



MYSTERIES OF INDIA SERIES  
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The State Library of Victoria  
"ALMA CONJURING COLLECTION"

A Practical Lesson In  
"CUPS AND BALLS"

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WILLIAM  
270 COLLING STREET

# A Practical Lesson In "CUPS AND BALLS"

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Introducing a number of original moves, ideas and suggestions



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In submitting this article to my confreres I do so in the full hope and belief that my offering may merit attention. As far as I am aware the majority of the moves, ideas and suggestions are the result of my own personal experimentation and therefore feel those interested will find something new, worthy of incorporation in their own routine.

To those who have not attempted this classic I could only say that this experiment is not so very difficult of accomplishment, as it is generally made to appear. I have kept away from the Cups and Balls for years on account of this fear and have neither bothered to attempt it. I am merely making mention of this fact as an encouragement to those who are not familiar with it.

#### SECTION ONE

**THE CUPS:** The regulation outfit consists of Three conical shaped metal cups. You can also use three ordinary cups—three empty cigarette tins, three poker dice shakers or three paper cups.

#### SECTION TWO

**THE BALLS** Made of cork and darkened over the flame of a candle. — I suggest you make your own as the ones I got with my outfit were too small. Get four ordinary corks and with a sharp knife cut each as near the shape of a ball as is possible. This will result in a crude sphere and later with a good flat file, shape these into the finished product. Stick a pin half way in each ball and burn it (the ball) over the flame of a candle; finish up by wiping it lightly with a rag.

#### SECTION THREE

**THE PALM:** Various methods have been explained, but I prefer the ordinary flat palm and would recommend you to use the same. From this position it is a simple matter to transfer ball to the finger palm position when necessary. Practice this transfer as follows: Place a cup on the table—a ball is palmed in your right hand—reach down and hold bottom rim of cup with your thumb on one side and first and second fingers on other side. Raise Cup from table and at same time bend third and fourth finger inward toward palm and pull slightly outwards. This is sufficient to bring ball under the last two fingers. This move is done under cover of raising cup and is not perceptible to the keenest observer—not even to you in a mirror.

#### SECTION FOUR

**THE SECRET INTRODUCTION:** I shall explain two methods here and like myself would advise you to alternate these, although to be frank it is not absolutely necessary.

**METHOD A:** The ball is palmed in your right hand. Lift up cup as explained in above paragraph. By the time your hand reaches position, say somewhere in line with your breast, the ball is already transferred under your third and fourth fingers and is directly under the mouth of the cup. From the front it appears as though all your fingers are encircling cup, but it is not so. Only the first and second fingers are around cup and the third and fourth fingers under cup around ball. Keep your eyes fixed on the table—misdirection here is very essential. Now lower hand with cup and just before touching table open out last two fingers and the ball is safely under the cup. After sometime you will find that it will not be necessary to resort to speed to put this trick over. The Indian conjurer although has another method of introducing the ball under his cup; keeps banging the cups very hard on the ground everytime he replaces them. You will find that if this trick is worked without undue haste its effect will enhance in proportion.

**METHOD B:** In the second method I introduce the ball directly from the palm ordinary under the cup.—Pick cup as described above but do not bend third and fourth fingers. These are kept outstretched in a natural manner. The real grip to the cup is supplied by the thumb and first finger—the second finger is only placed there lightly. As the cup is brought down on table the tip of second finger presses on cup

slightly which action tilts the mouth of the cup inwards towards the palm. The tip of thumb and first finger acting as fulcrum. The mouth of the cup now is directly above the ball and a slight relaxation of the muscle releases ball which is carried down with and under the cup.

#### SECTION FIVE

**SECRET EXTRACTION:** This move is necessary when it is desired to show there is nothing under a cup when a ball is actually placed there by a member of the audience. Assuming that the cup covers a ball—you want to show there is nothing there. Reach for cup holding mouth with thumb—first and second finger. Just as you lift cup curl fingers around—your little finger will come directly around ball which presses it against inner side of cup. This, when timed correctly, will appear quite natural. Hold cup up for a while gazing on table and when bringing it down the ball is palmed—only the empty cup is replaced on table. All these moves should blend into one after a little practice. I may add here for the benefit of those who have short fingers—like mine—that it would be advisable to push cup back under some pretext prior to executing this sleight. The reason is obvious as this will bring the ball in close proximity to the front side of cup from which position it is more convenient to press ball as explained.

#### SECTION SIX

**TO SHOW BALL UNDER AN ACTUAL EMPTY CUP:** With this move I have fooled those who work the Cups and Balls. Cup is laid on any spot on table by spectator. You have a ball palmed in your right hand. When desiring to produce ball pick up cup at bottom and as soon as your fingers encircle in the usual manner relax ever so slightly and leave ball on table lifting cup up simultaneously. There will be a tendency at first to drop ball before reaching table and this should be counteracted. The ball must be left on the table. From the front it simply looks as if you picked up the cup, THAT'S ALL.

