

THE MAGIC WAND "SHILLING SERIES" No. 3

A FEW
JARDINE ELLIS'
SECRETS

BY

GEORGE JOHNSON



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JARDINE ELLIS'

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GEORGE JOHNSON.

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FOREWORD.

THE late Jardine Ellis was a master of what is known to Conjurers as "close quarter work." The majority of his effects were designed to puzzle the single onlooker, and in this particular class of Magical deception he was a past master.

This clever worker was at some pains to keep his secrets within a charmed circle and usually stipulated that his tricks were not to be either shown or exposed to a conjurer. I have witnessed many of the effects but for the majority of the secrets I am indebted to Mr. Stanley Norton who, by the way, has himself written the description of the Slate Mystery.

One day, while exchanging secrets—as conjurers are wont to do—Mr. Norton remarked to Mr. Ellis, "You are very particular as to these effects; do you expect to keep them for ever and ever?" Ellis laughed, "Oh well," he said, "when I am gone it does not matter what becomes of them."

I do not, therefore, feel any qualms regarding the publication of this booklet. However, in memory of a clever worker who left us all too soon—he died on February 1st, 1923, a comparatively young man—Conjurers may perhaps see to it that the secrets are not disclosed to all and sundry. So far as this little publication is concerned, it will only be sold through recognised Magical booksellers and dealers.

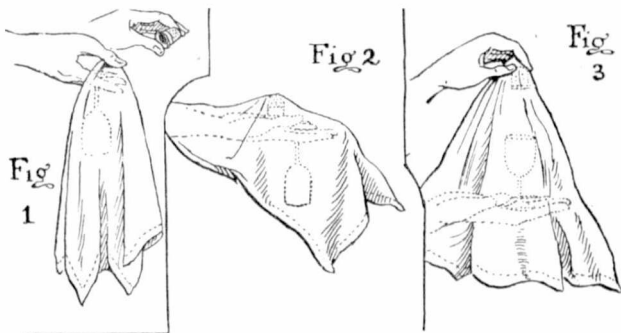
GEORGE JOHNSON.

The "MAGIC WAND" Office,
September, 1925.

THIMBLE AND WINE GLASS.

This experiment was introduced as "A trick with a thimble." Nothing was said about the wine glass, for herein lay the surprise.

With the left hand, Ellis took from his pocket a thimble and with the right, from another pocket—usually that on the right side of his lounge coat—what appeared to be merely his handkerchief. The handkerchief was permitted to hang down from the



fingers of the right hand. Unknown to the spectators, a small wine glass had been taken from the pocket at the same time and the base of this, back-palmed coin fashion, was gripped between the sides of the first and little fingers. In Fig. 1,

where this is illustrated, the position of the handkerchief is, however, not quite correct; one corner should be under the thumb and the other three corners should be hanging down.

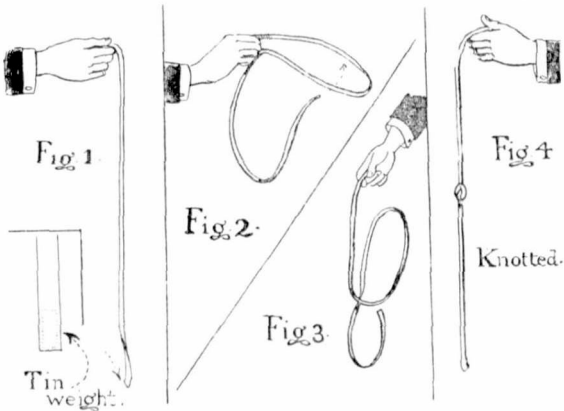
The thimble having been examined, it was placed on the palm of the right hand, just beyond the corner of the depending handkerchief. The observer having now moved back—out of harms way from the performer's point of view—Ellis seized the handkerchief with the finger and thumb of the right hand, by the corner which, until this moment, was under the right thumb. He now drew the corner of the handkerchief up the arm to a position just above the edge of the coat sleeve, see Fig. 2. Then, with the left hand, he seized the thimble through the handkerchief, raised it, and as it approached the position shown in Fig. 3, reverse palmed the wine glass so that the latter rested, on its base, on the fingers.

