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CONJURED UP

BY S. H. SHARPE



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CONJURED UP



PART ONE

GOOD CONJURING

*I like your silence, it the more shows off
your wonder.* —SHAKESPEARE.

WHAT is good conjuring? We rarely see a performance that really satisfies us. But in what way is it deficient? Is there a standard by which presentations may be judged with any degree of satisfaction?

I suppose it may be safely said that anything is good of its kind provided it serves its purpose satisfactorily.

I mean that a good wireless set is one that gets the stations wanted and gives perfect reception without trouble; and that a good conjurer mystifies his audience. But as audiences vary, and a conjurer whom one audience will consider splendid may be thought quite impossible by another, can it be said that a conjurer is actually good or bad apart from an audience of some kind? Or is it only possible to judge his quality by the reaction of a group of people to his performance? In brief, is quality a relative term? Again, provided a conjurer is judged good in comparison with other conjurers, can he therefore be considered good unconditionally? I intend to wrestle with these questions in the hope of coming out on top.

It seems to me that the quality of magic depends upon the quality of the audience; and that the aim of magic being to mystify, the best conjuring is that which bewilders the most critical audience, and yet appeals to

the general public. That is to say, the superficial effect must come within the average person's scope of appreciation without being crude: the artistic and technical details being of a high order. A performer can hardly be upheld as a master-magician because he is a perfect children's conjurer, for instance. To entertain and mystify young folk is a most interesting and satisfying pursuit; but it cannot be considered in the same class as one appealing to the better type of adult audience; any more than children's stories are comparable with those of Dickens or Wells. Stories written for adults appeal to many children at an early age because of their simple plots and clear writing, but few of us would choose to read children's stories for our own amusement since they are, of necessity, too simple and trivial to hold the interest of an adult mind. No sane man wishes to become mentally arrested so as to remain a child in outlook all his life. There is a vast difference between a man retaining a child-like wonder and enthusiasm, and inappropriate childish ignorance. But, in addition, good conjuring must be built on artistic lines, as I have tried to show in *Neo Magic*; as only entertainments which are constructed on a sound basis can avoid rapidly becoming stale. Because a performer is popular no more means that he is good in the true sense than a sixpenny shocker is good literature or jazz good music. True merit lies beneath the surface, and is only capable of being judged by an experienced critic. In fact it is probably safe to say that an ideal critic would have a wider experience of the subject than the artist whose work he was criticising; otherwise he rather resembles a schoolboy criticising his master. It often takes some time to "get the hang" of a sound piece of work and to realise the idea the artist is trying to convey. But once the appreciation of sound work has been acquired, inferior work, which was formerly considered good work, seems poor, shoddy stuff, and we wonder how ever we used to enjoy it.

THE ESSENCE OF MAGICAL CRITICISM.

The necessary qualities in a critic are not always realised. I think they may be tabulated as follows:—

(1) *Knowledge*: Without which his opinion will be worthless. In my view, a critic's interest should not be circumscribed by the subject he sets out to judge. The more he has studied other arts the better will he understand his own. To paraphrase Kipling:

"For what should they know of Magic, who
only Magic know?"

It may not be out of place to point out here five

kinds of barrier to accurate knowledge for which we should be continually on the lookout.

Custom or Habit. We are apt to take for granted the soundness of precepts that have been ingrained in us since before we were in a position to test their truth. A fault which is sometimes met with, however, in anyone who has taken it into his head to distrust custom, is to condemn *all* familiar rules; which is as bad as taking all on trust, if not worse.

Authority. A man's notions must not be taken as infallible simply because he has become an authority on a subject.

Mass Opinion. The majority of people give their opinion without sound reason, and, on this account, are not to be heeded. One reasonable view is worth more than an infinite number of emotional ones. "In a number of counsellors there is much wisdom", *only* provided such counsellors understand what they discuss.

Self-deception or stubbornness. We are apt to believe what we wish to believe, and to twist contrary opinions to suit our purpose. Sound views can only be arrived at by approaching a subject impartially with a clear mind, and only accepting as *true* those things which have been demonstrated true beyond question.

Superstition. All human beings, however materialistic they profess themselves to be, are at bottom superstitious and liable to surrender reason to the miraculous. This leads to any phenomena which we are unable to explain on rational grounds being taken for manifestations of the supernatural if our imagination is given the least jolt in that direction—to the lasting glory of the mediumistic fraternity.

(2) *Sincerity*. Unless a critic really thinks and means what he says he is a canting humbug.

(3) *Tolerance*. The critic who invariably sets out to find fault will always discover faults to find. *The true critic seeks merit* but does not say that it exists unless he observes it; nor does he exaggerate the quality of what he finds. It is mistaken kindness to over-praise. A complaisant critic is a bad critic. Such procedure may make a performer think his work near perfection, and encourage unmerited self-assurance. A performer cannot afford to get into this frame of mind because, no matter how praiseworthy his work, it is never beyond improvement. Said Huxley: "No man nor any body of men is good enough or wise enough to dispense with the tonic of criticism".

As no critic can know more about a work of art than its creator, good criticism consists in the critic saying how, in his opinion, the technique might be improved; or in pointing out details which will help the audience to appreciate the artistry and the underlying idea to the full. *A work of art can only be understood by the spectator viewing it from the same mental approach as the maker of it.* Intolerant criticism is generally the result of failing to do this. My impression is that more frank and public criticism would help to raise the standard of conjuring presentations and lead to more finished performances; because the more fully people understand a thing, the higher quality do they demand. One is bound to the conclusion that those who resent criticism are most in need of it and are suffering from that common malady, conceit. By criticising each other we help each other: and even if a suggestion is not followed there is always something to learn from disinterested opinions. But readers of a gushing criticism are led to expect a higher degree of perfection than they subsequently find. In consequence, dissatisfaction results, to the performer's detriment. When backed by encouraging advice, it is sometimes kind to be cruel.

(4) *Courage.* A critic must not mind saying what he honestly feels about a performance. If he is afraid of making himself unpopular by condemning some action, or of running counter to general opinion in any way, his observations are not worth putting on to paper. A critic's purpose is not to say what he thinks will most please either performer or observer, but to express his own views. A casual critic can only say if the work he criticises is pleasant or unpleasant; but the competent critic judges real quality.

(5) *Impartiality* is essential to anyone who sets out to pass judgment on another man's work. Probably no one is totally without bias of some kind; but, so far as he is consciously able, a critic must put personal likes and dislikes to one side if he hopes to be taken seriously. Favouritism, sentiment, or prejudice, ruin criticism of any kind. Neither is it a critic's purpose to flatter. His business is to pass an honest detached opinion, based on a sound knowledge of the subject he judges. In a word, he should be just and true to himself:

*"And it must follow as the night the day,
Thou can'st not then be false to any man."*

Exaggerated praise will not make a work meritorious. Natural selection is always unobtrusively sorting out the fittest and sending the others to the wall. But these qualities alone will not enable anyone to appreciate

artistry to the full, because appreciation does not depend on analysis. Technical vivisection quickly reduces any work of art to a corpse. The only way a spectator can hope to realise what the creator was aiming at is to catch the spirit of his imagination *by judging his own reactions to the work as a whole*. An objective criticism must necessarily be technical and so deal with what the artist *does* rather than what he *means*; whereas a subjective criticism is a criticism of the critic's own imagination as prompted by the magic-artist.

AUDIENCES.

One difficulty of a critic is to understand the mental outlook of others, though without doing so he is unable to say with confidence whether a production will suit a certain type of audience or not. One of his tasks therefore should be to study the opinions of other people in order to understand their point of view. This can be done to some extent by attending performances in different parts of the audience and noticing how people of varying types react to each kind of effect and method of presentation.

To judge a performance from one part of a building only cannot give a right impression of its effectiveness, particularly if that position be in the stalls of a theatre. Only if those in the pit and gallery are easily able to follow a conjurer is his act suited to that particular hall. This is rather a pity because the finest and most subtle work cannot be appreciated at a distance in a way that music or acting can: consequently the best conjuring is to be seen in the concert-hall, small theatre, and room. Television will doubtless result in a revived interest in good conjuring. Real stage-magic necessarily depends in no small measure upon the machinist and concealed assistant, the magician being reduced to little more than an ordinary actor—and very often not that! One feels inclined to state that a conjurer whose performance can be imitated by anyone familiar with his methods is no conjurer.

A mistake generally made in judging conjuring acts is to class them all as appealing to the same type of audience. This is most unfair. If one performer's programme is intended to appeal to a popular audience, being spectacular and lively, while another is more reserved but of considerable merit from an artistic point of view, how can the two be judged in the same class? The better conjurer will doubtless be beaten if judged from a layman's point of view; whereas he would not deserve first place supposing it was a popular audience for which the programme was intended. When societies

hold contests, it seems to me that one of the most important rules should be to state for what type of audience competitors are to cater and judge according to appropriateness.

