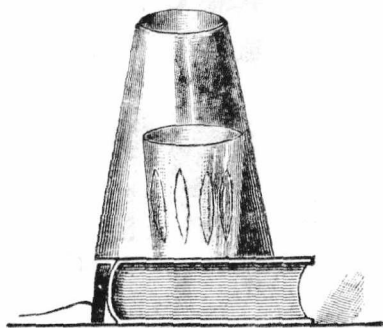


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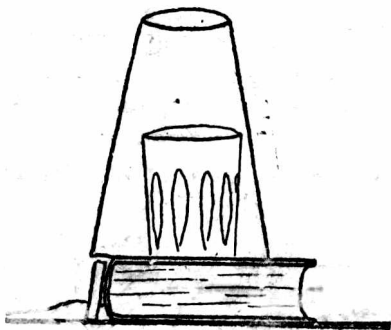
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HOW TO GIVE A

Conjuring Entertainment.

IT is no small achievement to be able to well entertain one's friends and neighbours during the long evenings, and I think there are few modes of so doing superior to an exhibition of clever conjuring. For one thing, it has novelty to commend it. Of those who can sing, play, or recite, the name is legion, but there is a singular and regrettable dearth of amateur conjurers. Why this should be I do not know. To attain prime excellence in the art demands sedulous practice, of course, but scarcely as much as one would expend in, say, learning to play some musical instrument. And then the result indemnifies one so hand-

somely for any trouble incurred! It is, moreover, an inexpensive pastime—at least, sleight-of-hand pure and simple, which is the only branch of conjuring worthy our serious regard --and also a valuable trainer of the faculties into a habit of alertness and diplomacy, not to speak of the inventive and ingenious powers which must be called into activity when new tricks are demanded from time to time.

I do not propose to initiate you into all the possible sleights and combinations employed by the conjurer in his wonder-working performances: the design of these papers is rather to present to you a series of illusions—some original, others selected for their special excellence—which constitutes a ready-made programme for your study and presentation. Every item will be thoroughly and, I trust, clearly explained as it comes before us. In the first place, a few words about the stage and the conjurer's dress.

The Stage.

Whether the stage be a raised platform or simply one end of a room, cleared of furniture for the occasion, it is essential that the audience occupy a position only in front of the performer, in order that they may not have an embarrassing side view when the conjurer is effecting some change under cover of his body. A small table should occupy a position at the extreme back of the stage, right up against a curtained doorway or screen large enough to contain an invisible and unsuspected assistant. This table should hold all the objects required in the course of the performance, and is ostensibly there for that end. At its outer edge—the edge nearest the spectators—a little rampart should be constructed of various articles, such as a box or two, a pot of flowers, and the like, to protect from observation the

hand of your assistant when it is slyly introduced through an aperture in the curtain or round the screen to seize some object which the conjurer has deposited there. Another table, preferably oblong in shape, should be placed in the centre of the stage, bearing a couple of lighted wax candles, one at each corner, and let this table be flanked by two chairs.

The Conjurer's Dress

is, of course, the orthodox evening suit, but with some essential modifications. Each breast contains a large inner pocket, the opening of which, cut the whole length of the pocket, is vertical, and lies just far enough back to be out of sight. Two more pockets, semicircular in shape, are sewn on the inside of each tail, in such a position that the hand, when hanging by the side, can easily drop any object into them, or

remove it thence. They must be "baggy"—always in an open condition, which may be attained by making them of rather stiff material. It is also necessary to have a little pocket, large enough to contain a small egg, on each trouser-leg, level with the knuckles when the hand hangs by the side, and just concealed by the coat-tails. Last of all, the vest should be split up the back and reunited with three or four pieces of broad elastic; and strong elastic should be run through the bottom, to draw it close to the body and prevent a premature disclosure of any object we may have concealed there. So much for the conjurer's attire.

A wand is an indispensable adjunct to the conjurer's outfit, not so much because its use is in conformity with traditions of the art, but because in the hand which holds a wand he is enabled to palm with impunity certain comparatively bulky objects not otherwise easy of concealment. So possess a wand, and let it

be of ebony or ebonized wood, about thirteen inches long and half an inch in diameter.

With these prefatory remarks, we ring up the curtain and send you forward to make your bow to the audience.

You open the entertainment with a graceful little speech, which should have the effect of putting you and your audience on good terms with each other. While speaking, you remove your white gloves, roll them into a ball, pass them carelessly from the right hand to the left, touch them lightly with your wand, which has been held under your left arm, and lo! the gloves have vanished into thin air. The explanation is simple. The gloves are only seemingly passed from one hand to the other, in reality being retained in the right hand, which immediately seizes hold of the wand, thereby diverting suspicion from it. The left closes in a natural fashion as the simulated transfer is made. Do not let this little intro-

ductory sleight, which always creates a good effect and puts your audience on the *qui vive*, interrupt the course of your remarks. Let your manner convey the idea that such a mode of disposing of your gloves is the most natural in the world.

The Coins of Mercury.

Advance towards the spectators and observe that conjurers are the most impecunious people imaginable, for they are always borrowing; but, fortunately, they let little time elapse before repaying their creditors. Now, if some one would be so obliging, you would like to negotiate a little loan—for ten minutes. You want to borrow a florin, which the lender will please mark, for the purpose of identification.

While the coin is being produced and marked, step up to the centre table, ostensibly

to rid yourself of your wand, but really to make away with the gloves still in your hand, which you effect by slipping them under your vest on the right side.