The left hand was now gently lowered until the thimble—which was made of celluloid—could be permitted to noiselessly slide into the glass, the latter being inclined a trifle to aid this manœuvre. Then the performer dramatically withdrew the handkerchief and disclosed the glass and thimble. The trick is wonderfully effective if casually presented.

A JUGGLING FEAT.

The performer, holding a cord or ribbon by one end, gives it a slight shake. A knot appears half way down the cord.

For this pretty effect, Ellis used a cord with a weighted tassel. In working it, I have been more successful with about a yard of silk ribbon at the lower end of which is inserted a piece of rather thick tin plate measuring three-quarters of an inch by half an inch. The metal, which is attached to the ribbon by bending the edges of the tin plate over the silk, is indicated in Fig. 1. A strip of



ribbon is Seccotined over-all and the fact that the ribbon is thus weighted is unknown to the audience.

Though simple enough to explain visually, the little feat is difficult to describe on paper. Hold the ribbon as in Fig. 1. Now give the wrist an upward jerk so that the weight (*i.e.* the weighted end of the ribbon) rises in the air about an inch or so below the level of the hand. Try this move some half dozen times. Now, just as the "weight" is approaching the hand—it is presumed to be the right hand—suddenly move the hand towards your left and instantly strike the rising ribbon with the loop of silk which is formed, so to speak, in the air. The hand naturally falls a few inches in doing this. In Fig. 2, the uppermost portion of the ribbon is about to "swish"—I can think of no better term—against that part which is some few inches below the knuckles. The result of this manœuvre causes the weighted end of the ribbon to pass through the loop in the direction of the arrow (Fig. 2) and the knot (Fig. 4) is thus formed.

Fig. 3 is intended to illustrate the ribbon just about to conclude its formation into a knot. It is actually the termination of the move illustrated in Fig. 2.

No written instructions can exactly convey the idea but, with the above notes, the learner

should acquire the knack in five minutes. Do not lose patience!

Another worker, Mr. Ellis Stanyon I think, holds a ring (threaded through the ribbon) between the thumb and fingers (Fig. 1), and, as the knot is made, releases the ring which becomes tied in the knot. This is a charming amplification which the performer may venture upon when proficient with the first and easier version of the trick.

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THE ROD AND RING.

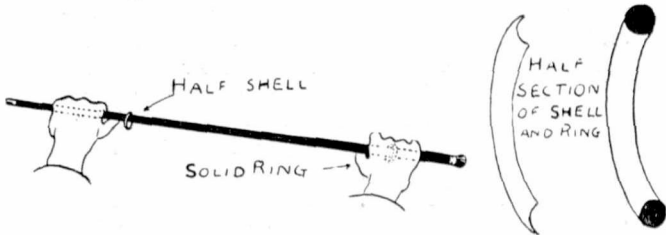
When Jardine Ellis presented his version of this effect at the Magic Circle Grand Séance of 1921, the majority of us were puzzled. Fairly certain that two rings were used, it was difficult to reconcile this with the fact that we never by chance caught a glimpse of any duplicate.

The secret may be explained in a few words. There was no actual duplicate, but a half shell ring which, nesting *over* the solid, made the latter appear as a single ring. The *forte* of this ingenious performer lay in the adroit manner in which the ring was adapted to the shell—and in which the *shell was exhibited* as the *bona fide* ring.

The ring itself is solid. It measures rather more than two inches in diameter, having a thickness of about three-eighths of an inch. To visualise the "shell" it is only necessary to imagine a hollow brass curtain ring sawn in half edgewise. (I should think it would be possible to thus make two very efficient "shells.") The performer, with ring and shell in the right trouser's pocket, a temporary assistant standing on his (the conjurer's) right, and a borrowed walking stick, proceeded somewhat as follows.

Ring and shell were taken from the pocket. Contracting the fingers over the two,—an easy

palm this—the helper received the ring alone for the purpose of examination. When, after a moment or so, the stick was being inspected, the ring, back in the performer's hand, nested in the shell again.



The apparatus consists of a ring and a shell ring which is rather difficult to describe and almost impossible to clearly illustrate. Imagine a hollow ring cut into two round its circumference thus making two circular troughs. One of these is the shell which should fit nicely over the solid ring.

The ring alone is permitted to drop down the stick and a sort of bagatelle process with the ring on the stick is now indulged in, as follows.