Audiences may be roughly considered under the headings of: (1) Age (Children, Adolescents, Adults, Mixed), (2) Sex, (3) Size of audience, (4) Distance from performer and position as to angles, (5) Mental Type or Social Class. A performance must be considered under each of these headings, and should then be:

- (1) Appropriate to the audience and place. It is no use casting pearls before swine or putting swill in front of a fair lady.
- (2) Mystifying, otherwise it is not conjuring.
- (3) Entertaining, because stark mystery is not always entertaining. A magical effect greatly increases in power when, in addition to being wonderful, it carries an impression of beauty and grandeur.

AUDIENCE MENTALITY.

Mentality cannot be gauged simply by age. A great many adults are almost infantile in outlook where entertainments are concerned, and few indeed have truly adult minds. Psychologists seem to agree that the normal adult's mental capacity is similar to that of an average child from twelve to fourteen years old. Anything that a boy or girl of this age cannot appreciate will probably be beyond an average mixed audience. But it must be understood that, at twelve years old, a child can understand more than many adults realise. Besides a crowd seldom thinks; and a person's mentality is weakened as soon as he becomes one of an audience.

Masses of people have infantile mental outlooks and can appreciate little beyond spectacle and horse-play; having, in fact, decayed since childhood in that they are no longer receptive to fantasy. The majority have adolescent minds that react to sensation (even though it arises from cruelty, violence and gross situations), romance, and sentiment, in addition to show and broad comedy. The *truly* adult mind has reached the state of preferring entertainment that stimulates thought, delight (such as results from perceiving anything lovely and graceful) and contemplation; while still enjoying the foregoing amusements in small proportions by way of relaxation. In a word, the really grown-up mind is more *human* than the mind of the average grown-up!

CONDITIONS OF PRESENTATION.

The circumstances under which an effect is presented have considerable bearing on its power to convince. The tighter the conditions the more magical the effect. Though an interesting and attractive performance may be given when magic is presented with bulky apparatus which the audience have no opportunity of examining, it will not carry the true element of mystery that results when a committee examine the articles used and remain on the stage while the effect is in progress: or when borrowed objects are conjured with at close quarters and no sign of trickery can be detected. The magic of a séance depends in no small measure on the test conditions of presentation.

An old effect can be rejuvenated by inventing a method of presenting it under more stringent conditions than formerly. The effect of Maskelyne's "Psycho" was very similar to Kempelen's Chess-player. But it was demonstrated under conditions that made the old effect a new mystery. In my opinion, Selbit's method of "Sawing Through a Woman" was superior to any of the imitations because everything could be examined before and after the effect, and a committee surrounded the box while it was being divided.

Of course, a perfect effect would be capable of presentation under any conditions. A feature of "The Chinese Rings" is that it may be said closely to approach this ideal.

VARIETY OF METHODS DESIRABLE.

But failing perfection in this respect a mystery can often be adapted to any conditions by inventing new ways of accomplishing it. That is one reason why it is always useful to have more than one method available. A trick that could be used satisfactorily under close quarter conditions might not be safe on the stage, and *vice-versa*. "The Rising Cards" is proof enough of this. If there had only been one method of performing it, the effect would have been dead long ago.

The classics never lose charm *when well done* by an original method. There are no better effects in magic than the old, well-tried ones for audiences that are not already familiar with them; and when the *method* is fresh or worked with such artistry that even conjurers are unable to follow the moves employed, an old feat attracts the know-all and the student as much as a new effect. It is not the old *effects* that pall, except when really overdone through being the craze of the day. Only when the method is familiar and the presentation botched

does a classic fail to attract. Wherever there is a touch of originality linked with a tightening of conditions there also is a fresh attraction.

It is possible to produce almost any effect if you are content to do so without studying conditions. A dreary black-art setting, confederates, and special apparatus, make magic easy. But conjuring worth watching is not easy.

THE ELEMENTS OF MAGIC.

Magical effects are compounded of eight elements. In proportion as these are considered or disregarded will a conjurer's success depend.

- (1) The Magical Plot.
- (2) The Dramatic Plot, or Patter.
- (3) The Objects Used.
- (4) Misdirection.
- (5) Construction.
- (6) Technical Mastery.
- (7) Dramatic Ability.
- (8) Manner.
- (9) Style.

THE MAGICAL PLOT.

A new plot is the key to an infinite number of new effects, according to the arrangement of the other elements just noted.

By "magical plot" I mean the bare conjuring feat on which the complete effect is built. The production or transformation of an object, for instance, is a simple magical plot. For a detailed analysis of such feats, see *Neo Magic*, p. 41.

THE DRAMATIC PLOT.

The "dressing", patter and general *mise en scene* are of no less importance than the actual feat, though most conjurers are content to present a trick in bare outline: which is a most feeble and unfinished procedure. It is the dramatic element, the imaginative setting, which lifts a trick from a show of cleverness into the category of art. There is no doubt that this element of conjuring should claim a great deal more attention than it does in practise; and, where competitions are concerned, I suggest that more encouragement might well be given to the dramatic side. A magical plot without a *mise en scene* is to conjuring what an outline of a story is to a play or novel; and who in their senses would present such a skeleton to the public

instead of giving it the flesh and blood of characterisation and incident? Simply to produce a plant in a pot, for example, is a thing of the moment; but by going through the process of setting a seed, watering it, applying heat, and showing first the small shoot growing, the feat is enveloped in a convincing plot and brought within the scope of magical possibility. There are numerous dramatic plots capable of being super-imposed on any single magical plot; and by viewing it in a different light to the customary one an experiment takes on a new interest. When anybody asks me to "do a few tricks", I always feel like asking if I am to begin by standing on my head. Demonstrating a bare trick to people is like giving them raw meat to eat, instead of having it cooked and served in an attractive and palatable way. In fact the rules governing food for the body apply equally to food for the mind; *i.e.*, nourishment, balanced variety, palatability, and pleasant service and surroundings. Some performers' programmes give one the impression of a meal consisting of nothing but fancy cakes and froth; others of yesterday's hash; some of all "trimmings" and nothing eatable; while others are so concentrated that one cannot digest them in the time allowed.

Why is Charlier famed throughout the magical world despite the fact that few ever saw him perform? Simply because he adopted a dramatic form of presentation and supported it by faultless technique.

It may be that this matter can be summed up in the question: "Is the effect convincing?" Does the yellow handkerchief *really* seem to have turned blue? Do thoughts *really* appear to pass from mind to mind? Does the lady *really* seem to have vanished into air—into thin air? Or are they all just clever tricks? It is probably safe to say that the whole problem of art in magic turns on this point. Without conviction there can be no true magic. The smallest inconsistency will ruin any effect if it is judged critically. And anything suspicious, *whether it has really any bearing on the effect or not*, destroys the idea of magic. That is why some of the mediums' feats are good conjuring when stripped of charlatanism—they are so convincing. As the conjurer is open to less serious consequences than the fraudulent medium if he gets found out, he does not usually bother so much to make his effects convincing. I sometimes think the oft repeated question, "What is wrong with Magic?" can be answered quite sensibly in three words: "It isn't magical". One unconvincing effect spoils an otherwise good programme by breaking the spell of enchantment. "Will its inclusion help or mar the atmosphere of wonder?" That is what the magician should ask

himself of everything said and done in his performance. Once a conjurer includes a mechanical transformation, a sleight depending upon unnatural actions, or any not-quite-magical feat in his performance, he ceases to be a magician and becomes a doer of tricks—a trickster.

Probably no better example of a convincing dramatic presentation could be given than Houdin's "Ethereal Suspension". I extract the following description from W. Manning's *Recollections of Robert Houdin* :

"Eugene was a younger son, and appeared at St. James' Theatre in the trick known as 'The Suspension by Ether', the latter drug being then only recently in vogue as an anesthetic. Houdin led his handsome son by the hand to the footlights to make the most machanical of bows to the audience. The two slowly retired backwards, when the father fixed an upright rod under each arm of the son, who had ascended three steps for the purpose of raising himself from the stage. The father then expatiated gravely upon the marvels of ether, and pretending to administer it to the youth, a simulated slumber followed and, the steps being suddenly removed, the boy remained supported by the two rods only, his body retaining a vertical position, the feet eighteen inches from the stage. Houdin then very carefully raised the body to the horizontal line without disturbing the slumber of the boy, and, to the terror of many a spectator, the father suddenly kicked away rod number two, leaving Eugene's outstretched body apparently without a support, his right elbow only just in contact with rod number one. My illustration represents a further development of the experiment which appeared to defy the laws of nature. This was always the final trick of a performance; and when the curtain fell, and was raised again in obedience to the recall, father and son came walking most gravely forward, and the effect of this slow movement was to make half the world believe the boy was not flesh and blood at all, but a marvellous automaton".

That Manning was not exaggerating when he eulogised his friend may be gathered from the fact that people not only condemned Houdin for subjecting his son to inhuman practices, but one writer in "Magazine of Mysteries," edited by E. L. Blanchard, the dramatic critic, went so far as to describe "a beautifully made automaton" which, he said, the reader would be astonished to learn was none other than the figure they had taken to be human, and who talked, walked and gesticulated with such graceful ease during the performance. This mythical automaton was said to have been constructed by Jacques Legrinier, of Geneva, the features being modelled by

Jerome Tussaud. The figure, says this romancer, was supported in the horizontal position by being inflated with hydrogen gas, a suitable amount being let out when it was required to fall slowly to the stage again.