When you have received the coin, stand with the table on your right, and remark, "It may not be generally known that inanimate objects as well as animate are affected by mesmeric influences. For example, take this florin here." Transfer it to the left hand, and hold it visibly in the fingers, with the palm towards you. "I make a few gentle passes"—do so solemnly with the other hand—"and immediately it acquires entirely new characteristics. See! I squeeze it between my fingers"—(make the movement of taking it between the thumb and fingers of the right hand; but while it is covered from the audience's sight by the fingers of that hand, let it drop into the hollow of the fingers of the left hand, its lower edge resting in their roots, in which position it may be re-

tained by closing the fingers slightly upon it. There must be no pause in the simulated act of taking the coin: the hands must separate immediately, the right closing and being carried upward, followed by the eyes, the left sinking level with the waist in the most natural manner possible)—“and it gradually grows smaller and smaller, till you can scarcely perceive it at all”—(hold out the finger and thumb as if you actually held something between them, at the same time seizing the nearest candlestick by the left hand, which contains the florin held between the first joint of the fingers and their root. The fingers naturally straighten when about to seize anything, but yours cannot; but if the movement is executed briskly, the anomaly will escape notice)—“so small, indeed, that I am able to pass it into the flame of this candle”—suit the action to the word. “You see that dazzling point of light? Well, that is the florin in an

incandescent state; and here it is as it was at first." Appear to take something from the flame and hold it up. "Oh, I am forgetting that it is at present invisible to any but a conjurer's eye. But a little rubbing in the palm, thus"—(replace the caudle on the table, and place the tips of the fingers of the right hand on the coin in the left, slide it from its position into the palm, and rub with deliberation)—"will soon restore it to its original condition, as I think you all can now testify." As you make this remark, turn over the left hand, and leave the florin balancing on the fingers of the right hand.

As you advance to the audience to have the coin identified, let your left hand fall by your side, and take another florin from that tail pocket, which you secretly palm. "Palming" is the art and practice of holding any suitable article in the hand, which is so disposed as to appear empty. To palm a florin, as in the case

under consideration, hold it between the thumb and two middle fingers, the palm upward. Now, if the fingers be smartly closed, the coin will be pressed into the palm of the hand, and a trifling contraction of the flesh at the root of the thumb and little finger will suffice to hold it there securely—if it lies in the right spot, which will be found by trial. Though it is possible to acquire such proficiency that one may retain a coin thus while the hand is held wide open, it would be most inadvisable to do so in public. Observe your hand while it hangs naturally by your side, the fingers bent, the thumb inclined inward to the palm, and take it as your model. To proceed with the trick: When you have regained possession of the marked florin, apparently transfer it to the left hand, palming it in transit, and disclose the substituted coin, on which your fingers have momentarily rested. Borrow a handkerchief, which throw over the left hand, and

with the fingers of the right seize the florin through the fabric, and give it to some one to hold. Then borrow a penny, which also have marked, and another handkerchief. Hold the coin between the second finger and the thumb of the right hand (which contains, it will be remembered, the marked florin) and the handkerchief spread out in the left hand. The handkerchief is thrown over the coin held in the right hand, and immediately grasped by the left hand, and the right withdrawn. Apparently it is the penny which the handkerchief contains; but it is not so. Under cover of the movement of the right hand, the penny has been gripped by the sides of the first and third fingers, which slip it, aided by the second finger, behind down the thumb to its root, against which it is pressed by the first joint of the thumb. During the brief instant the right is concealed under the handkerchief, the florin is brought to the tips of the fingers

and seized by the left, and the penny takes its place in the palm. There must not be the slightest hesitancy in this transaction, or suspicion will inevitably be aroused. Give the handkerchief to be held tightly by another of your audience, at some distance from the first. Then say something after this fashion: "Now, the gentleman over there, as we know, has the florin in his keeping, and this gentleman the penny. You are certain about that, sir?" addressing the first temporary assistant. The answer may be affirmative or negative. Whatever it be, offer to convince him, by ocular demonstration, that he really holds the florin, and for this purpose remove it from the handkerchief, and show it to him. In seeming to replace it under the handkerchief, substitute the penny by the sleight already described, and return it to him to hold. Then command the coins to change places; which is found accomplished, of course, on examination.

“ Ah,” you continue, “ I’m afraid you didn’t quite see how that was done. Well, let us try again.” On your centre table have a couple of tumblers, a jug of water, a newspaper, and a book—say Nuttall’s Dictionary, or something of that thickness. Draw attention to the innocent character of the tumblers, into which you pour water, to prove that there is no secret opening which might escape the eye. Then empty them, and bring them for examination. As you walk to the table, palm in your right hand a piece of clear glass of the exact size of a florin, the edge of which may be roughened or milled, to give greater facility in palming. Obtain the marked florin from the lender once more, and apparently place it under a handkerchief, leaving instead the glass disc. Place one of the tumblers on one of the chairs, cover it with the handkerchief, and let the glass fall to the bottom, the sound exactly simulating the fall of a coin. Let the tumbler remain covered.

