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LIGHT ON THE BLACK ART.

By ALEXANDRE HERRMANN.

In the Cosmopolitan Magazine of December, 1892.

An actual practice of over thirty years in what is popularly known as the art of necromancy, during which time I have visited nearly every part of the habitable globe in quest of information tending to the perfection of that art, enables me to give your readers a few ideas of its growth, development and present status.

The love of the mysterious and human credulity were undoubtedly the origin of the magician's power. These causes, modified by enlightenment and education, operate still to perpetuate his power. I find no abatement but rather an increase in the sizes of audiences attending the prestidigitator's performances year by year. And these audiences come with no reverence, as the audiences of fifty years ago, impressed in most instances with the superstition that the performer relies upon supernatural aid. For the most part they are as intelligent as he, and know as well that his seemingly contrary effects are produced from perfectly direct and natural causes. Their mission is to detect his methods or to find amusement and wonder in his cleverness. His reputation depends upon his adroitness in deceiving the senses with the application of the well-known fact that motion is quicker than vision. To his aid in his illusions he must summon mechanics, chemistry and

electricity just as his tricks are arranged for the production of effects in these different departments of science. This will give the reader some idea of the requirements and study of the magician of the present day.

In contrast to the prestidigitators of former times, the magician of to-day stands pre-eminent. The conjurers of the old school depended for their success both upon confederacy and the mechanism of the cumbrous furniture that littered their stages. Robert Houdin was the first to discard the numerous tables with richly embroidered hangings and to substitute ordinary stage appointments, depending upon the application of well-known scientific laws for his success. But even Houdin's performances would seem crude to-day. Owing to the exigencies of quick travel and rapid appearances in different cities, it would be impossible to remove and adjust his complicated though concealed machinery. In former times a huge van was required to transport the magician's effects; one trunk suffices for my trick baggage.

By this assertion the reader is not to suppose that the magician has discarded machinery. Far from it. He has simply reduced it to its minimum size while still rendering it capable of all its power. For the performance of one of my tricks I carry in my pocket in the shape of a watch, a dynamo battery of nearly one horse power, while for the performance of the trick known as the "vanishing lady," in the chair used there is machinery enough employed to run a printing press and as delicate in construction as the works of a watch.



The information concerning the family of Alexandre Herrmann is meagre in the extreme; its fame really dates from the time of Carl Herrmann, the (much) older brother and instructor of Alexandre, and the greatest magician of his time. Their father was an accomplished conjurer, but did not practice the art professionally and was opposed to his sons doing so. Alexandre (Herrmann the Great) was born in Paris, February 11th, 1843, and made his first appearance on the stage with his brother in St Petersburg when but eight years of age. He remained with his brother for six years, when his parents placed him at college at Vienna. College routine proved too irksome and at the end of the year he left and began his career as a "magician" in Spain in 1859. He made his first appearance in America in 1861 but returned to Europe a year later and made an extended tour, during which he filled (about 1870) an engagement of 1,000 consecutive nights at the Egyptian Hall, London. He returned to America in 1874, marrying on his arrival the lady, Adelaide Sersey, whom he met on board the vessel in which he crossed. He became an American citizen and was naturalized in Boston in 1876. He died from heart trouble while travelling with his company in his own saloon car, Great Valley, N.Y., December 17, 1896.

Another advantage enjoyed by the magicians of thirty years ago was the privilege granted them of producing the articles to be used in a trick from behind the stage. Now these articles must be produced, as well as caused to disappear, while the conjurer is among the audience. It requires no slight skill, to produce apparently from the clothing of different persons in the audience, fruit, flowers, plumes and even fowl, and then make each article disappear again without returning to the stage, yet these are the demands made upon the modern conjurer. The mechanism to produce such effects is more wonderful than the trick itself, and its construction is the secret of the performer, his stock in trade.

In this connection I might mention the wonders of concealed mechanism in the smallest possible compass in the trick of producing several glass vases filled with water and gold fish from a handkerchief, in the midst of an audience. There can be no mistake about the genuineness of the articles produced. They are passed among the spectators. The water precludes the idea that the vases have been concealed on the person of the performer, and the perplexing question is, where are they concealed as they come one after another from the folds of an ordinary handkerchief? This perplexity on the part of an audience is always to me a source of unending delight every time I perform the trick. I always invite the closest inspection beforehand, because I am satisfied that it is impossible to detect the real source of the trick, and generally tell the spectators, "The closer you watch, the less you will see," and the truth of my assertion is verified in the fact that no solution of this illusion has ever been hazarded.