FANTASTIC AND PSEUDO-SCIENTIFIC PLOTS.

Roughly speaking, all magical plots fall under one of two headings: *Fanciful* and *Pseudo-scientific*: though some might be classed under either section.

A *Fanciful Plot* is one depending purely upon imagination and covers everything grotesque, whimsical, comical, or supernatural.

A *Pseudo-scientific Plot* has a basis of fact and appears to be true and reasonable. Of course, the spectators know the thing is simply entertainment because the demonstrator owns himself a conjurer, and thus draws a dividing line between himself and quack hypnotists, mediums, fortune tellers, and similar impostors who gull credulous people by denying the use of natural methods. The conjurer says he produces magic by art, and *does* produce magic by art. The knave produces magic by art and says it is natural magic.

Robert Houdin used pseudo-scientific plots for many of his effects, as a study of his *Secrets* will show.

The process mentioned on page 9 with "The Growth of Flowers" is a pseudo-scientific plot. It could be varied in many ways. One would be to use a zinc pot and a copper cylinder with an ebonite collar to insulate it, arranging a little scientific patter to account for the rapid germination by electric waves set up in the earth by this arrangement. Or the tube could have a large lens fitted in the top and be placed under a hissing arc-lamp for ten seconds, it being explained that the lens focussed the ultra-violet rays on the seeds with surprising results.

Pseudo-scientific effects are sometimes inclined to be less magical than Fanciful ones because they seem to be within the bounds of possibility. A Fanciful plot generally inverts all reason and so produces the truly magical atmosphere.

A Fanciful plot for the same effect would be to say that if the spectators imagined hard enough that they could see flowers in the pot they would begin to think that flowers really were there. The cover would be put on and everyone asked to imagine daffodils growing in the pot. On raising the cover nothing would have happened: so they would be urged to think harder. Then the flowers would be seen to have arrived. Even this verges on pseudo-science. Or the conjuror might say he

had noticed some flowers that particularly took his fancy in a garden, so he decided to transport them by magic to the plant-pot on the table. Having done so he could finish by saying: "I wonder what the grower of them will think when he finds them gone!" Of course, if he says the fairies have brought the flowers the plot is pure Fancy.

In order to make a pseudo-scientific plot convincing it is necessary (1) to base the plot on some recognised principle; (2) to avoid making the fiction too tall to be credible, by carrying the scientific theory one step beyond fact but not two steps; and (3) to present it in an earnest manner. If the conjurer is obviously thinking to himself "Of course this is all bunk", and makes his statements in a half-hearted way, the effect is bound to be unconvincing. To carry his audience with him, he must act as though he has complete faith in what he is saying.

The *mis-en-scene* of "Domination of Thought" (page 25) is pseudo-scientific, as in it the conjurer demonstrates telepathy functioning in a way that has not been proved to exist in reality. That mind reacts on mind is a recognised fact; so one mind *may* be able to dominate another mind in the way shown in the effect; which effect therefore becomes perfectly credible.

Again, a spectator might be asked to examine a pedestal and a vase, and to place the vase on the pedestal. Then the conjurer would stand some distance away, concentrating his gaze on the vase so that (according to his theory) mental waves were projected round it like tentacles, making it first begin to rock and then fall off the stand, breaking into fragments with a clatter that would snap the tension and so bring the atmosphere back to normal again.

Such pseudo-scientific plots as these are often, in a sense, prophetic: just as poems sometimes tell of things that are yet to be. For who shall say with certainty that there is no thread of possibility in fabrications of this nature, woven in the minds of imaginative thinkers? And that no conjurer's dreams—such as the passing of matter through matter, telepathy, clairvoyance, the mental control of inanimate objects, materialization and dematerialization, the instantaneous transposition of physical bodies from place to place, and transformations of various kinds—which he illustrates with the aid of artifice, will ever be realised in actuality?

Oliver Wendell Holmes has some amusing things to say about Pseudo-Sciences in *The Professor at the Breakfast-Table*, from which I quote:

"I shall begin, my friends, with the definition of a *pseudo-science*. A pseudo-science consists of a *nomenclature*, with a self-adjusting arrangement, by which all positive evidence, or such as tells against it, is excluded. It is invariably connected with some lucrative practical application. Its professors and practitioners are usually shrewd people; they are very serious with the public, but wink and laugh a good deal among themselves. The believing multitude consists of women of both sexes, feeble-minded enquirers, poetical optimists, people who always get cheated in buying horses, philanthropists who insist on hurrying up the millenium, and others of this class, with here and there a clergyman, less frequently a lawyer, very rarely a physician, and almost never a horse-jockey or a member of the detective police—I did not say that Phrenology was one of the Pseudo-sciences.

"A pseudo-science does not necessarily consist of lies. It may contain many truths, and even valuable ones. The rottenest bank starts with a little specie. The practitioners of the Pseudo-sciences know that common minds, after they have been baited with a real fact or two, will jump at the merest rag of a lie, or even at the bare hook. When we have one fact found us, we are very apt to supply the next out of our imagination. The Pseudo-sciences take advantage of this.—I did not say that it was so with Phrenology.

"I proceed, therefore, to explain the self-adjusting mechanism of Phrenology, which is *very* similar to that of the Pseudo-sciences."

After explaining how he would size up his sitters and fumble with their skulls, he concludes :

"Of course, you know, that isn't the way the Phrenologists do. They only go by the bumps. What do you keep laughing so for? (to the boarders) I only said that is the way *I* should practice "Phrenology" for a living."

PURE, STORY, AND SYMBOLIC MAGIC.

Moreover, conjuring effects may be roughly grouped under three headings: Pure Conjuring, Story Magic, and Symbolic Magic.

Pure or Absolute Conjuring is the largest group, because the aim of most magic is simply to create wonder and enjoyment; and provided the conjurer mystifies his audience he may be said to have succeeded: just as most music is intended to be pleasant and harmonious sound.

Story Magic differs from pure conjuring by illustrating a fairy tale of some kind. This tale may be told by the conjurer's patter or be acted by living characters in

illusion work. Of course, the story may be either fantastic, pseudo-scientific, or more or less commonplace. This conjuring is really a kind of accompaniment, like music to a song or opera, as the magic is not complete without the story.

The advantage of Story Magic is that it adds human interest to effects that, by themselves, might resemble scientific demonstrations too closely to be generally attractive. The story dramatizes the magic.

Symbolic or Poetic Magic may take Pure Conjuring or Story Magic as its basis: but it also conveys an idea of something that is not immediately apparent. The magic acts as a vehicle to an esoteric message that few will comprehend, *in addition* to an exoteric effect which the masses can appreciate.

The hidden idea may be some phenomenon of nature (an effect with silks or liquids might be based on the idea of the rainbow; or with spheres, of the planets, for instance); a moral truth; or something quite different according to the artistic inspiration. Symbolic Magic is probably the highest and most poetic form of conjuring and can hardly be appreciated to the full by anyone out of sympathy with the artist's train of thought; any more than can a symbolic painting, sculpture, or musical composition. The parables of Christ are symbolic poems. When people deride symbolic art or think it childish, it simply means that they only see what their perceptions tell them and fail to understand the idea the artist was trying to convey through its medium: in fact they probably do not realise that it means anything at all but amusement, which is only to be expected.

All magic is Symbolical, even when the artist is not conscious of the fact—your poet often writes greater than he knows. When a conjurer materialises a number of objects, changes their size, shape, colour, and other properties, and then dematerialises them again, what is he doing but symbolizing the creation, flux, and annihilation of the Universe? When he presents an "inexhaustible" effect, what is he doing but symbolizing God's plenty? When he makes inanimate objects obey his bidding, what is he doing but symbolizing the Invisible Control of Master Thought over all matter? As for the conjurer, he is symbolizing Omnipotence itself.

Here too we have the answer to the perpetual cry for something new; to which symbolism answers, "Behold! I make all things new." The art that has eternal freshness is art with a hidden message: mystic, esoteric art: Art to Enchant.

PART TWO
POEMS IN ILLUSION

Poetry is a general name signifying every cause whereby anything proceeds from that which is not into that which is; so that the exercise of every inventive art is poetry, and all such artists poets.
—PLATO.

All experience shows that doctrine alone nerves us to the effort called for by the greatest art. The What is always more important than the How, if only because the How cannot become really magical until such magic is indispensable to the revelation of an all-important What.
—BERNARD SHAW.

NARCISSUS

“MANY years ago, when the earth was young, there lived a youth of surpassing beauty about whom I want to tell you a fable.

“I shall use one of the Jacks from this pack to represent the youth, and should like some lady to name which she prefers. You will choose, Madam? Many thanks. Now which Jack do you consider the most handsome? The Jack of Hearts. Very well; if you think the Jack of Hearts is the handsomest youth in the pack, he shall play the part in our fable. Here he is. (*Removing the Jack chosen from the pack and holding it up for all to see.*) You see he is beginning to look quite conceited already.

