battle and put to flight by the Russians. Worousky had both thighs shattered by a cannon ball and fell on the battle field. However, he escaped from the general massacre of his comrades by casting himself into a ditch near a hedge, not far from the house of a doctor named Osloff. At nightfall he dragged himself with great difficulty to the house, and was taken in by the benevolent physician, who promised to conceal him. Osloff eventually had to amputate both of Worousky's legs, close to the body. The operation was successful. During this time, Baron von Kempelen came to Russia, and paid Dr. Osloff a visit. He also took compassion upon the crippled Polish officer. It seems that Worousky was a master of the

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* See Fiske's Book of the First American Chess Congress, New York, 1859, pp. 420-484.

game of chess, and repeatedly defeated Osloff and von Kempelen. Von Kempelen then conceived the idea of the automaton chess player, as a means of assisting Worousky to escape from Russia, and immediately set about building it. It was completed in June, 1796. In order to avert suspicion Osloff and von Kempelen determined to play at several of the smaller towns and cities before reaching the frontier. The first performance was given at Toula. Worousky won every game he played and the papers were full of praises of the automaton.

Worousky was concealed from sight, while traveling, in the big chest which held the chess player. Air holes were made in the sides of the chest to enable him to breathe. The little company arrived without adventure at Vitebsk, on the road to the Prussian frontier, when a letter came summoning them to the imperial palace at St. Petersburg. The Empress Catherine II, having heard of the android's wonderful skill, desired to play a game with it. Von Kempelen dared not refuse this demand. Worousky, who had a price set on his head, was the coolest of the three, and seemed delighted at the idea of playing with the Empress After fifteen days travel they reached St. Petersburg.

The Empress played a number of games with the automaton, and was very much piqued when she was beaten. On one occasion she endeavored to cheat the android by making a false move, but the figure indignantly swept the chessmen from the board, to the secret amusement of the Russian courtiers who were present. Von Kempelen was much alarmed, fearing the discovery of his concealed confederate, but Catherine passed off the incident with a laugh. She offered to buy the machine, but von Kempelen declared that his own presence was absolutely necessary for its proper working and that it was quite impossible for him to sell it. After some further discussion, the Empress allowed him to proceed on his journey with his precious automaton, and so Worousky was enabled to escape at last to Prussia.

CHAPTER IV

A Rosicrucian of the Eighteenth Century

I.

PARIS! Time—the latter half of the romantic eighteenth century, with Louis XVI seated on the throne of France. Scene—midnight in the Rue St. Claude, not far from the frowning Bastille. A grand *soirée magique* is to be held at the house of the Comte de Cagliostro, the celebrated sorcerer and Rosicrucian. A rumble is heard in the narrow street—ha, there, belated pedestrians and beggars! out of the way! Here comes the gilded coach of the Cardinal, Prince Louis de Rohan. There is a flash of torches. Servants in gorgeous liveries of red and gold, with powdered wigs, open the door of the vehicle, and let down the steps with a crash; whereupon Monseigneur le Cardinal, celebrant of the mass in the Royal Chapel at Versailles, Grand Almoner of France, and amateur alchemist, descends. He is enveloped in a dark cloak, as if to court disguise; but it is only a polite pretense. He enters the mansion of his bosom friend, Comte de Cagliostro. Within, all is ready for the "Great Work." The Egyptian room, with its sombre velvet draperies, is illumined by wax candles, arranged in mystic triangles. Its strange altar, covered with a long black cloth, on which are embroidered in red the symbols of the Rosicrucians, is set with the apparatus of the wizard—odd little figures of Isis and Osiris; vials of lustral waters; a crux ansata or Egyptian symbol of life; and a large globe of clarified water. Presently the guests are seated in a circle about the altar, and form a magnetic chain. As the old dramatists phrase it, to them enters Cagliostro, habited like the arch-hierophant of an ancient Egyptian temple. The clairvoyante is now brought in—a child of angelic purity, who was born under a certain constellation. She is bidden to kneel before the globe, and relate what she sees therein. Cagliostro makes passes over her, and invokes the aid of the planetary spirits; whereupon the seeress is penetrated with the magnetic aura emanating from the thaumaturgist; she becomes convulsed, and declares that she sees events taking place that very moment at the Court of Versailles, at Vienna, at Rome. It is all very weird and uncanny.