The actual ring is dropped on, when it quickly reaches the left (nearly closed) fist. The ring is then jerked with that fist until it arrives adjacent to the right, when the ring falls back again. At the termination of this juggling business, we will presume that the left fist conceals the ring (on the

stick, of course, this being known to the spectators) and that the right hand contains the palmed shell.

The assistant now grasps the ferrule end of the stick and the performer the knob end. He places his right hand—presumed to be empty—underneath the left, which, it will be remembered, covers the ring. The performer now suddenly withdraws the right hand, exhibits the shell, pulls the stick away from his helper and, ere the latter has time to ask any question, such as "What is under the left hand?" the performer has dropped the shell on to the stick. The instant it arrives at the left hand the latter opens to receive it and as the shell at once adapts itself, all is well. There must not be a moment's hesitation with these moves. The performer may now withdraw ring and shell, as one, and hold them with a second and third "finger palm" ready for the next phase of the trick.

So much for taking the ring off the stick—or rather appearing to do so. Now let us proceed with the equally apparent transference of the ring to the stick when the ring is presumed to be elsewhere.

The to and fro juggling proceeds as before, this time, however, the performer shows the shell

as he deliberately removes it. (The ring, as usual, is still concealed by the left hand.) The position now is as follows. Assistant holds ferrule end of stick. Performer holds the knob end with left closed fist under which, this time unknown to the spectator, is the ring. The shell is held in the performer's right hand. He brings this hand adjacent to the left and proceeds to strike the edge of the shell against the stick. At the third or fourth hit, he suddenly *pulls away the left hand with a sliding motion* and drawing the right hand sharply backwards rests it on the hip *with the shell palmed*. All eyes are fixed on the twirling ring. Now, again, giving neither assistant or audience time to think, the stick is taken from the assistant and the ring dropped off *right on to the palmed shell*, which is concealed by the curvature of the fingers.

The trick may be tried, for one's own amusement, with two key rings, but no amount of writing can equal five minutes' experimenting with a ring and shell. Sufficient has been stated to show the possibilities of this brilliant effect. In presentation, the performer must neither cease pattering for a moment or permit his helper time to ask awkward questions at equally awkward moments. As the presence of the shell ring is never guessed at, the performer, if he does get

into difficulties, can drop the ring into the shell at almost any time. Jardine Ellis never experienced any trouble of this sort. He boldly proceeded on the lines described, though it is possible that there are others more conversant with the various moves who, if willing, could better describe the actual working than myself. I have only seen the trick "from the front," and submit but the bare bones so to speak, of a pretty experiment.

A HUMOROUS CARD ITEM.

This was a trick of the variety that seemed to delight Ellis. Incidentally, it pleased the audience, though exactly what the "victim" thought of the proceedings is open to conjecture.

A spectator having been cajoled on to the stage, was given a pack of cards to shuffle. Ellis then asked that a card might be selected, noted and then returned to the pack, while the latter was held by the performer behind his back. Immediately the card was partly in the pack, the conjurer wheeled round and addressed both the helper and the audience. "I would like to point out," he said "that my hands, and the cards are still behind my back and that it is impossible for me to have seen the card which this gentleman selected."

During this harangue, Ellis had obtained control of the card (probably by the pass) and brought it to a known position in the pack. He had contrived to leave his helper at one side of the stage while he (Ellis) occupied the other. "Now sir," said the conjurer, clearly and dramatically, "the card you selected was the" After the word "the" only a confused mumble could be heard. "Eh?" usually remarked the victim, somewhat puzzled. Ellis walked across the stage and placing his hand familiarly around the man's shoulder so that the right hand *holding a card* was visible to the audience but *not* to the helper, whispered something into the ear of the latter. More confused still, the temporary assistant shifted uneasily. Then, in a perfectly clear tone, and amidst peals of laughter from the spectators, Ellis said "Your card sir, was the (say) four of diamonds."

It was almost impossible for the victim to glance over his *right* shoulder while the conjurer was whispering into his (the helper's) *left* ear, and it was not until he returned to his seat that he was enabled to tell how the conjurer knew the card. Then, some adjacent spectator explained the joke. Ellis, of course, palmed the card in the first instance and then held it on the helper's shoulder where it was visible to the audience. The remainder of the pack he had placed on the table.

THE JARDINE ELLIS SLATE MYSTERY.