“Well, this handsome youth was strolling along the banks of a lake one day and chanced to notice his own reflection in the water. As there was no mirrors in those days it was the first time he had seen an image of himself, and he mistook the reflection for a mysterious water nymph and fell in love with her at once—for, you will remember, he was an exceedingly beautiful youth. This hand-mirror shall represent the lake. (*The Jack is casually placed on top of the cards in the left hand to*

enable the right hand to take up the mirror and show it. The mirror is then replaced face-up on a table or chair. The Jack is removed from the pack and held so that the face can be seen.)

“It should serve the purpose well, as I see a very handsome youth in it. (*Locking into the mirror.*)

“Now our hero lay down to gaze at the nymph in the water to speak to her. (*Placing the card face-down on the mirror.*) But though her lips moved she gave no reply to his flattering remarks. When darkness fell he went home (*removing and showing the card; then replacing it on the mirror*), but returned next morn as soon as it began to get light. Every day he went to gaze into the lake at his beloved until he began to pine away. Then the gods took pity on the love-lorn youth, and by their magic power—(*the conjurer touches the back of the card with his wand*)—changed him into a flower drooping over the water so that he could behold his own reflection for ever. And that is how the narcissus was created; for Narcissus was the handsome youth’s name. (*The card is lifted from the mirror—by the lady if the audience is small; if not, by the conjurer, who holds it—for all to see. The Jack has changed into a painting of a narcissus.*)

“Perhaps, madam, you will accept the Jack of Hearts as a token of the fable. I am afraid he would now find his former companions uncongenial.” (*Handing the card to the lady.*)

WORKING DETAILS.

The narcissus card is on top of the pack; having been palmed there if the cards were previously used for another trick. Any Jack may be used. The pack remains in the left hand throughout. In placing the Jack on the mirror the second time it is top-changed for the flower card. It is as well to make the pass during the remainder of the patter in order to lose sight of the Jack.

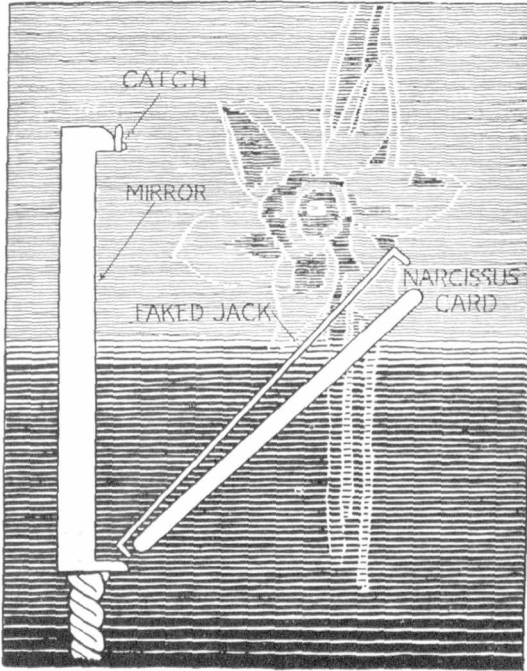
Stage Version.

This effect is quite suitable for performing by the above method before large audiences if giant cards are used.

Another method that can be employed with giant cards is to use a faked Jack and mirror. The mirror is framed on a floor-stand. The Jack used is made of a piece of thin chromium mirror with the edges turned over to form a very shallow tray that jams into the mirror-frame. On the outside is stuck the Jack. The edges inside match the mirror-frame and outside are covered

with white paper. The narcissus card fits in this tray and hides the mirror-surface; its back appearing to be the back of the Jack.

The working will now be obvious. The fake Jack of Diamonds is in the pack; and in selecting a Jack for the trick the conjurer seems to prove that it is immaterial which he uses by saying: "I think the Jack of Diamonds



is the most handsome, so we had better use him. The Jack of Hearts has only one eye and the other two are dull-looking fellows."

In placing the Jack against the mirror one end is rested on the shelf and the card slowly hinged up so that its reflection may be seen as it approaches the glass, proving that up to the last moment no change has been made. The fake is pushed tight into the frame and a small catch at the top turned to hold the card up. In due course the flower-card is removed leaving the inner surface of the tray to represent the mirror. When the card is first placed against the mirror it is simply rested on the shelf and held up by the catch as in the illustration. Of course, the Narcissus card may be examined at the finish.

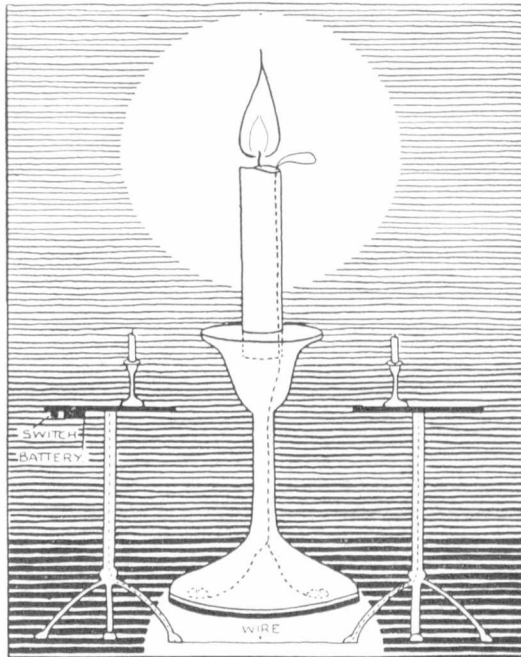
BY CANDLE LIGHT

An effect to be presented in pantomime. On opposite sides of the stage are seen two small undraped tables each bearing a candle in a candlestick. The conjurer lights one of the candles. He then takes a coloured silk handkerchief which may, if desired, be chosen from several different ones or borrowed from a lady in the audience, and gradually compresses it into one hand. Holding this hand over the candle, the fingers squeeze the silk until it is apparently vapourised and passed into the flame. He examines the flame to convey the idea that the handkerchief is there. The magician now takes up a position at the side of this candle and in line with the other; and, after carefully sighting as though taking aim and judging his distance, puffs out the lighted candle. Following an imaginary flight, the other candle is seen to light up a moment later, the flame having apparently been blown from one candle to the other. The conjurer crosses over and takes the candlestick holding the now lighted candle in one hand, and again examines the flame. Giving a smile of approval, he seems to pluck the flame between finger and thumb and replaces the candlestick on the table. Upon shaking his hand, the flame turns into the handkerchief, which has evidently accompanied it on its flight.

The magical lighting of the candle may be brought about by (1) the familiar mechanical candle containing a small lamp, for particulars of which see *Our Magic*, page 478; (2) by chemical reaction or time fuse; (3) by electricity. The latter is, in my view, the cleanest method if a hot-wire device is employed. The preparation is not difficult.

A groove is made up the side of the candle with a hot skewer, and a piece of thin flex containing two insulated strands of wire inserted, the wax being pressed over to hide it and hold it in place. The top ends of the wires are now joined by soldering between them a short length of thin iron or platinum wire. This loop is bent away from the candle. The other ends of the wires go through the candlestick

to brass screws in a fibre or wooden base, enough slack being left inside for adjustments to be made easily. The points of the screws should protrude sufficiently to make contact with two discs of brass on the table-top which are connected by thin flex to a small switch and battery under the top of the other table. The candle wick (which should be lighted and blown out again to char it, then moistened with methylated spirits) is joined to the wire loop by twisting a slip of flash-paper round. On pressing the switch the wire ignites the flash-paper, which lights the wick.



The Ever Ready Co. have placed on the market an electric gas-lighter made like a flash-lamp at 5/6. The parts of one of these may be used to construct the device. The battery provided will then light the candle 7,000 times!

It may be thought that an increased effect would be obtained by lighting the first candle magically. I suggest that to do so would be a mistake, as when everything happens magically things cease to be magical. Good conjuring results from a nice balance of the extraordinary and the commonplace.

The vanish and reproduction of the handkerchief are managed by sleight-of-hand. The performer's right side is to the audience. The handkerchief is rolled up, and palmed in the right hand, the left "passing" it into the candle. In blowing out the flame both hands hold the sides of the table-top in a natural way, which action helps to conceal the palmed silk and enables the left fingers to press the hidden switch at the correct moment.

The other candlestick is lifted by the right hand, indirectly showing that there is no connection between the candlestick and the table, and the flame pinched out with the left forefinger and thumb. After replacing the candlestick, the supposed flame is taken in the right finger and thumb and finally the silk is jerked into view. This last action requires some little practice to accomplish in a finished manner. The impression created should be that the flame has transformed itself into the handkerchief upon being shaken, and is managed by bending in the forefinger and thumb on the first downward jerk and nipping a piece of the palmed silk, sweeping it into view as the hand goes up again. Of course, the idea that a flame is being held between the fingers is due purely to suggestion.

THE NERVOUS CARD

This is a good little trick to show when seated at a table.