Cagliostro!—the name has a cabalistic sound. Who in reality was this incomparable master of mystery, this Rosicrucian adept and arch-

necromancer of the eighteenth century, who suddenly emerged from profound obscurity, flashed like a meteor across the stage of life, and then vanished into the darkness of the gloomy dungeons of the Castle of San Leon, Italy, charged by the Church with magic, heresy, and Freemasonry? He was a pretender to genuine magic and occultism, and not a prestidigitator who exploited his wares for the amusement of the public; but he did not disdain to use the methods of a Pinetti or a Philadelphia to enhance his mystical séances. He claimed to be able to evoke the spirits of the dead. In fact, he was the prototype of the modern spirit medium.

Was he knave or martyr?

One hundred and thirty-four years have passed since Cagliostro's death. In drama, romance, and history his personality has been exploited. Alexandre Dumas made him the hero of his novel, *Memoirs of a Physician.* Grim old Carlyle penned an essay about him full of vituperation and condemnation. The great Goethe wrote a drama in five acts portraying his career, called *Der Gross-Cophta.* Madame Herrmann, the lady conjurer, prepared a magical skit called "Cagliostro," in which she impersonated the celebrated sorcerer of the Old Régime. Perhaps there never was a character in modern history so denounced and vilified as Cagliostro. Were there no good points about him? Was he simply a heartless and unscrupulous charlatan preying on the credulous and superstitious? Did he not have some redeeming traits, some ideals?

In the year 1910 a voluminous work was published in London which treats the subject of the arch-hierophant of the mysteries in an impartial manner. It is entitled *Cagliostro; the Splendour and Misery of a Master of Magic,* by W. R. H. Trowbridge. The author has, in my opinion, lifted the black pall of evil which has rested upon the name of the necromancer for a century and more, and has shown very clearly that Cagliostro was not guilty of the hundreds of crimes imputed to him, and, on the contrary, was in many respects a badly abused and slandered man. As all readers of history know, he was mixed up in the Diamond Necklace trial, which dragged the fair name of the beautiful and innocent Queen of France, Marie Antoinette, in the mire. But Cagliostro was acquitted, after having been imprisoned for more than a year in the Bastille. He was afterward banished from France. The French minister of police then sought to identify him with an impostor, forger, and all-round rascal named Joseph Balsamo, who some years before the advent of Cagliostro in Paris had made a criminal record for himself in France and other countries, and then had mysteriously disappeared. Theveneau de Morande, a French

police spy, living in London, and editor of the *Courrier de l'Europe*, published a series of vitriolic articles about the magician, claiming that he was Joseph Balsamo; but the evidence adduced was flimsy and insufficient. The book published at Rome in 1791, purporting to be an account of the trial of Cagliostro by the Inquisition, also identifies him with Balsamo, but no dates are given. Upon the articles in the *Courrier de l'Europe*, by Theveneau de Morande, and the Inquisition biography all subsequent authors have based their opinions that Cagliostro, the arch-enchanter and occultist, was Joseph Balsamo, blackmailer, forger, swindler, panderer for his own wife, and "wanted" by the police of France, Italy, Spain, and England. Says Mr. Trowbridge:

> There is another reason for doubting the identity of the two men. It is the most powerful of all and has hitherto apparently escaped the attention of those who have taken this singular theory of identification for granted. Nobody who had *known* Balsamo ever *saw* Cagliostro.
>
> Again, one wonders why nobody who had known Balsamo ever made the least attempt to identify Cagliostro with him either at the time of the Diamond Necklace trial or when the articles published in Morande's paper brought him a second time prominently before the public. Now Balsamo was known to have lived in London in 1771, when his conduct was so suspicious to the police that he deemed it advisable to leave the country. He and his wife accordingly went to Paris, and it was here that, in 1773, the events occurred which brought them prominently under the notice of the authorities. Six years after Balsamo's disappearance from London Comte de Cagliostro appeared in that city. How is it, one asks, that the London police, who "wanted" Joseph Balsamo, utterly failed to recognize him in the notorious Cagliostro?