[STANLEY NORTON.]

It was in August, 1920, that Jardine Ellis initiated me into the secret of this effect, truly one of his gems, but nevertheless one of his most difficult problems. There are no tricky sleights to master, no fakes, but a gift of showmanship that is vouchsafed to very few. If properly presented, your temporary assistant should leave the stage feeling very bewildered.

The effect is apparently impossible. Three common school slates are cleaned and marked by the assistant one after the other, they are also marked on both sides and tested for any faking. In spite of all these precautions a long message (*completely covering* one side of the *middle* slate of the stack) duly appears, clearly written in chalk. Further rigorous tests reveal nothing to either assistant or audience.

To describe this trick is a somewhat lengthy task, yet I cannot do the reader justice unless I give every detail as Ellis taught me.

You require three unprepared slates, a piece of chalk, a duster—and plenty of impudence.

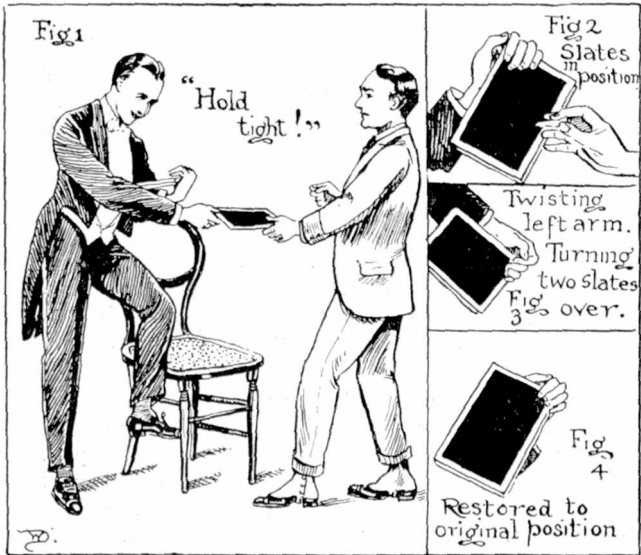
Prepare for the trick by thoroughly cleaning and drying all three slates; note that they have not any accidental distinguishing marks, such as

a large knot in the grain of the frame of one or a flaw in the slate of another.

Take slate No. 1 and upon one side write out your message, spread it well over the slate, but leave a little margin on each side of the writing. In the *bottom right hand corner* of this side of the slate write a figure 1. Turn the slate over and in the same way and position mark a figure 2. Hold this slate with *writing uppermost* and pile the other two slates on top of it. Grasp the stack by the *top right hand corner*, the arm below and diagonally across the slates, the back of hand downwards towards stage. The *bottom left hand corner* of stack lies in the bend of the elbow. Thus you walk on. The stage is set with two chairs side by side and fairly close together. You have a piece of chalk in your pocket and a dry duster on the back of one chair.

First get your assistant, and from this moment onwards you are *working*. Don't pick the most suspicious or supercilious member of your audience. Borrow, if you can, one of the genial and reasonably good-natured brand. And, for goodness sake, having got him, keep him in good humour. "Gag" all you can, but not at him, for your whole aim is to win his confidence and make him believe that, up to a certain point, you have not done a suspicious sleight or move. If

you arouse any irritation or an even good-natured desire to "get one back on you"—you are lost and there is no "get-out."



Invite him to the chair furthest from you (he stands on your left), you stand beside the other chair, one foot resting carelessly on one of the side rungs of the chair under the seat, and still

nursing your stack of slates. Patter genially away, hand him the duster (with some joke relative to spring-cleaning), and also the first slate from the top of stack. See that he wipes it thoroughly on both sides. Receive the slate back from him. Place it on the stack and produce chalk from pocket. State that you are about to mark the slate on *both* sides, as also the other slates, but, only after each has been cleaned by him.

You say, "I will mark each side of the slate, with consecutive figures. This side 'one' and this side 'two'" You *apparently* mark, in the *lower right hand corner*, a figure 1 and turning slate over undoubtedly mark a 2. *But* you merely simulate writing with your thumb nail in the first instance. The actual chalk is pushed up *too high* between the finger and thumb, but is *visible*. *You must not hesitate*. A simple flinch and the assistant may note the swindle. You now withdraw the next slate and hand it to the assistant to clean as before. Now give particular attention to the following moves.