Shuffle the pack and glimpse the top card. Divide the pack into two piles and hand the top part to a spectator. Ask him to spread the cards on the table and remove one from near the centre; then to place it on top of his pack after remembering it. You apparently do the same with your cards. The two packets are squared up and cut, the cut being completed to bring one of the remembered cards to the centre of each. You never touch the spectator's cards after once handing them to him.

"The card I remember was the Five of Spades," you say, *really naming the card glimpsed at the beginning of the trick*, and which is next to the spectator's card in his packet. "What card did you take?" It is named.

"I just do this," you continue, making the click with your cards, "and it gives my card, the Five of Spades, such a fright that it jumps right over to your packet to join your card—I think you said it was the Jack of Diamonds."

You turn over your cards and show the Five of Spades is absent. Then the spectator examines his packet and finds the two chosen cards together.



THE INVISIBLE SILKWORM

“ I don't know whether any of you have ever kept silkworms. It's rather a fascinating hobby. Silkworms live in paper houses. You get a piece of paper and make it into a little tube like this, and pop your silkworm inside. I have a pet silkworm in this box, but you won't be able to see him—or her. I don't know whether it's a he or she silkworm, but that doesn't really matter. You've heard of the invisible man, haven't you? Well, this is an invisible silkworm. You can see she is invisible, can't you? *(Apparently taking silkworm between finger and thumb and holding it up)*. Into your little house you go. *(Putting it into the tube)*.

“ The best of invisible silkworms is that they not only work far more quickly than the common or mulberry

silkworms, but they weave their silk into fabric, just as spiders make webs. I think there should be some result by now. Yes, here is our pet's handiwork. (*Gradually removing a golden-yellow silk square from the cone*). A modern factory couldn't have done it better and would have made a lot more fuss. I do declare here's another. (*Holding the tube so that a second silk can be seen emerging. This is removed and the paper crumpled up and tossed aside*).

"Another advantage of silk made by invisible silkworms is that instead of wearing away and going into ladders it keeps increasing in quantity. Ladies, take my advice and ask for stockings made of invisible silkworms' silk. Look! (*As the yellow silks are gently crumpled in the hands they seem to multiply and well out in a fountain of silk, falling gracefully in a heap on to a plain side-table covered with dark felt to prevent them slipping off*).

"But even this silk is as nothing compared with the invisible silkworm itself when it breaks through its chrysalis and flies away as a gorgeous butterfly." (*From a few of the silks taken in the hands a brilliantly coloured butterfly, measuring some five feet from wing-tip to wing-tip suddenly appears. It is hung on arms attached to the table-top so that it forms a background to the mountain of yellow silk*).

WORKING DETAILS.

Production.

A tube of thin note-paper about an inch in diameter is made and two fifteen inch silks tucked in, a corner of each being interlocked so that as one is removed a corner of the other is automatically pulled out to obviate fumbling. The ends of the tube are cut off about half an inch from the silk and turned in to prevent it expanding.

This tube is on the table hidden by a sheet of note-paper measuring about five inches square; or if the effect is used as an opening item the paper is held in the right hand covering the tube.

The hands are shown empty and the paper and the tube picked up together with the right hand. The paper alone is passed to the left hand and casually held forward so that its innocence may be noted; it is then returned to the right hand and made into a tube round the fake. The actual motions to use in order to secure natural handling will soon become apparent in practise. The tube is then held to the eye like a telescope to strengthen the idea of a clear passage, the far end being kept just beyond any spectator's line of vision. No mention that it is empty should be made, as this might

rouse suspicion. The ends of the tube are folded in after a pretence of putting a silkworm in has been gone through.

An alternative method of loading is to have the fake—which should in this case be slightly conical in shape—in a pocket together with a small rubber band. The paper is made into a tube, the right hand goes to the pocket for the band and at the same time secures the fake, narrow end up, by holding it against the palm with the tip of the third finger. As the band is held between finger and thumb the position is quite natural. The left finger and thumb help to stretch the band over the first and second fingers of the right hand from whence it is placed over the tube, which is shown empty, being then placed straight over the fake in the right hand. The left hand is shown and retakes the tube so that the right hand can also be seen free. The ends of the tube are next closed. These actions take but a few moments in practise and lead to convincing results.

Multiplication.

After removing the first silk, the tube is held forward by the left hand for the next to be seen emerging, thus giving an opportunity for the right hand holding the first silk to fall naturally to the side and secure the main load of silks from beneath the jacket, where it hangs from the point of a long pin pushed *upwards* in the trousers—this if a dinner jacket is being worn. When in tails, the load may either be on the back of the leg in the position of a pochette, or be vested on the *left* side, from which position it can be obtained quite naturally by the *right* hand. Had the load been vested on the right side the elbow would stick out in a very *gauche* manner during the action. Being the same colour as the silk in the hand, there is no fear of the load being detected after securing.

The load is made up of not less than a dozen fifteen-inch silks of the same golden-yellow as the first. They are prepared by holding them by their centres (hanging separately, not one over the other) and then rolling them into a bundle and tucking an outside corner into a fold to hold secure. Threads should not be tied round the bundle, nor must an elastic band be used, as these prevent clean handling of the multiplication.

The second silk is gradually pulled out of the tube by the hand holding the first silk and load. It is a mistake to pull the silks from the tube rapidly as this spoils the graceful expanding effect that makes the silk seem to be swelling as it is produced.

After crumpling up the paper and tossing it aside the silks are pressed concertina-fashion between the hands

so that the bundle comes undone and the load overflows on to the table.

THE BUTTERFLY.

To obtain a really striking effect the butterfly should be about as large as the conjurer can hold with his arm outstretched; and if it represents a Purple Emperor or other species of darkly coloured butterfly, a pleasing contrast will result. The silk used in its manufacture should be substantial and the colours bold. Watery-looking colours on flimsy silk will ruin the effect.

At the tip of each wing is a bone ring, one being larger than the other so that the correct one for each hand can be found by touch. If the colouring of the silk is equally good on each side this precaution is unnecessary.

The butterfly is prepared by first pleating it up sideways, then from top to bottom. When about a foot of material is left, the whole is *rolled* up beginning with the pleated part. A narrow piece of tissue paper stuck round will hold it in place. This load is disposed of under the jacket on the left side with the rings uppermost under the lapel in a convenient position for securing. The pressure of the coat holds the load in position. In order to get the utmost out of the effect the silks should not be packed until immediately before the performance; they will then expand without showing a mass of creases. This freshness makes all the difference when, in addition, the fabric is bright and clean. Performances other than conjuring are sometimes quite spoilt through slovenliness. I remember seeing "Chu Chin Chow" towards the end of a long run where the market-place scene was ruined because the merchants were displaying fabrics that could only have looked attractive to a rag-man.

Several of the silks are picked up from the table one at a time by the right hand and placed between the fingers of the left, leaving the left thumb free. When sufficient cover has been obtained, the right hand, in passing with another silk between the body and the silks in the left hand, secures the load and holds it so that the left thumb can engage the big ring. Another silk is added and placed to hide the load. Then the left hand may hold out the yellow silks and turn them about. The right hand now approaches and takes hold of about half the silks and the free ring. A moment's pause—then the hands are parted with a rapid shaking gesture; and the butterfly should suddenly appear as a complete surprise.

An alternative though less artistic method of loading the butterfly is to have it hanging at the back of the table on which the silks are dropped, and pick it and a bunch of silks up together.

DOMINATION OF THOUGHT

I do not know who invented the following first-rate card trick that I have adapted to a *mise en scene* of Hofzinsler's. It was shown to me by my friend Dleisfen. Three other versions are described on pages 65, 81 and 85 of *J. N. Hofzinsler's Card Conjuring*.

I suggest that, when seriously presented in the manner following, "Domination of Thought" forms one of the most thought-provoking effects in the whole range of intimate magic. The method to be described is simpler in execution than any of Hofzinsler's and depends upon a very elementary principle. The drawback is that, once the trick is discovered, anyone can repeat the effect, as no practice is needed. I have known a lady with a superficial knowledge of conjuring see through the trick at once. However, you cannot have it all ways. Hofzinsler's versions are doubtless superior but require special cards and considerable skill in execution.

"An experiment called Domination of Thought. I say an experiment because conjuring of this nature is never infallible. It depends on psychological workings; and I cannot be certain beforehand how your mind will react to the suggestions I put out. An *experiment*, then, in Domination of Thought.

(*To the person assisting*): "Do you think it is possible for me to influence your mind so that you will think just as I wish you to think, without your being conscious of the fact, whether you will or no? You cannot say.

"Well, though every person *thinks* he is free to guide his own thoughts, there are times when one mind can secretly control another. I shall try to prove the truth of this statement by compelling your thoughts to run in the same channel as mine—a thing that can be done under favourable conditions. You doubt my words? You think I am exaggerating? To convince you I shall furnish three witnesses.

"Here are two packs of cards. Now in order to get our two minds perfectly attuned, will you please go through exactly the same actions as I do.