I might mention another field in which the magician of to-day surpasses his professional brother of thirty years ago, viz.: his perfection in the art of "palming." As long as cumbersome mechanism and stage settings were resorted to there was not much need of palming but with the necessity of their abolition its paramount importance was manifest. A man might as well essay to be a lawyer without a knowledge of law, a physician ignorant of the science of medicine, as a conjurer without perfect acquaintance with palming. And this art is acquired only after a lifetime of constant practice. It is the very essence of the conjurer's art. On it he depends at every step. It is his illustration of the principle, "motion quicker than sight," and in it lies his power both to distract the attention of an audience and to produce his very best effects. It is because of their dexterous use of palming that the magicians of Europe and America to-day far surpass any that have gone before.

This language may sound strange in view of the fact of the widespread celebrity of the East Indian conjurers. India has always been the Mecca of conjurers, and in quest of knowledge I visited it, remaining there some time. I am convinced that the marvellous stories related of East Indian jugglery are but the oft-repeated tales of travellers.

To be continued.

For a complete history, with amusing anecdotes, of Alexandre Herrmann and his brother Carl, and explanations of the tricks that made them famous, see "Herrmann the Great and his Tricks explained." Cloth, 300 pages, illustrated. Sent post free from this office for 5/4.

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Original Lessons in Magic.

By ELLIS STANYON.

In every issue from No. 1, Vol. I, to present date.

Balancing a Cigarette Paper.—An ordinary cigarette paper, the larger kind for preference, may be balanced in various positions, perhaps one of the most effective being upon the nose, as seemingly the most difficult (see Fig. 12).



Fig. 12.

The better to accomplish the feat if such it may be called (very little if any dexterity is required) the paper is first folded in half lengthways (see the Fig.) and then again pressed out flat; the crease remains, stiffening the paper which is thus kept rigid for the balance.

The simplicity of the feat, as compared with others in the art of balancing, is accounted for by the lightness and shape of the paper which, catching the air, does not allow it to fall rapidly from the perpendicular. The fragility of the paper and the obvious necessity of careful handling, however, gives the audience an entirely opposite impression and this incongruity is, of course, all in favour of the performer.

The cigarette paper may be laid flat upon the top of a silk hat, caused to jump up, stand on one end, and remain balanced in such position as long as desired. To cause the paper to "get up" it is laid *quite flat* on the top of the hat with about a third of its length extending over the edge. A slight jerk is now given to the hat, in the right direction, causing that part of the paper overlapping the edge to come in contact with the air, forcing it into a perpendicular position in which it is maintained with a modicum of skill on the lines explained above.

N.B.—For several other equally simple, but effective and spectacular balancing feats, see our "New Juggling Tricks" (first series). Particulars of the **Now Famous Serial Works** find enclosed, or may be had on application.

The Great Needle Swallowing Trick.—Probably no conjuring trick ever caused a greater sensation than the needle swallowing trick, performed by a conjurer (I forget his name) who was with Barnum's great show some years ago, and probably no trick is less known at the present day than this one, to which I will now offer an explanation.

The conjurer shows a packet of needles, to all intents and purposes the common every-day article—they are and they are not as we shall presently see. He also shows that his mouth is quite empty and further passes for examination a piece of black thread about 4 ft. long. The thread is eventually rolled into a ball, placed in the mouth and seemingly swallowed. The needles are next arranged in a stack side by side, placed in the mouth, and apparently follow the thread. The mouth is again shown empty. Presently the conjurer inserts the tips of his finger and thumb in his mouth and pulls out what eventually proves to be one end of the piece of thread.

Affecting a choking fit he continues to pull at the thread which gradually grows longer and a needle is seen threaded, or rather tied, on it about 6 inches from the end. The "choking" is continued as the thread is drawn from the mouth, slowly for effect, and the whole of the needles (counted before and after) are found tied on the thread at regular intervals, say about 2 ins. apart.