Attached to the back of the book is the little piece of mechanism depicted in Fig. 1. It is

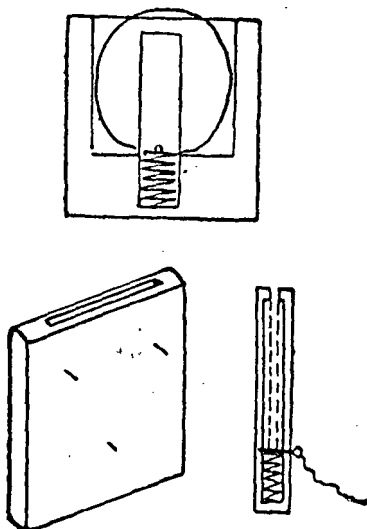


Fig. 1.

not to be purchased anywhere, for the idea is mine, but it may be constructed easily. It is made of wood, and measures two inches by

two inches by three-quarters of an inch. A cylindrical groove about half an inch in diameter occupies the centre, and in this a spiral spring works. This spring may be quickly manufactured by winding a piece of elastic wire, procurable from a watchmaker, round a lead pencil. A space large enough to hold a florin is cut out of the interior of the wood, and is open at the top, like the slit of a money-box. The spring is held in a state of contraction by a wire pin which passes through a hole driven through the wood, and may be pulled completely out. The three spikes seen are for the purpose of attaching the arrangement for the nonce to the back of the book, by forcing them through the binding. They are sharp and fine, and about half an inch long. If the spring be forced downwards and secured by inserting the pin, a florin may be dropped into the slot; the withdrawal of the pin releases the spring, which flies upward and propels the

florin into the air to the height of ten inches ; and if a slight inclination be given to the apparatus, the coin may be received by a vessel placed in close proximity.

This mechanism, then, is attached to the back of the dictionary while it lies upon the table, the spring in a state of contraction, and a length of strong black silk is secured to the loop of the pin and runs to the hand of your assistant behind the scenes.

Advance to the table and adroitly slip the marked florin into the slot while you lift the book and carelessly run over the leaves, to show the spectators that it has no guile about it. Be careful to keep a finger on the pin, lest it be accidentally withdrawn. Replace it on the table and put the other tumbler upon it, alleging as your reason for its employment a desire to interrupt any communication between the table and glass. Then tear off a piece of the newspaper about one foot by two feet, and

pin the two ends together to form a sort of open cone. With this you cover the tumbler, observing that no one can possibly harbour suspicion against a cover which has been constructed in their presence and of such material. It is scarcely necessary to say that the tumbler must be placed in the correct position for the coin to fall into it, and the cover must project considerably over the back edge of the book, to afford as much room as possible between it and the tumbler for the flight of the coin (Fig. 2). This done, you inform the audience that you will cause the florin to fly from one glass to the other. At the word "Pass!" the assistant pulls the silk which draws out the pin, and the coin is heard to fall into the tumbler with an unmistakable clatter. First remove the handkerchief, and invert the tumbler to show its empty condition, for the moisture at the bottom will cause the disc to adhere firmly. Then bring the other tumbler containing the florin,

the paper cover, and the dictionary for examination, of course removing and palming the mechanism before it leaves your hand. The three holes left in the back are too minute to attract attention.

Carry the tumblers, &c., to the back table,

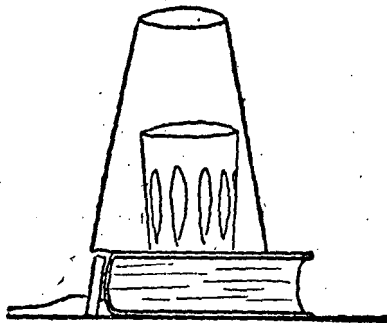


Fig. 2.

which will give you an opportunity to palm, or, rather, to conceal in the fingers of the left hand as many florins as you possibly can. The fact that you have anything in that hand may be disguised by carelessly holding the lapel of

your coat. At the same time palm in the right hand a couple of florins. Borrow a silk hat, which pass to the left hand, grasping it with the fingers inside the brim in such a manner that the coins, when released, may fall into the hat.

Commence the illusion by some observation about the little necessity there was for troubling your audience for coins, when they are to be had for the labour of gathering them. For instance, "Look at this florin hanging so contentedly to the fringe of this lady's shawl." You have dropped one of the coins in your right hand from the palm to the fingers—by no means a difficult feat—and you show it at the instant you make the gesture of removing a florin from the spot indicated. Throw it into the air and catch it in the hat. From some other article of attire you feign to procure another piece of money, which, obviously, is the second palmed florin. But this you only pretend to throw into the hat—directly into the hat—not into

the air this time—palming it instead, and allowing one of the coins secreted in the left hand to fall in place of it. The illusion is perfect. So proceed till your funds in the left hand are all exhausted, varying as much as possible the mode and place of discovering the coins, and letting your manner be brisk and entertaining.

The Enchanted Eggs.

As a little preparation is necessary for this next illusion, the safe storage of the handful of coins will give you an excuse to leave the stage for an instant. When behind the scenes, place an egg in each thigh pocket, another under your vest at the left side, and in your right tail-pocket a fourth, which has been dyed a ruby colour.