"First we both mix the cards we hold by the same kind of shuffle. You prefer the riffle-shuffle? Very well. Now we exchange packs, so that I hold the pack you shuffled, and you hold the pack I shuffled. Again we shuffle—and exchange packs. Now we have both shuffled each pack. Next we fan our cards and remove one—any one—but first, please, look steadily into my eyes for a moment. Ready!

"Remember the card you have chosen, and place it face down on the table. Now square up your cards and put the chosen one on top of your pack; just as I do with the card I have chosen. Then we each cut our pack to bring the chosen card to the centre; and exchange packs again.

"Now will you please remove the card you thought of and place it face-down on the table as I do with the card I chose. You see what has happened so far? We have each gone through the same actions, which include remembering one card. You think you had a free choice? I am sorry to contradict you. You were compelled by the influence of my mind over yours to think of exactly the same card that I myself was thinking of and which I have placed on the table opposite yours.

"Please do not alter the card in your mind, because these two cards on the table are, so to speak, two subpoenaed witnesses to your choice. But three are more convincing than two; so I shall provide a third witness—in black and white this time. (*The conjurer writes something on a slip of paper which he folds and places between the two cards on the table*).

"For the first time, will you name the card you remembered? The Ten of Hearts; so that was your thought. Please turn over your card as the first witness. The Ten of Hearts.

"Here is my thought. (*Turning over his card*). You see, it is the Ten of Hearts, too. Finally we will call the third witness. Will you please read aloud what is written on the paper. (*The assistant reads: 'You are thinking of the Ten of Hearts,' or whatever card it is*). So you see our three witnesses prove the truth of my statement that a conjurer can sometimes control other people's thoughts."

WORKING DETAILS.

The method is quite simple. After the second shuffle the conjurer notes the bottom card of his pack as a "key" before handing it to the assistant, who thinks of a card, places it on top of the pack, and cuts it to the centre. This brings the key card above the chosen

one. The conjurer does not remember any card at this stage but only pretends to. The packs are again exchanged, enabling the conjurer to find the chosen one under the key and place it on the table. The assistant finds its duplicate in the pack he now holds and puts it on the table too. The conjurer has now only to write the name of the chosen card on a piece of paper and the trick is finished.

The fact that the trick is nearly over before the writing is done is by no means apparent to those watching the effect in progress. If preferred, the paper may be held by another *member* of the audience, who can be called on to read the memorandum as the third witness.

A superior method is to write on the paper *before* the cards are chosen and to place it, rolled into a pellet, on the table. You have fifty-two cigarette-papers with the names of cards written on them and rolled into pellets distributed in four pockets—one suit to each pocket. The pellets for each pocket should be slipped between the edges of two small wooden tablets held together by elastic bands. When the chosen card is known, you secretly find the pellet that tallies and finger-palm it. Then take up the pellet on the table with the opposite hand, palm it in seeming to put it in the other hand, and give the secured pellet to a spectator to hold. The palmed paper is disposed of in a pocket.

Alternative Method.—Let the pack from which the spectator chooses a card be one having marked backs that can be easily read—such as a De Lands Daisy Deck. When the two cards are on the table the conjurer observes which has been selected by reading the back. Each card is now pushed into the centre of its pack, the packs being then shuffled. Now the trick proceeds as before, the conjurer knowing which card to remove without the use of any key. This method is, of course, much harder to detect, though the advantage of unprepared cards is lost.

THOUGHTS ARE THINGS

First Version.

"Everybody knows that thoughts are thinks, but some people believe that thoughts are *things*: that if you think you are well, you *will* be well; if you think you are ill, you will be ill; if you think and believe you can do a thing it is already nearly as good as done.

"I should like to make a little test of the power of thought now, if some lady or gentleman will help in the experiment. Who will assist? The test will be quite painless, I promise. In fact when it is over, whoever has been helping will probably find their thoughts have far more power to work things than before. You are willing to try the power of your thoughts, madam? Many thanks. Kindly step this way and make yourself at home. (*Offering a chair*). Quite comfortable? Good!

"Now for the purpose of the test I should like you to select two cards from this pack. Any two cards will do; but I suggest you take one court card and one spot card so that they can be easily distinguished. You choose the King of Diamonds and the Nine of Clubs. (*Or whatever they are. The conjurer takes them and the pack back from the lady, placing the chosen cards on the table, face up*).

"The common spotty-faced card (*showing it*) I will place on this corner of the table with his face mercifully hidden. This royal personage needs a more dignified position. He can sit in the crystal-palace here for a while, counting the panes of glass. (*The court-card is shown and placed back-outwards in a tumbler; or in any other isolated position—such as on the mantelpiece, if performing in a room*).

"But perhaps you would prefer to take care of the man-in-the-street-card yourself. (*To the chooser*). If you will just hold out one hand perfectly flat I will place him there so that you can be quite sure he behaves himself. You never know what these low cards will be up to next. The court cards are too well brought up to stoop to anything underhand.

"Now for the test. Do you think your thoughts are firm enough at the moment to control things? You don't know! Come! That will never do. You should say: 'Certainly, they are strong enough for *anything*.' Your thoughts at present say the King is in his palace, while you have the common person in the palm of your hand, as it were. All you have to do is to alter your thoughts and think their positions are reversed; that you

are twisting the King round your little finger, and that spotty is putting a new pane in the palace window. Will you think that, please! Think it until you are convinced that the King really *is* on your hand and the other card is in the glass. Ready! Your will has registered the new positions on your mind? Then look at your card and show it to the audience. It is the King! The card-things have obeyed your thoughts and changed places: for here, in the Crystal Palace, is Spotted Dick. I think you will agree now, ladies and gentlemen, that mind can control matter, and that Thoughts *are* Things."

WORKING DETAILS.

The effect depends upon complete mastery of the top-change, which is used three times in succession, sufficient cover being provided in turning to place the cards in their positions.

The spot card is changed for an indifferent card as it is placed on the table. The King is changed for the spot card (now on top of the pack) in placing it in the tumbler. The indifferent card is changed for the King in moving it from the table to the chooser's hand. The rest is misdirection and *mise en scene*. Familiarity with the top-change is assumed. The sleight is explained in *Modern Magic*, Robert-Houdin's *Secrets*, and most other text-books.

Thoughts Are Things.—Second Version.

Have a card freely chosen and returned to the pack. Bring it to the top by the pass or false-shuffle; then have a second card taken. Ask the chooser to look at this second card to make sure it is not the same as the first, but not to remember it. Place it face-down on the table or in any conspicuous position, changing it for the first card chosen (which is now on top of the pack) in transit. Tell the chooser to think intently of the first card while gazing at the isolated one, saying that it will in fact *be* the chosen card if the chooser really thinks it is. Then turn over the card and show that "thoughts are things."

Thoughts Are Things.—Third Version.

After an effect with an ordinary pack, switch it for a forcing-pack consisting of, say, Tens of Clubs. Have a card chosen and replaced, and shuffle the pack.

Spread the forcing-pack face-down on the table of a tray, and ask for the name of the chosen card. Then request a second spectator to draw forward any one of the cards on the tray, thinking the while "I *will* pick the Ten of Clubs; the Ten of Clubs; the Ten of Clubs."

Gather up the pack minus the selected card saying, "So that is the card your thoughts have guided your hand to indicate as the Ten of Clubs?" At the same time switch the forcing-pack for another ordinary pack minus the Ten of Clubs by dropping it into the *profonde* and securing the fresh pack from the *pochette*. If this change has been used at the beginning of the effect, it must now be made on the other side of the body.

"Please look at the card you have chosen: it is indeed the one you were thinking of? (*Place the pack on the tray or table and take the card, showing it to the audience*). Some of you may think this is merely the result of coincidence; but, ladies and gentlemen, it is a proof that thoughts *are* things."

Second Method.—The same effect can be obtained with an ordinary pack as follows: Have a card freely selected and returned to the pack. Shuffle and bring it to the top. Make the pass, holding the position with the right thumb, and spread the cards on the table. Now make the spread fairly even but leave the chosen card (that was below the break held by the thumb) just sufficiently out of alignment to be more easily drawn than the others. The difference must not be conspicuous. The chances are now in favour of this card being picked out; in which case the trick is done so far as the conjurer is concerned. If some other card is chosen, gather up the rest, holding a break at the one to be forced, and bring it to the top. Then take up the drawn card and top-change it for the right one in handing it to the person who is doing the "thinking" to verify. Or the top card can be taken to turn over the drawn card, being substituted for it by the Mexican Turnover Sleight (see *The Expert at the Card Table*).

Third Method.—This method is probably the least trouble. Have a freely chosen card returned, bring it to the *bottom* of the pack. This can easily be done by holding a break where the card is returned—as for the pass—and then slipping the card to the bottom by dragging it out of the pack by pressure of the third and little fingers. False shuffle. Now pass the cards from hand to hand before a spectator as in forcing, asking him to touch the back of any card. Remove all the cards below the touched card except the bottom one—which is drawn to the right by the right finger-tips—and turn the cards in the right hand over to show the card that was previously at the bottom of the pack, and which now seems to be the one touched by the spectator. This is the Touch Force. The presentation is the same as in the first method.