What makes the trick so wonderful and to the ordinary mind, impossible, is the number of needles employed and the sharpness of the same. And this is what troubled the conjurers' who, of course, said the trick was worked with a duplicate set previously tied on a duplicate length of thread—but the matter was again in doubt when, on second thoughts, the difficulty was found to be increased two-fold by the duplicate set of sharp needles. The trick is of course accomplished with a duplicate set of needles, in all about fifty, but it never seemed to occur to anyone that the fifty, or more, needles could be made harmless in an instant by stacking them (points) evenly together and drawing the points several times over a sheet of fine emery cloth.

The respective stacks of needles are concealed, one on each side of the mouth between the gums and the cheek, and when the mouth is opened for examination the tongue is spread out as cover—but 25 needles which look a lot spread out, or tied on a line 2 inches apart, really occupy but little space when stacked closely together. The stack of needles tied on the thread are of course carefully arranged and placed in the mouth *points first* that no resistance may be encountered in the subsequent production.

Clairvoyant Figure Reading.—Performer takes fifty cards numbered consecutively A, A 1, A 2, A 3, etc., to A 9, etc., up to E and E 9. Each card so numbered contains besides, a long sum of figures, running some of them up into the millions. These cards are distributed to as many different people, who are requested to name their card (as A 1, D 6, etc.) and the performer instantly tells the sum of figures on it. There is no memorising, and the trick can be learned easily in 15 minutes.

The cards distributed, the performer is blindfolded and seated as far from the audience as possible. When all is ready he requests someone to call out the *letter and number* in the left hand top corner of the card as "E 3." Then, after affecting a few moments of deep thought for effect, he announces the order of the figures in the centre of the card, as 9, 126, 318. Another person then gives the letter and number in the corner of their card, and performer names the larger number of figures and this is continued as often as desired. An effective variation is, instead of being blindfolded, to write up the numbers on a blackboard.

The correct answer is obtained in the following manner: The index letter A represents 20; B, 30; C, 40; D, 50; E, 60; and the little figure standing next to the index letter is always treated as a single figure of its particular value. C 8 would therefore equal 48. The figures thus arrived at constitute the key by which the performer arrives at his answers; worked out as under.

- 1st.—The key figures are added together: 4 and 8 = 12
- 2nd.—The key number is doubled: 48 and 48 = 96.
- 3rd.—Deduct the smaller from the larger figure: 8-4=4.
- 4th.—Multiply the key figures together: 4 x 8 = 32.

Result, 1,296,432.

Where there is no index figure, only the letter, a

cypher is used, thus "E" would produce 60 as the key number, and this

Added	=	6
Doubled	=	120
Subtracted	=	6
Multiplied	=	0

Result: 612,060.

The above will be found to produce the maximum of effect, if used as an introductory to THE GREAT MEMORY TAX, see our "New Miscellaneous Tricks" (first series).

MANCHESTER NOTES.

Fred Harcourt, who has just returned from his successful Australian tour, played for a week at the Palace Theatre recently. He first performed the production of the four billiard balls, single-handed, then the passing of two canary birds from cage to cage, followed by the dyed handkerchief trick and finally the tambourine trick, the articles produced being about half a dozen handkerchiefs, some spring flowers and the ribbon. He concluded his entertainment and astonished his audience with his illusion Sapho, this being the vanishing of a young lady from a cabinet placed in the centre of the stage, she re-appearing in the circle of the theatre. The turn throughout was very well worked and the audience showed their appreciation in the usual way.

Prof. Wyman, the well-known North of England conjuror, appeared recently at the St. James' Hall, Manchester. Among other tricks he performed the following, torn and restored slip of tissue paper, egg in the hat *a la* Melot Hermann, and a new vanishing glass of water. Wyman stood in the centre of the stage away from any tables, chairs, &c. and filled a glass with water, he then covered it with a half sheet of newspaper, shook the paper and the glass of water had vanished, he showed the paper back and front and then produced the glass full of water from it. This and all his other tricks greatly mystified the large audiences that were present at all his entertainments. He concluded each show with his shadowgraphs, formed with his hands alone, and his portraits of various well-known people were remarkably clever.