On your return ask the audience seriously if

any one can oblige you with an egg. Of course the answer will be negative. "Never mind," you say; "I can easily procure one for myself. I have only to express the wish, and touch this chair with my magic wand"—(stretch out the wand towards the chair on your right, at the same time letting your left hand fall by your side, which extracts the egg pocketed there)—"or, better still, my hand here"—(bring up the hand smartly, and the instant the wand touches it let the egg make an appearance on the top of your fist, resting, as it were, in an egg-cup formed of the thumb and forefinger, brought thereto partly by squeezing and partly by momentum)—"and see, I immediately have it." While you hold it up to the audience, your right hand obtains the egg in the other side-pocket. Slip the wand under your left arm, bring the two hands together, give the visible egg a twist between the fingers, and show the second egg, which will appear to have been

procured in some mysterious manner from the first. The table is on your left. As you make the remark that the eggs are the genuine article, place one, held in the right hand, before the nearest candle-flame, to demonstrate its transparency. This movement will turn the left side of the body away from the spectators. Take advantage of this to insert the fingers of the left hand under the vest and slip out the egg concealed there. Then instantly make the gesture of placing the egg in the right hand into the left, palming it instead, while the newcomer will pass for it. Affect to see something in the flame of the candle, and produce from it the palmed egg. Then lay the three eggs down, and from the back table get and palm a small bantam's egg, which may be blown, and an ordinary wine bottle, which you inform your audience contains some kind of red wine. To prove this, pour out a glass or so for someone to sample. In reality, the bottle is

half full of water only, the wine being held in a tin tube a few inches long which lies in the neck of the bottle, and is prevented from falling in altogether by a rim, which, of course, is japanned, to render it indistinguishable



(Fig. 3). While you are returning to the table you remove this tube and vest it. Take up one of the eggs and remark, "It may be thought an impossibility to pass this egg into the bottle here, when one considers the narrowness of its neck." Place the bottle on the chair to your left, and rest the egg upon its mouth, thus calling

attention to the seeming difficulty of the feat. "But really it is very simple. All one has to do is to roll the egg into a smaller compass." Take up the egg and roll it between the palms, gradually bringing the

back of the right hand towards the spectators, and at that moment palming the hen egg and disclosing that of the bantam. "Ah, this is more like the thing!" Lean on the chair back with the right hand, the fingers towards the audience, drop the palmed egg into a padded receptacle arranged behind the chair back, which obviously must be opaque, simultaneously placing the bantam egg on the mouth of the bottle. "No," you continue, shaking your head, "it is not yet small enough. It requires a little more kneading." Pass it from the right hand to the left, palming it in transit; and after the necessary manipulation, appear to drop something very diminutive into the bottle. Take the latter up, shake it, &c., and observe that the egg has again assumed its original dimensions. The difficulty now is to get it out again. You are afraid it will absorb the essence of the wine if it remains immersed in it. You must break the bottle. Where's a

hammer? Speaking thus, with the bottle in your left hand, you make a turn away from the audience, as though you were seeking some article with which to break the bottle, and let your right hand drop the bantam's egg into your tail-pocket and obtain the ruby egg. "No, we won't resort just yet to such violent measures. Perhaps a smart blow or two with the hand will extract the egg." With the bottle held in the right hand, strike its mouth with the palm of the left; and at the third blow allow the egg to fall into the left hand, which comes quickly to the bottom of the bottle, as if to catch the egg which has been forced out there. If the blows be accompanied by a downward movement of the bottle, the deception will never be perceived. "You see, I was correct," you continue, exhibiting the ruby egg—"it has imbibed all the colouring matter of the wine;" which statement is corroborated by your pouring out pure water

from the bottle. Then, addressing the coloured egg, "Ah, you rascal! to utterly spoil a bottle of my excellent wine! Get along with you!" Hold it in the fingers of the left hand, make the appropriate movement of taking it in the right, letting it fall out of sight in the left palm, and with a whirling motion appear to throw it up to the ceiling.

Ringling the Wand.

Before your entertainment opens, tie a piece of thin twine to one of the buttons to which the braces are attached on the left side, and pass it under the vest, behind the body, and three-quarters of the way down the sleeve of the right arm. To the end of this tie another piece of strong black silk, long enough to project a foot beyond the cuff, and to the

extremity fasten a bit of bright-coloured ribbon about five inches long. If the thumb of the left hand be now hooked over the twine at the braces button, and carried downwards and backwards, the ribbon will fly up the sleeve. Let it be drawn just sufficiently up the cuff to be invisible previous to going on the stage to perform the first illusion.

When you walk to the back table, insert the fingers of the left hand up the sleeve, and pull the ribbon down as far as the length of the twine will permit. Leave the palmed egg on the back table, and come down with the bit of ribbon in your hand, and a small basin about six inches in diameter. Now borrow four rings, which deliberately string upon the ribbon, and tie. With the basin in the left hand, drop the rings into it, and pass the basin to the other hand, for obvious reasons holding it with the tips of the fingers, the thumb outside. Place the silk hat used for the money trick, and which you

have not returned to its owner, on the chair to the left, bring upward, and lower the basin into it, jingling the rings the while, to prove that they are really there. But before you lower the basin put the left hand carelessly on the hip, find the twine, and as soon as the fingers have released the basin, draw the rings up the sleeve, walk towards the table for your wand, and during those few paces get the rings into your hands and slip them off the ribbon. Break off the silk as high as possible up the sleeve, and vest the ribbon. On close inspection, the wand will be found to have part of a black pin inserted at right-angles about one inch from one end, projecting an eighth of an inch. The rings are held side by side in the hollow of the fingers of the right hand, and it is an easy matter to pass the end of the wand through them—the end opposite to that which has the pin—when it is taken in that hand. Go to the side of the stage furthest from the

hat, and remark, "Now, you have all seen that the four borrowed rings have been securely tied on the piece of ribbon and placed in the basin in the hat yonder; yet at my command they will slip out of the ribbon and fly towards me. Let me see if I cannot catch them on my wand. Now, one at a time, please." Stamp

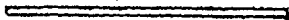


Fig. 4.

your foot and make a swinging flourish with the wand, at the same instant giving freedom to one of the rings, which should fly along the wand till it meets the pin, the function of which is to prevent their leaving the wand altogether. To all appearance, it will seem that you have actually caught one of the rings on the wand-end.