You are still holding the stack of slates as when you first came on. The assistant is starting to clean the second slate. Remark to him, "You have noticed, I suppose, that these slates are solid; there is no trick or mechanism in the

frames. Let me show the audience what I mean—hold tight.” You lean over your chair towards him and with the right hand grasp the edge of his slates and give one or two tugs—he, of course, pulling against you. It is at this moment, and under perfect misdirection, you twist your left arm, turning *your* two slates over and bringing the arm above them. Then, pressing the end of the stack against your body quietly restore your arm to its original position—*but the slates are reversed*. When the first slate was marked it was replaced on the stack with the “2” uppermost. The blank side of the faked slate is now on top and that also shows a 2—to both assistant and audience nothing has happened. You have just leaned over and proved the second slate solid. You take it back duly cleaned on both sides and mark as before, 3 and 4, one on each side and still at the right hand bottom corner.

Now comes the moment when you have to convince your assistant that he is being quite fairly dealt with; and it must be convincing. “Three on this side, four on this side,” you continue (*writing as you talk*). “I hope I am not boring you, there is only one more slate. When you have cleaned it I will mark it five and six”—the slates are slightly fanned—the fake slate shows its 2 in the corner—you drop it carelessly on the seat

of your chair and on top of it the "3-4 slate." You at once hand the *lowest* and *last* slate to be cleaned. The reader should now have solved the problem—with a single objection. Yes, I *know* this slate was originally marked on one side only with a 2, but, after the "turn over," an active thumb obliterated this little item. You now mark the *last* slate 5 and 6, and inform your assistant that now he must watch you closely. The slates are stacked and placed on the seat of the chair and the fun begins.

You must work slowly and almost carelessly—adopt a cheery easy attitude towards your assistant and bear this out by your deportment. I know of few tricks in which the "man who does it" matters more. Personally, I have only performed the trick once. This was to a gathering of about thirty people; it created an extraordinary effect.

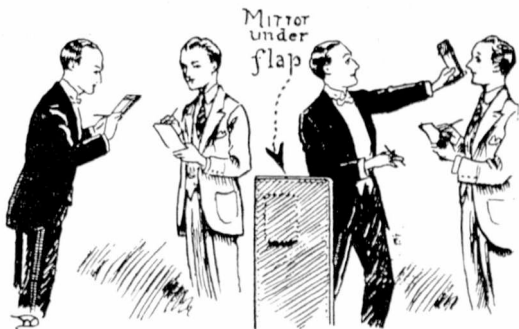
NOTE.—I mentioned that a dry duster should be used. A moist one leaves marks which do not readily dry and form, to keen eyes, a guide which is undesirable during the manipulations. The blank margin round the message is to prevent a glimpse of the writing being seen when the second slate is withdrawn from the stack after the first has been replaced.

AN EXPERIMENT IN TELEPATHY.

The effect to be described is designed for the bewilderment of a single individual. Briefly the "telepathist" reproduces a simple sketch, which the "victim" draws with pencil and paper. The performer is equipped with a faked pocket book. Under a leather flap, situated near one corner of the book, is a small piece of thin mirror plate. The design of the book's cover is arranged to conceal the mirror when the loose leather flap, indicated in the drawing, is either covering the mirror or folded back on the pocket book.

The performer faces his helper and offers him a quarter sheet of note paper, a pencil, and any flat object—to serve as a writing pad—that happens to be handy by. The presentation now proceeds somewhat as follows. "I want you, sir, to draw any simple object on this piece of paper; I am going to try and reproduce it while standing facing you. Please hold the book and paper as I do." The performer takes out his pocket book, places a similar piece of paper thereon, and holds the book with both hands by its lower corners. "Now draw a simple design, please, very slowly." The performer also appears to be drawing—he is actually making a few random lines. "You have made a sketch; very well, now I want you to

follow my instructions carefully. Continue to hold the book and sketch in the same position so that it is not possible for me to see it." (The performer takes a step nearer the spectator). Now I want you to place your hand over one eye and continue to look at your sketch with the other eye. (The assistant closes one eye as directed). "No, sir, not *that* eye, this one." As the performer makes the remark he, for an instant, holds his pocket book in front of the spectator's free eye—*whichever it happens to be*—and catches the reflection in the



mirror. The performer withdraws his hand and proceeds. "Yes, that is right. Now please open both eyes, look at the drawing and think intently of the design." During the final remarks, the per-

former appears to be adding a few finishing touches to his drawing. He then hands it to the spectator with the remark, "That is as near as I can get, sir." As may be supposed, the sketch is almost a replica.