#### SECTION SEVEN

**TO SIMULATE ACTION OF PLACING BALL UNDER CUP:** Show ball at tip of middle finger and thumb. Finger tips pointing upwards. As hand is moved towards cup allow ball to drop into palm but retain same position of fingers as if still holding ball. Tilt cup backward with left hand just sufficient to admit your right finger tips in and under it. The right fingers are then withdrawn slowly. This is the most natural method I know of for executing this move and I prefer it to pretending to place ball in left hand or pretending to throw it under cup. When right fingers are withdrawn from under cup they are spread apart quite naturally and owing to the slow manner in which it is done it is more convincing.

#### SECTION EIGHT

**SHOWING ONE BALL WHEN HOLDING TWO:** One ball is palmed in right hand. The other one held at tip of thumb and first fingers of left hand. Right hand approaches left and with thumb and first finger tip takes the visible ball, as same time dropping ball in left hand. Do this slowly—you are working under cover—so there is no need to race.

#### SECTION NINE

**THE JO-JO INTRODUCTION:** This is another of my pet moves. Ball is palmed in right hand. Pick up cup with the same hand and by tilting it slightly to the right with a sudden jerk the ball is shot into the cup. Toss cup up in air with ball inside it, at same time giving it a twist with first finger. The cup with the ball will go up spinning. —On its descent catch it mouth up and snappily place it on table. You have convinced them cup is empty and at same time loaded a ball under it.

You need not have the slightest anxiety about the ball falling.—Centrifugal force takes care of that. I use as much as three balls in my routine in the same way.

#### SECTION TEN

**THE SETTING:** I do not use any servante, profonds or secret pockets. All that is necessary is your right trouser pocket. In this pocket place four balls, a potato, a lemon and an onion. Yes! all together. With this set up you are ready to perform anywhere even though you have no cups. You can borrow ordinary tea cups.

## SECTION ELEVEN

**EXECUTION:** In the orthodox method the performance opens with the production of three balls, one at a time, at the tip of the wand. You palm out a ball from pocket and it's simple to pull it from tip of wand. I however do not use a wand—I open by picking the balls from the air—three balls, one at a time. Before commencing, palm out three balls from your pocket. One ball is palmed as in the regular manner—and two balls are finger palmed. It is not so difficult to palm three balls in this manner, as it appears in cold print—It's easy if you can palm one ball. These three balls are plucked from thin air—one at a time, and each placed under a cup. From here on your show begins. I do not propose giving you a routine here—you can work out one yourself and when you do that you will find that it is the best. With the exception of the fundamental principle of a trick it is a big mistake for any conjurer to copy the other fellow, no matter how clever he thinks him to be, and if any of the brethren would like a complete routine just drop me a line and it would give me great pleasure to work out one for you specially. That's a promise. Any way, after studying this article many combinations will automatically suggest themselves to you. It is the conclusion or the climax in this classic that leaves the onlookers gasping—they go into hysterics so to say. The Indian Conjurer works the Cups and Balls as near perfection as one hopes to reach, but they have no suitable termination, which leaves the end as flat as a pan cake. As a matter of fact the onlooker does not know whether the performance is completed or not. I always vary my finale so that if I am performing before any one who has seen my work before is equally startled with the rest. He does not see what he expected to. I shall now detail the various endings under separate heads.

## SECTION TWELVE

**1st FINALE:** In this at end a Potato, a Lemon and an Onion is found under each cup. The method of procedure here is as follows: Assuming that you have arrived at a point where each cup covers a ball. The fourth ball is palmed in your right hand. A number is asked for, say—between five and fifteen, and whatever number is called as many balls are now to be produced. Let us say that someone calls the number 12. Mentally subtract 3 from 12, which gives 9. — Lift 1st cup introducing palmed ball in, at same time pick up the ball just uncovered with left hand. Toss this ball in air and say one—catching it in right hand. Put right hand in pocket with the ostensible reason of leaving it there, but palm it out again and repeat with other cups in same manner. When the ninth ball has been put in pocket, leave ball behind and palm out potato. Lift cup with left hand pass to right covering potato and point to exposed ball on table with left forefinger and say ten. — Right hand then puts cup on table introducing potato under it. Left now tosses ball in air—right catches it and repeats same movements for lemon and onion. When palming out the three vegetables—do so under the 2nd, 3rd and 4th fingers—1st finger and thumb are shaped ready to get hold of cup. Patter here something after this style:—“Having now produced the desired number of balls there now remains nothing for me to do except lift the cups and show you that there are nothing under them. I lift the first cup—Oh, pardon me, you find a potato—I lift the second cup—you find an onion here, and if you want to know how I did this trick why the answer is here—it's a lemon. Lift third cup and show.