The same performance is gone through till three rings have made their appearance. Of

course, each succeeding ring is behind instead of before that which precedes it; but this fact will not be remarked at the distance you stand from the audience. All that will be noticed will be that at each flourish of the wand another ring will appear to have alighted in some incomprehensible manner upon it; and the true explanation will not be divined if the trick be executed with neatness.

Shake the rings into the centre of the wand, seize the other end in your left hand, thereby concealing the pin, and let the owners remove their possessions themselves, in order to avoid any suggestion of a change on your part. As you walk back to the hat, get into your left hand a piece of ribbon similar in length and tint to the other, and tied into the form which would be left if the rings were really abstracted from it. Conceal it in the fingers of the right hand, nipping it between the second and third, and as you seize hold of the brim of the hat,

with the fingers inside, allow the ribbon to drop into the basin. Let the audience remove the latter from the hat, when it will appear that the rings have actually escaped from the ribbon that secured them. This is an excellent and novel little illusion, "though I say it who should be silent." But it is not over yet.

It will be remembered that four rings were borrowed, while only three are accounted for. If you make the observation that you have returned the rings safe and sound, the owner of the missing ring will quickly inform you of your error. Affect some embarrassment at this--the more the better. Eventually move to your back table and bring forward a wooden egg-cup, a serviette, and a button-hook. When the owner of the missing ring has chosen one of the eggs on the centre table, you place it in the egg-cup, crack the top, insert the button-hook, and after a little fishing bring out the forgotten ring, which is cleaned and

returned to the owner. The mystery admits of simple explanation. The wooden egg-cup has a slot cut out of the bottom, which holds in an upright position any ring slipped into it, with half of the hoop projecting (Fig. 5). Some little force is requisite in putting the egg into the cup, in order that the ring may break and penetrate the shell; but the broad end of all the eggs should be slightly cracked

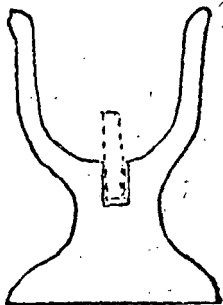


Fig. 5.

beforehand. It is scarcely necessary to tell you that the ring is slipped into the slot at the moment of lifting the egg-cup from the table.

Misadventures of a Handkerchief.

While standing before the back table, slip under your vest at the left side a strip of cambric about three inches wide and four feet long, and a lady's handkerchief which has been cut up into little squares and rolled into a bundle. It is advisable to get rid of the tin tube which occupies the same hiding-place. Palm a small lemon the contents of which have been extracted through a small hole in one end and the cavity occupied by a lady's handkerchief, the removed piece of peel, of course, being replaced and secured with headless pins, or such like, so that its condition may escape notice at a little distance. Request the loan of a lady's *white* handkerchief; the adjective will prohibit the offer of one with coloured border, which would individualize it incon-

veniently. If one with lace be handed you, refuse it, on the plea of fear of damaging it—certainly an illogical reason on the part of one who spends half his time destroying and restoring borrowed articles; but never mind, it passes current. While the spectators are looking for their handkerchiefs, produce the palmed lemon from somebody's nose, with any witty commentary your genius can offer. Pass it before their eyes, not *too* closely, however, and then put it on the table, the walk there enabling you to get the roll of cambric into your left hand. When you have received the handkerchief, observe that you want some gentleman to rub it gently between his two hands, in the manner you exemplify. Roll it into a ball, and while you are apparently showing him the proper way to rub it, bring the concealed strip to the top and let the handkerchief take its place in the palm. When you are sure that all is right, that all corners are

safely stowed away, boldly hand the gentleman the strip of cambric. See that he covers it immediately with his hands, and move away a few paces, to give you the opportunity to secrete the handkerchief beneath your vest and gain possession of the little squares. Then turn round. "My dear sir!" you exclaim, with a horrified expression, "*that* is not the way to do it! Dear, dear! Just look at that handkerchief now!" Of course he finds it transformed to one long strip. Take it from him to again illustrate how you require it rubbed, and adroitly change it for the bundle of squares. When this fresh misadventure has come to light, observe that the gentleman is really a dangerous character, and has put you in a nice fix, but perhaps the lady will be good enough to accept her handkerchief as it is; it may originate a new departure in the style of handkerchiefs. To this she will very naturally object. Then get from your back table a pistol

of somewhat novel-looking design. As shown in the diagram, it is an ordinary pistol, with the addition of a japanned tin funnel fitting

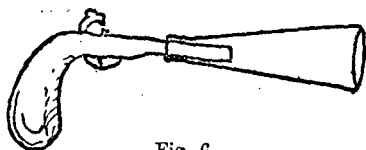


Fig. 6.