MEDIÆVAL MULTIPLICATION

"Many years ago, when people were too uncivilised to know anything about patent medicines that cure anything from having a cold in the head to being old in the arteries, or of share-pushers with whom money invested invariably multiplies itself at an alarming rate, they believed in old gentlemen who claimed to have distilled the Elixir of Youth and invented a method of breeding gold like nature breeds rabbits.

"I have been fortunate enough to discover their formula for multiplying money in this way and intend not only to make the experiment before you but to let you participate in the harvest.

"First I shall require the help of a gentleman to represent the pigeon to be plucked; or, to put it more politely, the fortunate recipient of the wizard's philanthropy.

"Thank you, sir, for offering your assistance. May I compliment you on your good fortune, because, no doubt, provided all goes well, you will leave the stage a richer and wiser man. A wiser man anyway! Pray be seated and make yourself comfortable.

"Now one of the many strange characteristics of these old alchemists was that they could make *other* people's money increase though they never seemed to have any themselves. You will gather that I wish to borrow a coin! Will you trust me with half-a-crown? Or a smaller sum will do—say a shilling. But stay! I was forgetting this is only an experiment; so we had better not be too rash at first. What about a penny? Have you such a thing as a penny on you? If not we must make do with the ridiculously small sum of a half-penny. You will risk a penny? Good!

"The old manuscript instructs the experimenter to encase the coin in a ball of clay; but as I havn't any clay handy I will use tissue paper instead. First a piece of white to represent the innocent wizard. Then a piece of black to represent the black magic. And last a piece of green paper to represent the lender of the coin. Now for the spell. (*Touching the ball of paper with wand*).

"There! I think that should have been strong enough to work the propagation. Let us see. First we undo the green paper. Then the black. Now for the result! Hurray! The spell has worked. How much profit have you made, sir? You lent me a penny and now there are three pennies and two half-pennies. My expenses for the tissue paper amount to threepence, so that just leaves you a penny. Here you are, sir. Let me compliment you on your great success.

"Now try the experiment with silver. As this will be more risky I shall use a coin of my own. I shouldn't like *you* to be the loser, sir, after the great confidence you have already placed in me.

"How much shall I risk, now? (*Pulling out a handful of change*). This florin looks strong and healthy enough for the purpose. Here it goes then into the white paper. Next the black; and finally the green piece over all again.

"Now, sir, will you take charge of the deposit? I will place the parcel in the middle of this tray so that all may see it clearly. Just hold it on your knees, so, while I pronounce the spell again. (*Gravely touching the parcel with the wand*). Perhaps you will be good enough to see what luck we have had this time. Carefully, please. First the green paper. (*Taking it from him after he has undone it on the tray*). Secondly the black paper. (*Taking it*). Now please open the white paper on the tray so that all may see. Bravo! We have made our pile. You are the cashier; how much do you make it? Two florins, three shillings, three sixpences, and one threepenny-bit. Eight and ninepence. Is that correct? Six and ninepence interest on two shillings within five minutes. Not so bad for a beginner. No doubt we shall do better still after a little practise.

"Well, ladies and gentlemen, you have seen what can be done on this system, and I am now going to give somebody an opportunity to have a bank-note multiplied in a similar way. Who is going to be the lucky investor? I should prefer not to borrow again from this gentleman as I am not at all sure the penny he lent me was a good one. A pound note is just as easy to increase as a ten-shilling one, so it isn't worth bothering with the smaller amount. You are willing to have your money

multiplied, sir? Good! My commission is trifling. I should have preferred a golden guinea, but no doubt you will find the interest on a note just as useful.

"Please make a memorandum of the number to avoid any misunderstanding later. I hope the notes we breed from it won't all have the same number, as that would make things rather awkward, wouldn't it?"

"You don't mind me crumpling your note into a ball, do you, sir? You see it increases already! Round it goes the white paper. Then the black—perhaps you would like to officiate, Mr. Cashier? That's the way. Now for the green paper again. Your note is now ready for our secret process. What will the harvest be!"

"Please hold the ball quite steady.

"The mediaeval necromancer used to tell the lender that his money would take several weeks to multiply and that he must not examine it in the meantime. We will imagine the necessary time has flown. (*Touching the paper with wand*).

"Now, sir, kindly undo the papers again. You are getting excited, aren't you, sir! (*To the lender*). Have you decided yet what to do with your profits?"

"Now open the white paper very carefully. What do you find? Nothing! You don't say so! You're joking!"

"Alas for your pound note, sir. I am afraid it is as safe as if you had put it into a sweepstake. You see the cunning old alchemist had spirited it away to his own cashbox (*going over to a cashbox that had been isolated in full view throughout*) leaving the investor a sadder and wiser man.

(*To the gentleman assisting*). "Here is the key. Will you be good enough to open the box and see what is inside. Well! Bless me; what's this? A stocking? You had better see if there is anything in it. What do you find? A note rolled into a ball. Then it must be this gentleman's. (*Taking note*). Would you mind calling out the number, sir? But perhaps you will check the number yourself before returning the note? (*Handing it back to the helper*). It is the very same number? Then will you kindly return it to its owner with my compliments, sir; and may this be a lesson to you both on the terrible results of trying to get money for nothing."

WORKING DETAILS.

The black paper used for the first wrapping up is really two sheets stuck together in the centre with a spot of gum. In one of these pieces is rolled a ball of white paper containing the copper coins. The open sheet with

the ball behind is placed with the white and green papers on the table. With a little practise the prepared piece of paper can be handled quite naturally.

The borrowed coin is first wrapped in the duplicate paper, which is then rolled in the black sheet, the hidden ball of paper blending with the rest once it is crumpled up. The lot then go into the green paper. In unfolding the papers care must be taken to open the proper side of the black ball; and for this purpose a distinguishing mark should be made on the side to be opened. A small chalk mark is sufficient.

The silver coin goes into the white paper just opened, which is in turn crumpled in the black piece again. An unprepared piece of black paper with the silver coins inside has meanwhile been palmed from a pocket or table, and this is switched for the first ball in passing it from hand to hand. The unwanted ball is disposed of in a well or behind some article on the table in taking up the green sheet again. The helper may undo these papers as there is nothing to find out, the inference being that he could have opened them the first time.

In taking up the white paper to wrap up the note, a duplicate ball of white paper is palmed and duly substituted for that containing the note. As the assistant rolls the other two papers around, the conjurer stands watching with his hands behind his back. This gives sufficient cover for him to remove the white paper secretly from the note, which is then *re*-palmed. The paper is quietly crumpled up and disposed of at the first opportunity. As the white paper has been rolled up and undone several times there is no fear of it "talking" during the process.

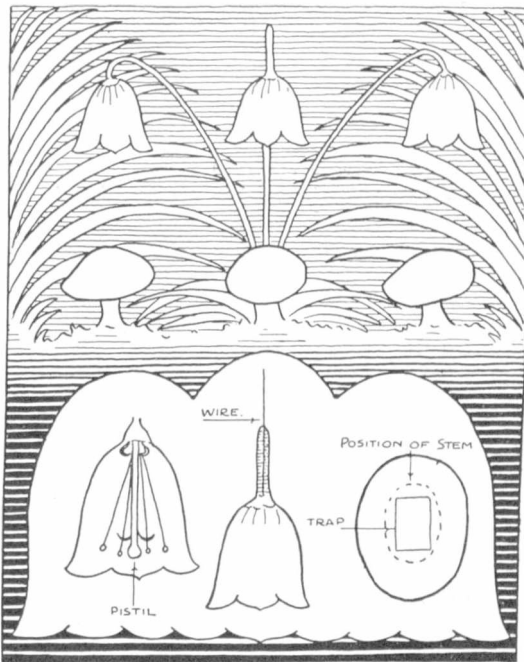
Inside the cashbox is a stocking containing a duplicate pound note rolled up in the toe. The conjurer takes this for a moment from the assistant after he has found it, as though about to return it to its owner; but bethinking himself of the number, hands it—or rather the original palmed note—back to the helper to identify. The momentary handling is quite natural and sufficient for the substitution. No difficulty will be found in pocketing the now palmed duplicate.

If preferred, the conjurer may open the stocking himself and remove the original note by palming it in and taking it out in one action. Or he could act as though about to take it out—which would provide sufficient cover to let it fall into the stocking from the palm as the hand opened the top—but change his mind and hand the stocking to the helper so that he could do so.

THE BLUEBELLS

A Fantastic Ballet.

The curtain rises on a bizarre pastoral setting. In the foreground are three giant bluebells, of the harebell type, growing in a cluster with their heads drooping over three monster mushrooms. Enter, to suitable musical accompaniment, a dancer dressed as a butterfly. She visits each bluebell in turn and examines them with some curiosity like a real butterfly does.



After dancing round in appropriate style the butterfly mounts one of the mushrooms and draws the bluebell over her by reaching up and pulling it down by holding the pistil. The bell hides her crouching on top of the mushroom.