## SECTION THIRTEEN

**2nd FINALE:** Here I end up by working the familiar smoke effect. — Two cups are placed mouth to mouth and cigarette vanished. Top cup lifted when apparently the smoke from the cigarette is found captured there. Blow gently in cup, producing a pretty effect. The two chemicals responsible for this effect are too well-known to need any mention. Just prior to reaching this point I light a cigarette and execute previous moves with ball and cup while holding cigarette in the usual manner between first and second finger. This will not interfere with movements and you can easily lift cup and introduce ball under it with safety.

## SECTION FOURTEEN

**3rd FINALE:** Here I produce liquid inside the cup. One cup is doctored. It has a double lining and worked on the air hole principle. Fill space between lining with liquid and stick wax both on the inner and outer hole. When the two cups are placed mouth to mouth the wax is scratched.

## SECTION FIFTEEN

**4th FINALE:** My pet and the strongest climax one ever hopes to produce. A glass of Whisky, Brandy, and Gin found under the respective cups. The three small glasses at

the outset are placed in a holder on the left side attached to vest. The holder I have been using is somewhat after the type of inkwell with rubber lined spring covers. This I have immediately abandoned the moment I came across Percy Abbott's "Keene." This gives plenty of freedom when working, with no fear of spilling contents and you will not get a better holder for a glass of liquid anywhere. I cannot divulge it, so am leaving this part out. Attach the three glasses on your left side, as Percy says to do with "Keene." The glasses are introduced under cups as follows: — Under cover of bending to pick cup up with left hand, right fingers palms the first glass. Your left side is away so this is quite naturally executed. The left hand transfers cup to right and then picks up the exposed ball from table. The cup is held by thumb and first finger—the second, third and the little finger are around glass. There is not much difficulty in introducing glass under cup as one would imagine when reading this explanation. As hand is lowered on table the moment the edge of palm touches table straighten out the three fingers lowering cup with thumb and first finger—at finish your palm will end up flat on table. Repeat with other two glasses.

### SECTION SIXTEEN

**ADDITIONAL MOVES:** (a) Ask lady to place a ball on her hand and cover with cup. You have a ball palmed in your right hand. You pick up cup to show ball has not vanished from lady's hand cover again. By doing so you have introduced a ball under it. — The cup now covers two balls, but she does not know it, because you don't let go of cup and by reason that you are pressing on to it against her palm, her sense of feeling is benumbed. — It is impossible for her to know how many balls are under the cup. Just try it on your own hand and verify it. At this point you ask her to press on top of cup and as soon as she gets ahold of it and not until then, you move your hand away. Now get another ball and place it under second cup on table. Vanish it from second cup and allow her to find it under cup she is holding.

(b) Borrow lady's hank and roll it up between your hands. — A duplicate hank is palmed in your left hand. — Under cover of rolling, the two hanks are switched—leaving the borrowed hank palmed in right and dummy exposed in left hand. Pick up cup and introduce hank under. The duplicate hank is in view all the time, which they take for the borrowed one. Vanish this and let them find it under the cup.

### SECTION SEVENTEEN

**SUGGESTIONS:** (a) With a set of Poker Dice and Shakers you can work out a routine, using some of the moves described above. Use the Gambler as the theme of your story and end up by finding three rolled up I. O. U. instead of dice, remarking that at the finish the Gambler takes all and leaves you these. Allow them to open out ball of paper and discover the I. O. U.

(b) Again when having tea with someone use three cups and lumps of sugar leading up to the climax by producing three small pastries under the cups. There are endless possibilities in the Cups and Balls and the impromptu nature of the experiment allow opportunities of being present anywhere. When I was on my last vacation at a seaside resort, I presented the Cups and Balls on the beach in my bathing suit. A towel was spread out on the sands for the table—Balls mad of sand rolled tightly in paper—Emptied the contents of three cigarette tins for cups. The difficulty was the receptacle for the balls—AH! HA! that blonde can help—and the difficulty was surmounted by borrowing the bathing cap from the blue eyed blonde. The cap was placed at the correct angle so that no one could see inside and there was the whole outfit. Believe me no performance of the Cups and Balls I ever gave went as big as this and all because the whole affair was so impromptu. Try this on your Coney Island.

### CONCLUSION

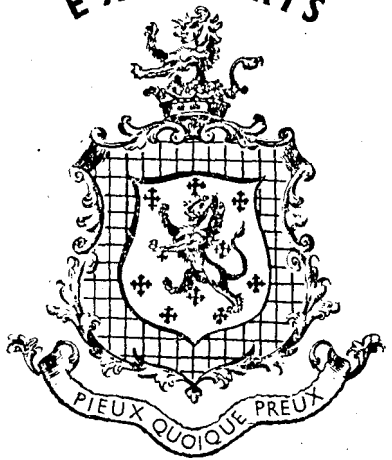
I do hope my endeavors will prove of assistance to some of the fraternity and as a parting hint, I may mention that the deeper one penetrates into this branch of magic the more treasure you will be able to unearth—so wide is its possibilities. I THANK YOU.

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