The Balsamo legend seems to be punctured. But, after all is said, who was Cagliostro? He admitted that the name was an alias. Balsamo was devoid of education, or even the appearance of respectability; grasping, scheming, and utterly disreputable. Comte de Cagliostro was a highly accomplished charlatan and past master in wonder-working; a chemist of no mean ability; an empiric, who effected many remarkable cures. He was charitable and generous to a fault, and gave away large sums of money to the poor. As head and founder of the Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry, he was fairly worshipped by his followers. How could Balsamo have transformed his character so completely As Trowbridge says: "Whoever Cagliostro may have been, he could certainly never have been Joseph Balsamo." Now let us turn to the man whose career under the impenetrable incognito of Comte de Cagliostro astonished all Europe.

In July, 1776—the exact date is not known—two foreigners arrived in London and engaged a suite of furnished rooms in Whitcombe Street, Leicester Fields. They called themselves Comte and

Comtesse de Cagliostro. They were presumably of Italian origin, and possessed money and jewels in abundance. The Comte turned one of the rooms he had rented into a chemical laboratory. It was soon noised about that he was an alchemist and a Rosicrucian. To please some people whom he had met he foretold the winning numbers in a lottery by cabalistic means. Refusing to be mixed up any further in such matters, he was persecuted by a gang of swindlers, and spent some months in the King's Bench prison on various technical charges. To avoid further trouble—and the evidence is conclusive that he was the innocent victim of sharpers—he left England. But before doing so he was initiated into a Masonic lodge in London. It was known as Espérance Lodge No. 369, and was composed mainly of French and Italian residents in London, holding its sessions at the King's Head Tavern, Gerrard Street. It was attached to the continental Masonic Order of the Strict Observance, which was supposed to be a continuation and perfection of the ancient association of Knights Templars. The date of the initiation of the famous sorcerer was some time in April, 1777. Immersed in the dreams of the Rosicrucians and mystics, Cagliostro determined to found an Egyptian Rite of Freemasonry upon the first three degrees of the fraternity, in which magical practices were to be perpetuated. Some claim that he originated the ritual of the new order himself; others that he borrowed it from an obscure spiritist, George Coston, whose writings he picked up in a book shop in London. He gave out that he had been initiated into the Order in Egypt by the Grand Cophta, or High Priest of the Egyptians. According to him Freemasonry was founded by Enoch and Elias. Power over the spirit-world was promised to those who became adepts in Egyptian Masonry.

II.

Cagliostro in his magical séances generally used a globe of pure water instead of a sphere of rock crystal. But sometimes he made use of a metallic mirror which he carried on his person. This fact we have on the authority of Madame du Barry, the frail favorite of Louis XV. When "Louis the Well Beloved" went the way of dusty death, the charming du Barry spent her years of banishment from the glories of the Court at her Château de Louveciennes and her houses in Paris and Versailles. She relates that on one occasion the Cardinal de Rohan paid her a visit. In the course of conversation the subject of Mesmer and magnetism was discussed.

"My dear Madame," said the Cardinal, "the magnetic séances of Mesmer are not to be compared with the magic of my friend the

Comte de Cagliostro. He is a genuine Rosicrucian, who holds communion with the elemental spirits. He is able to pierce the veil of the future by his necromantic power. Permit me to introduce him to you."

The curiosity of Madame du Barry was excited, and she consented to receive the illustrious conjurer at her home. The next day the Cardinal came, accompanied by Cagliostro. The magician was magnificently dressed, but not altogether in good taste. Diamonds sparkled on his breast and on his fingers. The knob of his walking stick was encrusted with precious stones. Madame du Barry, however, was much struck with the power of his bold, gleaming eyes. She realized that he was no ordinary charlatan. After discussing the question of sorcery, Cagliostro took from the breast pocket of his coat a leather case, which he handed to his hostess, saying that it contained a magic mirror wherein she might read the events of the past and the future. "If the vision be not to your liking," he remarked impressively, "do not blame me. You use the mirror at your own risk."