Herr Fritz the great continental Illusionist played recently for a week at the Grand Theatre, Manchester. He performs all the latest tricks, viz. goldfishing trick, in which he uses the mechanical globe for producing the fish, the vanishing lamp and also the organ pipe trick, various animals and birds being produced and finally a bucket of water. He concludes his act with his famous horse and jockey illusion, in which a horse and jockey, a lady and gentleman and some bamboo furniture, and a young lady sitting on the moon are produced from one cabinet.

Owen Clarke of London, played a week on the Pier, Colwyn Bay, and performed, amongst other well executed tricks, match vanished from paper bag and found on rabbit produced from gent's pocket, the production of a number of silk flags from Tambo., and a smartly worked box trick. Mr. Clark's work evidently met with the appreciation of the large and fashionable audiences.

At the Empire Theatre, Liverpool, we have had Horace Goldin, who has amazed and mystified the patrons of this theatre, by the rapidity and smartness of his act, for a full explanation of which see Explanatory programme in former No. of "MAGIC." Then follows the illusions described in "MAGIC." The act is concluded by the duck tub, the levitation of a rabbit, and the vanishing and producing of sundry ducks, rabbits, etc. The entire act only took 22 minutes and at the conclusion the audience rose in their seats and shouted for more.

NELSON THORNE.

BITS FROM BIRMINGHAM.

By "LI HUNG."

"Carlton, the Inexplicable and only Comedy Card Manipulator." Thus read the "Empire" bill and after that one naturally expected something good. Altogether, the turn included some of the smartest card work seen in Birmingham for a long time. (Complete programme in back number, Ed.)

Everhart, the Manipulator of Hoops, appeared during the month at the Tivoli with his remarkable and clever act. I daresay most readers will have seen this artiste at work. (Programme already given in back numbers, Ed.)

At Curzon Hall, Carl Mysto appeared for one week with the usual Handcuff and Trunk work. A challenge which he issued was accepted by a sailor, who chained, and handcuffed, and leg-ironed him until there appeared to be more iron than Carl Mysto, but he never-the-less escaped with a respectable margin of the time limit in hand.

Explanatory Programmes.

(In every issue from No. 1, Vol. 1, to present date).

**ALDRICH.—Empire Theatre, 24th April, 1903.
Comedy Juggling, Conjuring, &c.**

Comes on wearing black alpaca cloak covering court dress. Picks up a large flag about 8 ft. square, with pole across top to keep it extended, and holds same up so as to hide himself completely, pole resting on his head. After about fifteen seconds drops flag and is seen attired as an old miser. This magical quick change is executed quite close to special drop scene, in which doubtless is trap from which he may obtain assistance, and flag permanently attached to wire, manipulated either from "wings" or "flies." Miser mutters to himself "What a silly old fool I am. I will go out the same way I came in."

Covers himself again in same manner with same flag and changes to sporting man; and a third time, changing to black tight fitting suit and crush hat (? same suit that he appeared in first, or with very slight alteration).

Throwing aside the first flag he takes another, similar in all respects, and holds it up in front of himself, arms extended high above head, and fingers seen all the time (dummy fingers). After some fifteen seconds flag is thrown in air (wires jerked by assistants); almost simultaneously performer comes on at "wing."

Next follows an impersonation of a tramp juggler. On stage to his right is a heap of earthenware; on opposite side a white screen, about 4 ft. high by 2 ft. 6 in., stands on stage, also a box marked "seed" near by. Comes on attired as tramp puffing an "Ogden," which he eventually sticks on screen; also takes three cigars from pocket and sticks on screen, left hand side near top, also sticks his cap in centre of screen. Then makes a lightning sketch on screen consisting of a pelican surrounded by trees and bullrushes. Cap forms body of bird and two strokes of black paint for legs and one for neck finish it; a few daubs of green paint to right and underneath supply trees, rushes, &c. The three cigars on left form heads of bullrushes, finished with a few strokes of paint to ground.

Lights and smokes cigar, and puts lighted match in vest pocket—suddenly takes match out of pocket lighted, with actions that indicate it was getting warm. Repeats this several times, putting lighted watch in trousers pocket, between waistcoat and shirt, &c., &c., which provokes much laughter.