upon the barrel, for the reception of articles that are supposed to be fired thence. They are really pushed into the space between the barrel and the sides of the funnel, so as to be out of the line of fire. You seize this pistol, then, leaving the borrowed handkerchief on the table for your assistant's manipulation, and the squares are carefully deposited at the bottom of the funnel. Fire at the lemon on the table, which is then cut open, and the handkerchief—the handkerchief, as the audience will suppose —

is discovered within. Make a movement of returning it; then request permission to retain it a little longer, to show a curious fact of which the spectators possibly are not aware—that cambric will not burn if twisted in a particular fashion. Pass it over one of the candles, and, as it has been previously sprinkled with spirits, it blazes up at once, to your well-acted consternation. Drop it into the basin, which should have been left on the table, and run to the back table, from which you bring a piece of paper about a foot and a half square. Wrapping the still blazing handkerchief in this paper, you offer it to the owner again, and at her indignant refusal tear the parcel open to disclose, not the black ashes, but her handkerchief, white and uninjured. The paper is composed of two thicknesses, pasted together round three edges to form a bag, in which your assistant slips the handkerchief, and pastes down the open end. In tearing the parcel, you

tear merely the outer envelope, and obtain the handkerchief without disturbing the ashes within.

Bank - Note Illusion.

For this original trick you will need a couple of slates—ordinary school slates—of not too diminutive size, which are fastened together with little hinges so as to enable them to open like a book. Let a piece of cord be tied round them when closed, the knot being in the spot occupied by the clasps of a book, and at the four points it crosses the wooden frames drop a liberal quantity of sealing-wax, in order to prevent the cord slipping off. If the knot be then undone, the slates will admit of being opened and closed without injury to the seals, as a glance at Fig. 7 will evidence. Your assistant has this slate open before him, with a

piece of slate pencil about an inch long. Vest a sealed envelope, which need not contain anything, and now come among the audience with a dinner-plate, and another and identical envelope, unsealed. Request the loan of a bank-

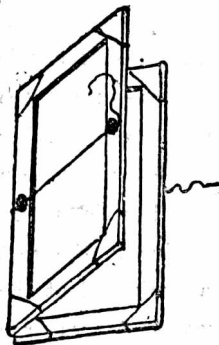


Fig. 7.

note. In lieu of a bank note, a postal order or a piece of paper with five figures written upon it secretly will do as well. Whatever it be, it is sealed in the envelope and deposited upon the plate, which you hold out. As you are returning to the stage, you are *awkward*

enough to let it slip from the plate to the floor.

You pick it up gingerly, taking care not to let it be concealed for a moment from the audience, and replace it on the plate, from

which it is thrown upon the table. The plate, having performed its functions, is then put aside on the back table. All seems fair enough. But as you have stooped to lift the envelope from the floor, you have quickly placed the concealed envelope on the empty plate, and as your thumb has retained the upper and bank-note envelope when you make the movement of throwing it on the table, it is the former that actually falls. Thus the note comes into the hands of your assistant, who with the utmost rapidity marks its number in large figures on the inner side of the slate, closes the latter, leaving within the piece of pencil, knots the two ends of the cord, dabbing it with sealing-wax, and places the slate-book on the table ready to your hand. This operation should be practised till the greatest possible degree of celerity is attained. From the instant in which you place the plate on the table to that in which you gain possession of the slate ought

not to exceed thirty seconds. This brief space of time you consume by a few sentences of "patter" as you come down the stage—such as, "We are all acquainted with the pretensions of spiritualistic mediums who assert that they have controlling power over certain spirits, who can make themselves acquainted with the contents of sealed envelopes, write a message on locked slates, and so on. Now, it's a queer fact that all these manifestations take place under conditions which render fraud an easy matter. For one thing, darkness is a *sine qua non*. If I were to challenge some of these gentlemen to let us witness their spirit powers here on this stage, in broad gaslight, I don't think my challenge would be accepted." Here bring down the slate. "For example, if we were to request their familiars to write down the number of the bank-note in the envelope yonder on this slate, I imagine we would have to wait an unconscionable time. Yet it is

simple enough. Let me demonstrate the superiority of my spirits over theirs." Allow the seals of the slate to be examined, explain its construction and use, and draw attention to the fact that there is a piece of slate pencil inside, with which the spirit-hand will transcribe the figures. Let some gentleman advance and hold the slate by one hand to his ear, with the request that he will speak when he hears the spirit at work. After a solemn pause a slight scratching on the slate will be audible to the listener, who will give notice to that effect. It is caused by your nail scratching the side of the slate furthest from the audience. Then let the gentleman open the slate, when the number of the bank-note will be found written upon it. Greater effect will be produced by writing not merely the number, but a long message, addressed personally to the gentleman who opens the slate, mentioning him by name, or showing, by some allusion to dress

peculiarity, that it is meant for him alone. Obviously, you have arranged with your assistant at the commencement or during the performance which person in the front rank of seats you intend to give the slate to.