Jardine Ellis varied the above procedure according to circumstances. Sometime he would merely ask the helper to close one eye, to gaze longer at the drawing or would make any chance remark that occasion offered. The main object was to cover the victim's spare eye for a moment with the faked pocket book and, being a master of misdirection, this Ellis did without ever arousing the slightest suspicion.

CARD DIVINATION.

This trick, when presented on one occasion at the Magic Circle, caused something of a sensation. It gives a very fair example of the methods adopted by Jardine Ellis and the ingenuity he displayed. It is true that many who witnessed the effect were afterwards much chagrined to discover that the trick was accomplished by the aid of confederacy, but it was "effect" that Ellis was after.

Coming forward with a tennis racquet and a soft woollen ball, he asked if a spectator, willing to catch the ball, would hold up his hand. Several hands appeared and Ellis, apparently choosing the most likely looking spectator (for his particular purpose) batted the ball in the right direction. The spectator was then asked to bring the ball on to the stage. In passing, it may be stated that this ingenious method of making sure of a helper from the audience was used on other occasions.

The helper was now given a pack of cards. He was asked to run through them, to extract one card and to place it in his pocket. Ellis then introduced another pack, and, after cogitation and some bye-play, withdrew from this pack a duplicate of the card which the helper had selected.

Brief and terrible is the secret ! In the pack given to the spectator, was a blank playing card on which was written, say, "Please select the two of hearts." One trembles to think what may have happened when, on certain occasions, Ellis may have had to deal with a disobliging member of the audience.

THE HOLDER OF THE EGG.

This was a particularly barefaced "swindle," using the word in a conjuring sense. The performer brought with him a basket of Easter eggs, each egg being covered with coloured tinsel paper. These he distributed amongst the audience. He then forced a colour, by one or other of the known methods, and, presuming the colour to be blue, the holder of the egg wrapped in paper of like hue was asked to come up and assist. There was only one "blue" egg and this was held by a confederate. It will be seen that under these conditions, Ellis could not only produce wonderful effects apparently with the assistance of a perfect stranger, but could, and did, produce some previously vanished article from within the egg. Moreover, this egg, had, from the spectator's point of view, been come by haphazardly. It must be confessed, this was not conjuring.

THE MEASURED, CUT, AND RESTORED STRING.

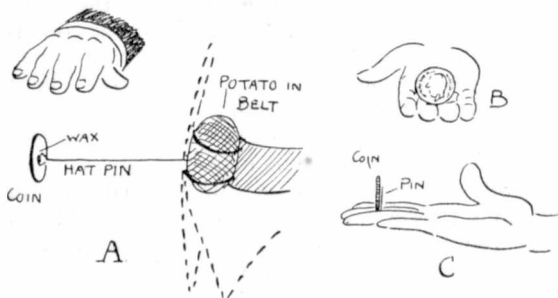
Producing a piece of string, twelve inches in length, the performer proceeded to measure it with the aid of a ruler which was on the table. "Now you measure it, to make sure," was the next remark in the course of patter. As the performer said this, he took a step backwards and held his hands behind his back with an air of—"I will have nothing further to do with it." With the hands in this position, Ellis got possession of a loop of string attached to a catgut and elastic pull which was in the left sleeve. (Probably the loop was engaged in one of the cuff links?).

The string, having been measured by a spectator, was left in a horizontal position on the table. With the fake loop concealed between the finger and thumb of the left hand, the performer slowly and deliberately picked up the length of string by—as nearly as possible—its centre. With the fingers of the right hand, he then apparently pulled up the loop into view—actually the loop attached to the pull. The loop was now cut and the ends rolled between the fingers. During the kneading process, the cut ends vanished up the sleeve, and it only remained to show the restored (*sic*) cord and have it again measured.

COIN LEVITATION.