Madame du Barry opened the case and saw a "metallic glass in an ebony frame, ornamented with a variety of magical characters in gold and silver." Cagliostro recited some cabalistic words, and bade her gaze intently into the glass. She did so, and in a few minutes was overcome with fright and fainted away.

Such is the story as related by du Barry in her memoirs, which have been edited by Prof. Léon Vallée, librarian of the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris. She gives us no clue as to the vision witnessed by her in the magic glass. She says she afterwards refused to receive Cagliostro under any circumstances. What are we to believe concerning this remarkable story? Possibly we might conjecture that Madame du Barry saw in the mirror a phantasmagoria of the guillotine, and beheld her blonde head "sneeze into the basket" and held up to public execration. Coming events cast their shadows before.

The actor, Fleury, in his *Mémoires,* from notes furnished by an eyewitness, Lady Mantz, gives an account of a séance witnessed at the house of Cagliostro. The ghost of d'Alembert was summoned from the world of spirits. Says Fleury: "The spectators sat in arm chairs along the wall in the east side of the apartment. Before these chairs was drawn an iron chain, lest some foolish person should be impelled by curiosity to rush upon destruction. On the other side was placed the chair intended for the reception of the apparition. The Grand Cophta chose the unusual hour of 3 a. m. for his evocations." When all was ready the servants were dismissed; a deep silence followed, and the lights were suddenly extinguished. "The guests were

requested to shake the iron chain; they obeyed and an indescribable thrill ran through their frames. The clock at length struck three—slowly, and with a prolonged vibration of the bell. At each stroke a flash of light as sudden and transitory as lightning illumined the apartment, and the words 'Philosophy,' 'Nature,' and 'Truth' successively appeared in legible characters above the empty chair." Cagliostro uttered some cabalistic words, turning successively to the four cardinal points of the compass; whereupon "the outline of the arm chair became gradually perceptible in the darkness, as if the lines had been traced on a black ground with phosphorus. The next moment, and as if by the same process, a winding sheet could be seen, with two fleshless hands resting upon the arms of the chair. The winding sheet, slowly opening, discovered an emaciated form; a short breathing was heard, and two brilliant, piercing eyes were fixed upon the spectators." The famous philosopher, d'Alembert, had supposedly been called from the spirit world and materialized. He would answer questions put to him, but only Cagliostro was privileged to hear him speak.

III.

From England Cagliostro went to The Hague. Throughout Holland he was received by the lodges with Masonic honors—beneath "arches of steel." He discoursed volubly upon magic and Masonry to enraptured thousands. He visited Mitau and St. Petersburg in 1779. In May, 1780, he appeared at Warsaw. A leading prince lodged him in his palace. Here the necromancer "paraded himself in the white shoes and red heels of a noble." In September, 1780, he arrived in Strasbourg, where he founded one of his Egyptian lodges. He lavished money right and left, cured the poor without pay, and treated the great with arrogance. The Cardinal de Rohan invited the sorcerer and his wife to live at the episcopal palace. Cagliostro presented the cardinal with a diamond worth 20,000 francs, which he claimed to have made. A laboratory was fitted up in the palace for alchemical experiments.

The skeptical Baroness d'Oberkirch, in her memoirs, declares that while at Strasbourg, Cagliostro predicted the death of the Empress Maria Theresa of Austria. "He even foretold the hour at which she would expire," relates the baroness. "Cardinal de Rohan told it to me in the evening, and it was five days after that the news arrived." What is the explanation of this feat? A lucky guess, or psychic powers above the ordinary? We leave it to the occultists.