Juggles old top hat, various and bewildering *twists* (no throwing). Throws top hat, cigar, and one of his dilapidated boots. Finishes by catching hat on head, cigar in mouth, and boot (wide top) on foot.

Next follows a very, very, old conjuring trick, but, introduced with excellent comedy and dramatic effect, it convulses the house (conjurers who are continually asking "Have you something new?" might well take a note of this). Picks up a small silk handkerchief and sticks opposite ends of either diagonal in his collar; the centre that hangs down is eventually seen to strike him in the face. He gets excited trying to blow the handkerchief away, and, after repeated attempts, snatches it from collar and throws it on stage, but it immediately gets up and remains suspended in mid air on a level with his head, and he passes his arms all around it—then it jumps at him and he seemingly gets frightened and runs away.

(To be continued).

COMPLETE PROGRAMME OF HARTZ, The American Illusionist.

The following interesting programme was sent to us some ten years ago, but we cannot acknowledge source as *ms.* is unsigned.

Hartz appears with a small tripod table with plate glass top, and takes a pack of cards and lets audience select four cards (really forces the cards, but in the act lets one or two persons take cards and pretends he saw the cards and tells them to take others—forced—and not to let him see them). After these cards are forced he draws attention to the fact that there is such a thing as "forcing," but to prove he allows a free choice he hands the pack to a man to shuffle, select a card, and then to pass it to another man to do likewise. The first four cards (forced) are now returned to the pack, and the other two cards (not forced) are retained by the drawers for the present. Hartz takes pack and goes to the side table for a short round stick with a zinc top to receive a tumbler. As he stoops to pick these up he drops pack into right hand pocket quickly and takes out a duplicate clockwork pack. He places pack on table and hands stick and tumbler for examination. He then draws attention to his way of doing the rising card trick, usually done by assistant pulling string, but he does it surrounded by audience, &c. He asks what the top of the stick is made of. Audience reply "Zinc." Hartz says "Yes, but I wanted it made in tin, and the man told me he only *worked in zinc* ('worked tin zinc'). When he finished it the tumbler was found to fit so tight into the top that it was *blocked in* ('block tin')." He then jokes about stick—"my stick," "mystic proceeding," &c., and asks what part of speech stick is, and in what mood. "Potential mood, and if not it ought to be." The tumbler is then placed on top of stick, and the clockwork pack is placed in tumbler and a man is asked to hold it up. The cards rise one by one (by clockwork) with splendid effect. The pack is then quickly changed on chair servante for another a shade shorter than the pack first used. He asks one of the two men with remaining cards to replace his card in the pack, and of course can tell by feeling where it is and says, "Your card is the 10th" (20th or approximate number) and rapidly counts off the cards from the top and shows card. Asks the other man to take the pack in his own hand and either place his card in or not and he will tell which is done and of course easily does so by touch, and if it is replaced, he shakes all the cards off until the gent's card is left and then asks him to name his card and shows it to be correct. Hartz then makes pack into piquet pack and says of course the trick can be done with whist pack but takes too long. The pack is now carefully shuffled and examined by audience and he puts it into his breast pocket and asks audience to name a card and he produces it and so on till all the pack is produced. This is done by having a duplicate pack in pocket with the suits arranged in sequence in a little rack provided with four pockets. This trick is known as "Demon Cards of Faust."

He then brings on stage a board with two candles on it in their sticks, and a knife, and draws attention to the fact that they are brought on before the trick commences and not by an assistant during the performance. He then lights candles and asks a lady to select a card, and says, "If it is a court card I would prefer you to return it and select another" (this is only a "blind" as the card is forced and not a court card).

(To be continued).

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Compiled with Notes by Ellis Stanyon.

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SHEFFIELD NOTES.

The "Triple Alliance" Servais Le Roy, Talma, and Bosco, appeared during last month at the Empire Palace, Sheffield, and presented the following programme: Rabbits, Pigeons, and Doves from Opera Hat, each party participating in this trick. Le Roy then produced from bare hands a given number (ten) of Handkerchiefs which forthwith multiplied into a hundred (?); Talma next did knots on handkerchiefs while Bosco did the Luck trick, with two Ducks, a black also a white one, heads cut off and restored, but Black head on White Duck and *vice versa*, and finally properly restored (this trick already made familiar to London readers by Imro Fox. Ed.).