It was in June, 1914, that Mr. Stanley Norton first introduced the coin balanced, on its edge, at the finger tips. For the benefit of those not conversant with the original deception, a condensed version of the effect as it appeared in the *MAGIC WAND*, Vol. 4, page 742, is included in this article. Jardine Ellis, with his usual proclivity for creating a big effect from small beginnings, improved the trick out of all recognition, and it is his particular version that I now describe.

The coin, a florin, was first balanced on the fingers, then the hand was removed and the coin was seen to be floating in space. A few passes were made round and about the coin, it rested again for a moment on the finger tips and was then returned to the lender.



To deal first with the balancing. Place a pin on the coin, which should preferably be a new one as the pin is less noticeable. Pick up the coin by its edge, with the finger and thumb, the thumb tip covering the pin point. Show casually, front and back, making a sweeping movement with the arm. Now slide the pin across the coin until the head projects about half an inch beyond the edge of the coin. At the same moment, the coin is placed on the first and second fingers of the outstretched right hand, held palm upwards. The head of the pin is now gripped by the knuckles of the first and second fingers and forms a support for the coin which will stand almost at right angles to the hand. (By relaxing the pressure of the knuckles, the coin may be caused to gracefully assume a flat position in the hand and from here, minus the pin, it is transferred to the other hand and returned to the owner; this, however, has nothing to do with the Ellis levitation).

Jardine Ellis was provided with a long hat pin, originally fitted with a metal head or knob. This latter was removed and the small cup-shaped receptacle which formerly held the head in position was filled with conjurer's wax. (Beeswax two parts, Diachylon one part; melt together. This wax is always "tacky.")

The pin, in the first instance, was impaled on the left coat sleeve. Having presented the balanced coin by the Norton method, Ellis obtained possession of the hat pin and having pressed the coin against the waxed head, imbedded the point into his waistcoat at a position where he had thoughtfully vested a potato! It thus became possible to remove the hand supporting the coin altogether and exhibit it "floating in space," The experiment over, and the coin returned, the pin was pushed into the right coat sleeve at an early opportunity.

In presenting this effect, Mr. Norton now wears a long bandage which contains a large and sound potato. Personally, I should back the tuber with a strip of metal. One never knows.

THE MAGNETISED KNIFE.



The appliance here illustrated was that used by Jardine Ellis to apparently cause a dinner knife to mysteriously adhere to the palm or to the fingers of the hand. It consists of a tiny piece of metal cut to shape and bent as illustrated. (Ellis used the very thin plate found in the tops of cigarette tins fitted with a "cutter" lid.) The fake measures three-eighths of an inch by half an inch approximately, irrespective of the little triangular portion bent over at the back. The flat surface was covered with conjurer's wax. The presentation was crisp. Placing the fake midway on the knife blade, and close to the back, Ellis exhibited the knife "on both sides" by means of the well-known wafer and paper knife move. He then placed the knife, longitudinally, on the outstretched right hand, so that the apex of the fake was clipped between the second and third fingers of that hand. He now placed the tips of the three middle fingers of the left hand on the blade and raising the two hands supported the knife in this position. His patter will explain the rest. "It is easy to hold the knife here with three fingers. If I lift one finger it is less easy with two. If I lift two fingers, it is still retained by one, but if I take away the last finger it is a miracle." The knife was again shown back and front in the usual fashion.

THE FLOATING WAND.

I am not at all certain that the following ingenious idea was a secret of Jardine Ellis'. It is, at any rate, akin to his style. Briefly, a wand, or walking stick, adhered to the fingers in the usual fashion, but instant examination of the hand or wand failed to reveal the secret.

Here it is. A loop of fine catgut was attached to a piece of elastic cord which was in turn stitched to the arm-hole of the jacket. The catgut loop was then pulled down and engaged under the nail of the second finger. In this position the catgut was invisible, because the hand was held palm downwards in front of the body, thus concealing the loop itself, while it was impossible to catch a glimpse of the tiny portion embedded under the finger nail. The whole affair being at tension, it was only necessary to insert the wand or the walking stick between the fingers and the catgut loop in order to present the usual suspension trick. Various positions could be assigned to the article used, and when it was withdrawn, the performer had merely to bend his fingers towards the palm when the catgut vanished up the sleeve, *via* the elastic. If fine catgut is used, it is quite possible to expose the palm of the hand when the loop is in position, unless the conjurer is performing at very close quarters.

THE END.

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