In the year 1785 we find Cagliostro at Lyons, France, where he founded the world famous lodge of Triumphant Wisdom and con-

verted hundreds to his mystical doctrines. But his greatest triumph was achieved in Paris. A gay and frivolous aristocracy, mad after new sensations, welcomed the magician with open arms. The way had been paved for him by Mesmer. He made his appearance in the French capital on January 30, 1785. The Cardinal de Rohan selected and furnished a house for him. Prints, medallions, and marble busts of him decorated the shop windows. He was called the "divine Cagliostro." There were neckties and hats *à la* Cagliostro. His house in the Rue St. Claude was always thronged with noble guests, who came to witness the strange séances in which ghosts were summoned from "the vasty deep." How were these phantoms evoked? Confederates, concave mirrors, and images cast upon the smoke arising from burning incense explain many of the phenomena. I do not doubt the reality of Cagliostro's hypnotic and clairvoyant feats, for I have seen enough to warrant belief in the genuineness of such; but his materializations test one's credulity to the breaking point. Says Trowbridge:

"To enhance the effect of his phenomena Cagliostro had recourse to artifices worthy of a mountebank. The room in which his séances were held contained statuettes of Isis, Anubis, and the ox Apis. The walls were covered with hieroglyphics, and two lackeys, 'clothed like Egyptian slaves as they are represented on the monuments at Thebes,' were in attendance. To complete the *mise en scène,* Cagliostro wore a robe of black silk on which hieroglyphics were embroidered in red. His head was covered with a turban of cloth of gold ornamented with jewels. A chain of emeralds hung around his neck, to which scarabs and cabalistic symbols of all colors in metal were attached. A ceremonial sword, with a handle shaped like a cross, was suspended from a belt of red silk."

Some years ago I heard that Dr. Encausse, of Paris, Grand Master of the Martinists, had Cagliostro's magic sword. I corresponded with him on the subject, but he informed me that the sword in his possession belonged not to the arch-enchanter but to Éliphas Lévi, the Cabalist and Rosicrucian, and was used by him in his mystical séances. However, he told me that he had the original ritual, in Cagliostro's handwriting, of the degrees of Egyptian Masonry. Dr. Encausse ("Papus") died at the time of the World War.

On August 28, 1785, Cagliostro was arrested under a *lettre de cachet* and cast into the Bastille, charged with complicity in the Affair of the Diamond Necklace, a *cause célèbre* familiar to all students of French history. He was acquitted by the Parliament, but was banished from France by order of Louis XVI. He took refuge in Eng-

land, where he was attacked by the editor, Morande, as previously stated. From England he went to various places on the Continent. But his reputation was ruined. In the year 1791 fate drew him like a lodestone to Rome, where he attempted to found a lodge of Egyptian Masonry. He was arrested and condemned to death as a sorcerer and a Freemason; but Pope Pius VI commuted the punishment to life imprisonment. In a subterranean dungeon in the Castle of San Leon, Urbino, he fretted away his life in silence and darkness until August, 1795, when news of his death leaked out. The cause of death and the place of sepulture of the famous sorcerer were never divulged. His wife died in a convent at Rome.

In the summer of 1927, when in Rome, I paid a special visit to the Castle of St. Angelo, where Cagliostro was imprisoned for two years prior to his condemnation by the Holy Office. I was shown his dungeon and saw also in a glass case, in the Council Chamber of the Castle, a facsimile of a page taken from Liber 3 de Morte (the Book of Death), which recorded Cagliostro's death as having taken place on August 28, 1795.

Alexandre Dumas, in his romantic novel, *The Memoirs of a Physician,* represents Cagliostro as the chief of the Illuminati, the avowed object of which was to overthrow the thrones of Europe and bring about the golden age of democracy; to free mankind from the shackles of superstition and political enthrallment. In the prologue, the Secret Superiors of the Order meet at midnight in a ruined château near Strasbourg to devise plans to accomplish these things. They come from the uttermost parts of the world. Cagliostro reveals himself to be the Grand Cophta, or Arch-Master of the Fraternity, recently from Egypt, the land of mystery. He undertakes, himself, to bring about a great revolution in France—"the storm center of Europe." This he purposes accomplishing by pandering to the vices of royalty; by widening the breach between the submerged tenth and the upper classes; by fanning class hatred; by enveloping the monarchy in disgrace; and thus producing an upheaval in society that will lead to civil war. This war he argues will spread like a devouring flame throughout Europe. Thrones will totter and liberal ideas will be spread broadcast. Humanity will rise from its sleep of centuries, rejuvenated and mighty. "I will tread the lilies under foot!" he says, alluding to the fleur-de-lys, the symbol of the French monarchy. He goes on his mission. Like Torrini, the conjurer, he has a van drawn by two Flemish horses; a miniature house on wheels, as it were, fitted up as a sleeping apartment and also as a laboratory for alchemical studies wherein the sage Althotas seeks for the Elixir of Life.