In the meanwhile, your assistant has rolled up the bank-note and pushed it into a wax candle hollowed sufficiently for the purpose, stopping up the end with melted wax, and cutting it, to disguise as much as possible the fact of its being tampered with. It must resemble exactly the candles burning on the table in thickness, tint, and degree of consumption. As you replace the slate on the back table, and obtain thence a piece of wrapping paper about six inches square, you slip this candle into your left breast pocket, and conceal in your left hand a tin cap (Fig 8) just large enough to fit over the top of one of the candles. With your right hand hold the envelope which is supposed to contain the bank-note in the

flame of the left candle—the audience's right—standing in front of the table, and facing the other candle, which is thus shaded from the spectators by your interposed body. With your eyes attentively watching the burning envelope, you bring out the candle from your breast pocket, light it at the other, cap the latter to extinguish it and to prevent the grease damaging your clothes, and substitute for it the

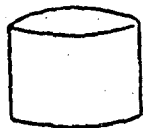


Fig. 8.

hollow candle, the genuine one going into your breast pocket. The wick should be touched with paraffin, to ensure rapid ignition. Practise this operation until it can be done with absolute precision and great rapidity, for the sooner you can change your position and bring the hidden candle into view the better; although your attitude is perfectly natural. When the envelope is sufficiently consumed, wrap it in the paper tightly. Standing behind

the table, ask the owner of the bank-note to choose one of the candles, right or left. If he replies "Right," take it as meaning *your* right; if "Left," as *his* left; so that the choice falls in every case upon the candle which contains the bank-note. Then walk to the spectators, feign to pass the little parcel from one hand to the other, make the gesture of throwing it towards the candle, and request the owner himself to break that candle in twain. He does so, and regains possession of his note.

The Magnetic Cards.

Bring forward a pack of cards of thin make and good quality. Remove the four aces, and give two to one person and two to another. Let the first person place one of the aces at the top and the other at the bottom of the pack. As

you turn to the holder of the other cards, perform the sleight known as "making the pass." Hold the pack in the palm of the left hand, between the thumb and fingers, introduce the first joint of the little finger in the centre of the pack, to divide it into pretty equal portions (Fig. 9), and grip the lower part between the thumb at one end and second and third fingers of the right

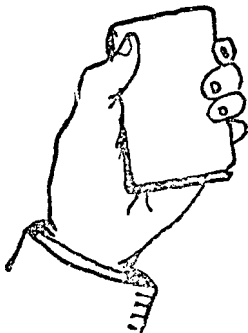


Fig. 9.

hand at the other (Fig. 10). Now the upper portion, held between the little finger at the bottom and the other fingers at the top, must be drawn out as far as possible, and the lower half raised as though it were hinged at the side which touches the thumb of the left

hand. When the two halves are clear of each other, a reversal of these movements will result in a transposition of the two portions: that which was originally uppermost will now occupy the bottom of the pack, and that which was the lowest the top. These combined movements must be practically one, and should occupy merely a fraction of a second in execution. Rapidity, neatness, and noiselessness are characteristics of a good pass.

Well, you make the "pass" as you turn to the holder of the other aces, with the remark: "See! I cut the pack exactly in the centre. Would you, sir, be good enough to place both the aces on the top of the lower half? Thank you. Now I put the upper half on the top. Two aces are in the centre of the pack, and the others at the top and bottom. Now, I have discovered that aces have great affinity for each other," &c., &c. Blow upon the cards, and shew that the aces are all now in the centre of

the pack. Next, place the two black aces in the middle of the pack, and the two red at the top and bottom. To show that they occupy these positions, spread the pack fan-wise, and as you close it insert the little finger of the left

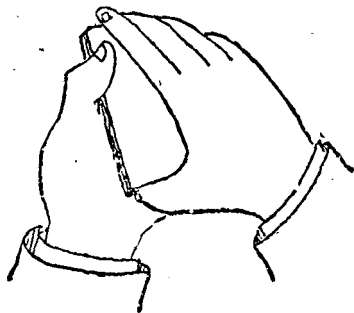


Fig. 10.

hand between the two black aces, in readiness for the pass. "I give the cards a little shake," you continue, suiting the action to the words, making the pass the while, "and what do we find? Why, that the red aces and the black

have changed places." A little reflection will show how this has come about. While spreading out the cards to demonstrate that this transposition has really been effected; slip your little finger between the middle aces, which are now red. "Did you observe the movements of the cards? No! Ah, that was because you didn't look closely enough. Well, let us repeat the experiment, and this gentleman here will perform it for us, to prove that there is no deception in the matter." Accompany the words "This gentleman" by a gesture towards him, under cover of which you make "the pass." Place the pack on his palm, and request him gravely to breathe upon it. When the cards are examined, the aces are, of course, found to have again changed places. After this, let some person choose a card from the pack. Cut the pack, and let the selected card (say the king of clubs) be placed on the lower half, held in the left hand. As you bring down

the other half smartly upon it, insert the little finger, and instantly make the pass, covered by a downward movement of both hands. The selected card is now at the top. Make a false shuffle in this manner: Hold the pack horizontally in the left hand, with the thumb pressing against the top card. If you now raise the cards with the right hand, at the same time exerting some pressure with the thumb of the left hand, the king of clubs will be retained in that hand. Pass all the cards in little parcels rapidly upon it. It then occupies a bottom position. Offer the pack once more to another person to select a card, making the pass as you do so, which brings the king of clubs to the centre. Keep your eye upon the card, spread out the pack slightly, and commence to run over the cards as though to give the chooser the option of selecting what card he pleases. But you should so arrange matters that the king of clubs is just ready to

his fingers as he puts forward his hand to seize one. "Force" this same card upon four or five other persons, taking care that they are sufficiently far apart to prevent them communicating to each other the name of their selected card, which would not be desirable. After the king of clubs is returned to the pack for the last time, make the pass which brings it to the top. Then take any card from the pack, and holding it up before the first chooser, ask if that is the one he selected. The reply will be negative. Ask the same question to all in succession. In the meanwhile, push the king of clubs with the thumb of the left hand till it projects a trifle beyond the edge of the cards beneath it. As you turn again to the first drawer, whose position in relation to the last drawer must be such as to necessitate a sweep of the body on this occasion, bring the hands together momentarily, place the card held between the thumb and first finger of the right

hand on the top of the pack; and while you are *pushing* the card on with the right thumb, *draw* out the underneath one, the king of clubs, with the forefinger of the right hand, so that the two cards slip over each other in opposite directions. When the king of clubs projects beyond the top card, seize it between the thumb and fingers, and separate the hands, the thumb of the left hand retaining the indifferent card, and drawing it into square with the pack. The two hands should not equally approach each other for "the change"—the right does all the approach, the left the separation.