Talma (Le Roy's wife) next worked the Aerial Mint and introduced some clever back and front palming. Le Roy did the Vanishing Bird Cage while Bosco placed a large cage about 3ft. by 2ft. by 2ft. near front of stage, fell forward on top of cage, flattening it out, and when he got up cage had entirely disappeared. Next followed (by Le Roy) production of myriads of flags, etc., from large "tambourine," held by assistant, and a "poultry yard" from larger flags; while Bosco appeared with a very large sheet and after much (pretended) exertion produced a *very small rabbit* (Bosco is the funny man of the party).

Following upon the flags from tambourine, the trio produced each a very large flag on staves, while the curtains parted at the back and revealed a portrait of His Majesty the King.

B. C. DAVIES.

Items of Interest.

A. M. Wilson, M.D., writes from Kansas City: "Glad you keep 'MAGIC' up to its HIGH STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE, IN EVERY WAY, including its typographical appearance."

We understand that the proprietor of the American Magical Journal, "The Sphinx," has departed with a Circus Co., for a 27 weeks' tour—rather a long time, but we hope "The Sphinx," with its interesting contents, will continue to make its appearance at regular intervals, as hitherto.

Prof. Herwinn writes, "I send you one of Herr Dobler's Programmes, containing his photograph, of 20 years ago; I bought two or three of them at his performance. The programme is rather interesting. Dobler is still giving shows in Scotland."

Bosco Jr. writes from South Africa, "Your New Catalogue just to hand, and I think it AI, AND WORTH DOUBLE THE PRICE."

Lewis Davenport (The Silent Magician), writes, "I am now working the Silent Thought Transmission I bought of you and it is going GREAT everywhere I work it—wishing you every success."

The long promised sequel to "Modern Magic" and "More Magic" by Professor Hoffmann, is in the press, and will be issued early in August. The volume, which will be entitled "Later Magic," will be published simultaneously in England and America; in London by Messrs. George Routledge & Sons, and in New York by Messrs. E. P. Dutton & Co.

A line from you with a little news, also a miscellaneous or other advertisement (especially professional card) per return in time for the next issue is respectfully solicited; as is also an Annual Subscription of 5/6.

The Editor will be glad to receive copies of all recent books (or magazine articles) on Conjuring and Kindred Arts, that the same may be included in the Appendix to his Bibliography.

SOUTH AFRICAN NOTES.

Since my last writing I have had the pleasure of witnessing "The Great De Villiers' Show." He opened with the usual conjuring tricks, and I have never seen a conjurer make so much out of a trick as he does. He showed no trick that was, in itself, new to conjurers here, but it is the way he presents them. His empty pipe and smoke trick is a perfect little comedy. He also worked the handkerchief and cone trick; the large cone and flower trick with red and white rose bushes; and his trunk mystery, an anti-spiritualistic light seance. He also does a Chinese turn, in which he introduces the fish-catching, a rope tying test, slate writing, and a small illusion consisting of his personal vanishing from a cabinet and appearance at bottom of hall. He fills the last item on programme with his great illusion "The Resurrection of Themis" in which several clever changes are worked, from cabinet to a coffin, in another coffin, etc. The whole is splendidly staged and smartly worked and brings him quite an ovation every night. He is a clever conjurer, and a most entertaining and pleasant companion. The Coy. he is with is a strong one, every item being of high standard. Their success is assured in this country, and our best wishes are with them.

We have had some new arrivals in these parts, first and foremost being the Lee and Zancig Combination. The former giving an entertainment of humorous hypnotism of great excellence, whilst the Zancigs proved themselves "par excellence" as "Thought readers." Theirs is a most finished performance and far surpasses anything of the kind shown here before.

A new arrival at Pillis' Circus on the Grand Parade is Alfredo Gartner, celebrated clown and juggler, who shows some clever experiments.

A sideshow, with conjuring and illusion, has just located here in Claremont and opens at once. I hear that Thaumia, and the Human Spider are the illusions to be shown.

T. HAYES, Magician.

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