Cagliostro arrives at the château of a nobleman of the Old Régime, where he meets the lovely young Dauphiness, Marie Antoinette, on her way to Paris, accompanied by a splendid cortège of courtiers and attendants. She taunts the magician as a charlatan. In revenge he causes her to see in a carafe of water a vision of her death by the guillotine. She swoons with horror at the terrible phantasmagoria. Cagliostro goes to Paris, and is helped by the Freemasons to encompass the downfall of royalty. His necromantic powers aid him. In *The Diamond Necklace* is developed the story of the famous trial which landed the sorcerer in the Bastille and caused his banishment from France.

IV.

Cagliostro's gloomy old house in the Rue St. Claude, Paris, still stands, but it has been cut up into rooms for commercial purposes. If the walls of that ancient temple of mystery could but speak, what tales of magic they might unfold; but, alas, though walls are reputed to have ears, they are not credited with possessing tongues. The house has had a singular history.

Cagliostro locked the doors of the laboratories and séance-room sometime in June, 1786, on the occasion of his exile from France. Twenty-four years of undisturbed repose ensued. During the entire Revolution the house remained closed and intact. The dust settled thick over everything; spiders built their webs upon the gilded ceilings of the salons and the *chambre égyptienne* where the magical séances were held. Finally, in the Napoleonic year 1810, the doors of the temple of mystery were unfastened and the furniture and rare curios, the retorts and crucibles belonging to the dead alchemist of the Ancien Régime were auctioned off by order of the municipal government. An idle crowd of quidnuncs gathered to witness the sale and pry about the mansion. An examination revealed many curious acoustical and optical arrangements constructed in the building.

Accompanied by Félicien Trewey, the famous French fantaisiste, I made a pilgrimage, in the summer of 1908, to the house of Cagliostro. Leaving Trewey to talk to the concierge, I crossed the courtyard with its cordons of large stones blackened by time, passed through the sombre portal, and up the great stone staircase with its wrought-iron railing, and peeped into what was formerly the *chambre égyptienne,* on the second floor. There I saw a young French workman upholstering a chair. He paid no attention to me. I climbed to the very attic of the ancient mansion, and looked down into the gloomy courtyard, expecting almost every minute, in my excited imagination, to see the gilded coach of the Cardinal de Rohan come rolling up to the doorway,

and the Cardinal, in his splendid court costume, alight. Ah, those were the days of romance!

I slowly descended the ghost-haunted, time-worn staircase, feeling my way carefully along in the semi-darkness, and holding on to the forged-iron balustrade, thinking all the while of the high-born seigneurs and ladies who once passed up and down that winding way. I could almost hear the *frou-frou* of their silken coats and dresses, and the tap, tap of their red heels on the steps. How anxious they must have been, full of emotion, and curious to peer into the future. What visions did Cagliostro evoke for them in his magic glass? How many of those powdered, perfumed heads were destined to fall under the sharp blade of the guillotine,—the "Crimson Widow," beloved by the *sans-culottes!*

And then I thought of Cagliostro in the dungeon of the Castle of San Leon in rags and chains, lying upon a pile of mouldy straw, the wretched victim of the Inquisition.

A door on the landing below me opened slowly and noiselessly. I stopped, scarcely breathing, in anticipation of some mystic revelation. Was the phantom of the arch-necromancer coming out to greet me? No; it was but the wind! I closed the door softly behind me and hastily descended the steps. I was soon out in the sunshine. Desecration of desecrations!—one of the rooms on the ground floor of the mansion had been turned into a *brasserie,* and the name of the establishment was the "Bar de Cagliostro." Workmen in blouses were leaning against a galvanized-iron counter, sipping cognac of doubtful quality.