With your card changed, then you ask the first person if he is quite sure it is not his card. He will doubtless reply, "It is *now*." You then blow upon it, and show it to the second person, with the remark that it is now transformed to the card he selected. And so on with the other choosers.

But you may, perhaps, suggest that it may be impossible to "force" the card on some occasions. In that event, what are you to do? Simply make a virtue of necessity, and if the chooser won't take the desired card, let him select where he will, drawing attention to the fact that you give entire freedom of choice. Then open the pack at the king of clubs. Let him place his card on the top of that card, make the pass to bring the card to the top of the pack, and deliberately take any indifferent card from the centre, with the observation that you can easily distinguish the gentleman's selection, although it is apparently lost among the other cards. "Am I not right, sir? This is your card?" Before he can reply, turn away and effect the change. At his, possibly, triumphant negative, you appear surprised, and desire him to name his card, holding it meanwhile face downward, so that it may not be seen. "The ace of diamonds," suppose the

gentleman replies. "And what is this card but the ace of diamonds?" you retort.

Request four of the audience to select two cards each. When the selections are made, cut the pack, and have the first person's cards placed on the lower half. Bring them to the top by means of the pass. Utilize this sleight when apparently cutting the pack again for the reception of the other cards. But when the last couple have been received, add the lowest card of the upper half of the pack to them before making the pass. The result will be that all the selected cards occupy the top of the pack, with an indifferent card above them. Addressing yourself to the *last* person who chose the cards, hold up the pack and ask him if the bottom card is one of his. On receiving his negative reply, you take off the top card and show it to him, with the same query, which of course obtains a similar response. Meanwhile you insert your left little finger under

the then top card, in readiness for the pass, which you perform as you return the card to the pack. These two cards are therefore sent to the bottom, and the lowest is one of those chosen by the person you are then addressing, the other being at the top. "So your cards are neither at the top nor bottom of the pack!" you continue. "Now watch me closely, and you will perhaps see the cards flying to their positions." Solemnly shake the pack, then raise it, and exhibit the bottom card. Shake again, and remove the top card. While showing the latter, introduce your little finger as before under the top card, and the pass brings the second person's cards to the top and bottom of the pack. So produce the cards of the third chooser. Affect to have forgotten the other couple, and turn away, passing the card you have just replaced on the pack to the bottom, and after it the next card, reversing this latter as you do so, that its face may be

in contact with the face of the card above it. The fourth cards are now at the top and bottom of the pack, each presenting its back to view. When reminded of your omission, you must appear disconcerted for a moment, then brighten up, and say that though you have lost sight of the cards, you must endeavour to produce them somehow. Hold the pack with its back towards the audience, the ends of the first finger and thumb, which you have secretly moistened, pressed against the centre of the chosen cards. Desire the cards to be named; then give a swinging movement to the pack, which causes it to fly upward a few inches, leaving the two cards in your fingers, instantly striking it with the back of the hand to scatter the cards, and as they are falling in a shower, open your finger and thumb, and disclose, adhering to them, the missing cards.

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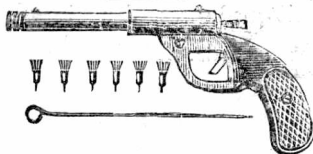
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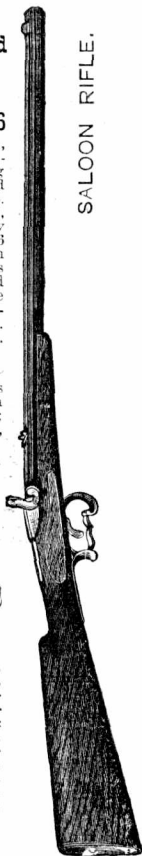
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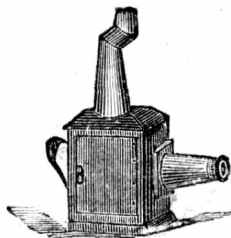
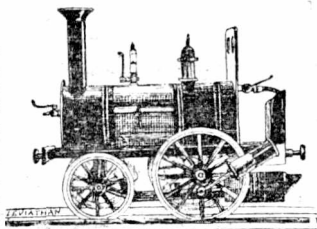


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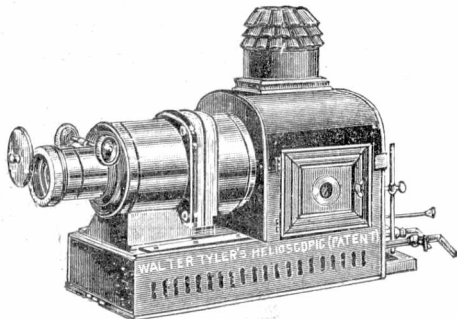
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