I asked the pleasant-faced concierge if he knew of the history of the old house.

"Yes, monsieur," he replied, "it was once inhabited by le Comte de Cagliostro, the celebrated sorcerer. Alexandre Dumas tells all about him in one of his novels."

From the mansion of the sorcerer I went to the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles, No. 10, not far away, to see the house of Madame de la Motte, of Diamond Necklace fame, whose strange intrigue landed the Cardinal de Rohan and Cagliostro in the Bastille; and after that I paid a visit to the old palace of the de Rohans, then used as the Government Printing Works, but now demolished. In this splendid Hôtel de Rohan, Rue Vieille-du-Temple, Cagliostro held a number of séances, with Mlle. de la Tour, niece of Madame de la Motte, acting as clairvoyante. From the palace of the Cardinal, M. Trewey and I paid a call on M. Caroly, at that time a dealer in magical apparatus, and editor of *L'Illusioniste*. I asked him: "Would it not be a good thing for the

Society of French Magicians to rent the mansion of Cagliostro and turn it into a club house?"

"Ah, monsieur," replied Caroly, with a characteristic shrug of the shoulders, "Cagliostro was a *charlatan.*"

That sufficed! But all the same I was not convinced that my project was not a good one. Just think of the atmosphere of that house of mystery. I, for one, should like to rent a room there, and spend days speculating about Cagliostro, the Cardinal, Madame de la Motte, and the world-renowned necklace that melted away through Carlyle's "horngate of dreams," in the delightfully wicked eighteenth century of magic and materialism.

I induced Harry Houdini to visit Cagliostro's house, when he was playing in Paris. He sent me a photograph of the gloomy portal of the mansion, with himself standing therein; a sphinx posing before an ancient temple of the occult arts.

In the summer of 1927, I paid another visit to the old home of the enchanter. The *brasserie* had given place to an automobile supply shop. The *chambre égyptienne* was occupied by M. Goldstein, furrier, who eyed me suspiciously from one of the windows. The Hebraic cognomen "Goldstein" (gold-stone) is suggestive of the Philosopher's Stone, which is credited with turning base metals into gold. Perhaps the gentleman furrier is an incarnation of Cagliostro. The subject is worth considering from a theosophical point of view. But that is another story, as Kipling says.

V.

Cagliostro, as I have said, has been exploited in plays and novels. Conjurers have used his cognomen for their tricks, such as the "Cards of Cagliostro," the "Casket of Cagliostro," etc. Robert-Houdin, in his séance before King Louis Philippe at St. Cloud, made splendid use of the sorcerer's mystic seal, a *serpent pierced by an arrow and holding an apple in its mouth,* which Cagliostro used upon his bottles of liquid gold and upon his Masonic diplomas. Upon this seal were the letters "L. P. D." Robert-Houdin also published a little paper called *Cagliostro.* Henri Robin issued his *L'Almanach Illustré: le Cagliostro.* In 1891, Hercat and Col. H. J. Sargent, the "Wizard of the South," opened a magical show in London called the "Cagliostromantheum."

M. Caroly, in 1893, in his conjuring exhibition at the Capucine Theatre of the Isola Brothers, Paris, presented an ingenious trick called the "Mask of Balsamo," which I had the pleasure of seeing. The effect was as follows:

The prestidigitator brought forward a small, undraped table, which he placed in the center aisle of the theatre; and then passed around

for examination the mask of a man, very much resembling a death-mask, but unlike that ghastly *memento mori* in the particulars that it was exquisitely modeled in wax and artistically colored.

"*Messieurs et Mesdames,*" remarked the professor of magic, "this mask is a perfect likeness of Joseph Balsamo, Comte de Cagliostro, the famous sorcerer of the eighteenth century, modeled from a death-mask in the possession of the Italian Government. Behold! I lay the mask upon this table in your midst. Ask any question you please of the oracle and it will respond."

The mask rocked to and fro with weird effect at the bidding of the conjurer, rapping out frequent answers to queries put by the spectators. It was an ingenious electrical trick. The *modus operandi* is thus explained in Hopkins' *Magic, Stage Illusions, and Scientific Diversions*: "That part of the wood which forms the chin of the mask is replaced by a small strip of iron, which is painted the same color as the mask, so that it cannot be seen; an electro-magnet is set into the top of the table, so that the cores shall be opposite the strip of iron when the mask is laid on the table. Contact is made by means of a push-button somewhere in the side scenes of the theatre; the wires run under the stage, and connection is established through the legs of the table when the legs are set on the foreordained places."

After witnessing Caroly's entertainment I went home to my little hotel in the historic Rue de Beaune, a stone's throw from the house where Voltaire died, to think and dream of the "Mask of Balsamo," which had obsessed my mind. In my bedroom, over the carved oak mantel, was a curious old mirror, set in a tarnished gilt frame, a relic of the eighteenth century. Said I to myself: "Would this were a ghost-glass, a veritable mirror of Nostradamus, wherein I might conjure up a phantasmagoria of that Paris of long ago." Possessed with this fantastic idea, I retired to rest, closed in the red curtains of the antique four-poster, and was soon wafted into the land of dreams. Strange visions disturbed my sleep. I seemed to see Cagliostro searching for the Elixir of Life in the laboratory of the Hôtel de Strasbourg, while near him stood the Cardinal de Rohan, breathlessly awaiting the results of the mystic operation. The glow from the alchemist's furnace illumined the great fantaisiste with a coppery splendor.

Cagliostro! Cagliostro! I was pursued all the next day and for weeks afterwards with visions of the enchanter. "Ah, wretched 'Mask of Balsamo,'" I cried, "why have you thus bewitched me with your sphinx-like smile." I took to haunting the book-stalls, antiquarian shops, and the Bibliothèque Nationale for rare prints and literature regarding the incomparable necromancer of the Old Régime, and was

liberally rewarded for my endeavors. Thus began my study of the most enigmatic character in the history of magic.

Cagliostro's Seal

The symbolical meaning of Cagliostro's seal has puzzled many writers. Éliphas Lévi (*Alphonse Louis Constant*), the famous French Cabalist and mystic, in his *L' Histoire de la Magie,* says that the serpent pierced by an arrow represents the Hebrew letter *Aleph,* an image of the union between active and passive, spirit and life, will and light.

"The arrow is that of the antique Apollo, while the serpent is the python of fable, the green dragon of Hermetic philosophy. The letter *Aleph* represents equilibrated unity. This pantacle is reproduced under various forms in the talismans of old magic, but occasionally the serpent is replaced by the peacock of Juno, the peacock with the royal head and the tail of many colors. This is an emblem of analysed light, that bird of the *Magnum Opus* the plumage of which is all sparkling with gold. At other times, instead of this emblazoned peacock, there is a white lamb, the young solar lamb bearing the cross, as still seen in the armorial bearings of the city of Rouen. The peacock, the ram and the serpent have the same hieroglyphical meaning—that of the passive principle and the sceptre of Juno. The cross and arrow signify the active principle, will, magical action, the coagulation of the dissolvent, the fixation of the volatile by projection, and the penetration of earth by fire. The union of the two is the universal balance, the Great Arcanum, the Great Work, the equilibrium of *Jachin* and *Boaz.* The initials L. P. D., which accompany this figure, signify Liberty, Power and Duty; also Light, Proportion and Density; and Law, Principle and Right. The Freemasons have changed the order of these initials, and in the form of L. D. P. they render them as *Liberté de Penser,* Liberty of Thought, inscribing these on a symbolical bridge; but for those who are not initiated they substitute *Liberté de Passer,* Liberty of Passage. In the records of the prosecution of Cagliostro it is said that his examination elicited another meaning as follows: *Lilia destrue pedibus*: Trample the lilies under foot."

If it be true that Cagliostro was an agent of the Illuminati, the mystical letters L. P. D. have especial significance, as Lévi explains. The *fleur de lys* was the heraldic device of the Bourbon kings of France; hence this trampling upon the lilies alluded to the stamping out of the French monarchy by the Illuminati.