Presently an elf prances in, and, after a short dance, cautiously approaches the lowered bluebell. But just as he is about to look under it, it swings up empty by the tension of the stem, owing to the butterfly having

mysteriously vanished. At the same moment, one of the other bells sinks until it touches its own mushroom, indicating the invisible arrival of some occupant. The elf stands back amazed as this bluebell flies up again and the butterfly-dancer gracefully alights from the mushroom to which she has been magically transported, and dances round without noticing him.

Now she visits the third flower and pulls it over her. Again the elf's curiosity overcomes him, and he thinks he has caught her, for a piece of her wing remains trapped under the edge of the petals. Carefully approaching, the elf claps his hand on the wing-tip and peeps into the flower. But too late. One of the other bluebells sinks at the same moment, and all he has caught is the little bit of wing that is seen to be missing when the butterfly emerges from her new flower.

For the third time the elusive butterfly visits a bluebell. To prevent her entering either of the others, the elf pulls them down to their mushrooms; then he stealthily creeps up to the one covering the butterfly and suddenly throws it off the mushroom. Oh! What a shock! There is a big frightening bee that evidently startles him, for he remains glued by astonishment to the position he is in. Then the other two bluebells spring up; and from each mushroom jumps a big bumble-bee, all of which buzzingly chase the elf round the stage and off to the accompaniment of Rimsky Korsakov's 'The Flight of the Bumble-Bee.' The butterfly has flown!

Curtain.

EXPLANATION.

The right-hand mushroom (see Plate) has a trap in the top giving access, via the stem, to a trap in the stage. The stem of this mushroom is oval with the narrow part to the front, and the trap is of such a size that the dancers—who should be young girls of slight build—can get through in a sideways position. From the front, the stem looks too narrow to act as a means of communication, which idea is supported by painting the edges and back a dark brown-green to match the background. This decoration throws the kid colour of the mushroom into relief; and, provided the *chiaroscuro* is not so overdone that the optical illusion is obvious, gives the mushroom an innocent appearance.

The other two mushrooms are unprepared except for a small box cavity in the top of each covered by hinged lids. They match the passage one sufficiently to prevent comparisons being made, and their stems may be a *trifle* more slender to assist the illusion.

The flower's stems are made of coiled springs secured to floor-plates screwed to the stage. The springs are covered with green cloth and are arranged to keep the bluebells normally resting on the mushroom-tops. To the point on each where the stem joins the flower, an invisible wire is fastened; and these wires lead over pulleys in the flies to a machinist back-stage.

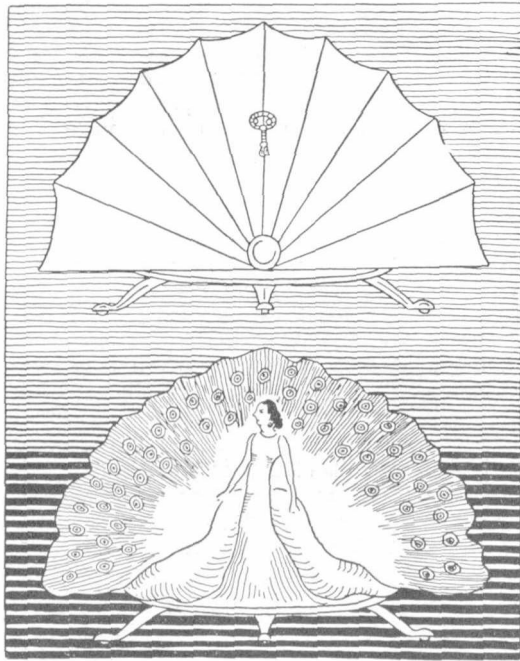
When the curtain rises, all the flowers are raised clear of the mushrooms by the wires. Inside the left-hand side one is a butterfly-dancer hanging from a loop in the top with her feet on two hooks at the end of the pistil which hangs among several stamens that are duplicated in each flower. These latter can be simply hanging cords with balls of orange wool on the ends to represent pollen. The hooks are natural on the pistil of a harebell.

The duplicate butterfly enters and examines the flowers in a way to convey an impression that all are empty. She then mounts the right-hand mushroom and pulls the flower over her, the machinist loosening the wire simultaneously. The dancer opens the trap immediately she is hidden and slips beneath the stage, shutting the trap after her. Meanwhile the elf has entered. As he is about to look under the lowered flower it is jerked up by the invisible wire, and the loaded flower lowered. Then this flower is raised to reveal butterfly number two. The elf turns the now empty flower towards the audience in examining it so that there can be no doubt about its emptiness, as this helps in misdirecting attention from the fact that the other was not actually shown inside.

The butterfly enters the middle flower next, taking care to trap a removable bit of one wing so that it remains on view as a silent proof of her position. She vanishes by hanging inside the flower, which is drawn up by the wire at the appropriate moment. The flower is lowered over the communication mushroom and the first dancer enters again via the trap, having removed a piece of one wing to tally with the bit captured by the elf.

Now she goes to the left-hand side mushroom again; and all the flowers are lowered as mentioned in the action. The dancers under two of the flowers rapidly alter their costumes to represent bees by stripping off quick-change outer dresses and hiding these in the mushroom-tops, from whence head-dresses of stockinette with eye-stalks fixed on to represent bees are removed. The third bee-dancer enters her flower through the trap.

The variety of principles used help to confuse any onlooker trying to solve the mystery. But the success of such a scena depends almost as much on the *maitre de ballet* as the magician.



FANTAIL

OR

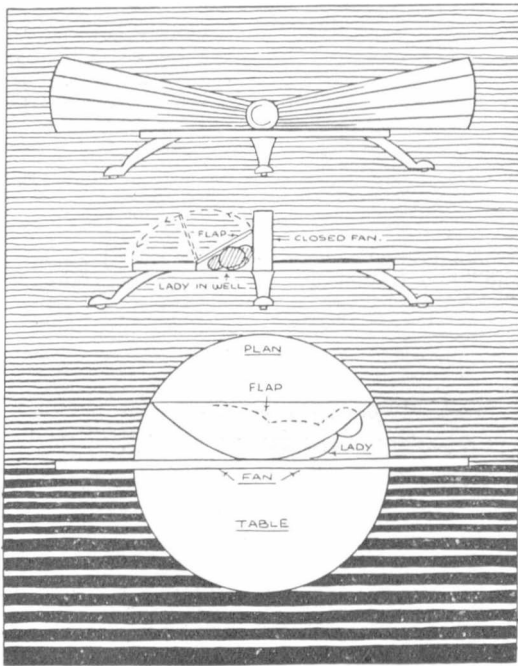
A BIRD OF PARADISE.

In the centre of the stage is seen a circular-topped stand raised about eighteen inches from the floor on legs with castors. The top of the stand is some five and a half feet in diameter. Across the centre is fixed an open fan of unusual dimensions; for it reaches seven feet above the top of the stand when open. It is quite plainly decorated in light pastel shades in order to show up against the plain dark background.

Two juvenile assistants, made up as Hindu serving boys, enter and demonstrate the innocence of the fan by opening it in the centre and each closing one side down to the level of the pedestal top. It is then opened again.

As coloured lights play on the fan the sounds of humming and other tropical birds is heard. The boys quickly swing the fan and stand round to disclose the appearance of a lady in a clinging robe of peacock blue, the train of which merges into the fan behind her, which is gorgeously decorated on this side so that the whole gives an impression of a peacock.

While the servants make low obeisance on each side, the human Bird of Paradise proudly views the audience from side to side in a stately, disdainful way, giving the spectators a few moments in which to admire her vain glory.



METHOD.

The lady lays on her back in a shallow well in the table immediately behind the fan. This well is about eighteen inches wide. A flap hinged to the outer edge and shaped to correspond with the contour of the table when thrown back covers the lady without coming flush with the table-top. The fan when closed supplies considerable screening surface and this enables the table-

top to be very little thicker than if it was unprepared. The combined spaces of the well and the partly closed flap provide ample room for a slim assistant. Though the extra height of the closed fan towards the ends conceals the exposed parts of the lady, loose additional flaps may be fixed if found necessary when performing in halls where the balcony angles of vision are tiresome.

The outside of the flap when closed over the figure is decorated like the rest of the table-top, and gold on the reverse side. The inside of the well is lined with peacock-blue velvet which merges into the fan rising above it.

The lady's dress clings to her body as far as the thighs, and then spreads out in graceful lines into a train of material long enough to reach well into the trough when she is standing near the front of the open flap.

The two sections of the fan are held together by a loop of golden cord that engages knobs on the two end pieces at a suitable height for the boys to reach. As soon as the boys have closed the fan, the lady throws back the flap and takes up her position near the edge of the table, quickly arranging the train of her skirt so that it blends into the colour behind her. By this time the boys have jumped off the table and the lights are focussed ready for the spectacular climax.

To get the real peacock effect of abnormally long upper-tail covert feathers an additional mechanical arrangement would be required.

Ornamental feathers attached by spring-hinges to the end of each rib of the fan so that they could be closed and hidden would be held in position by triggers. To each trigger would be attached a trick-line leading to the hinge of the fan where the lines would join a release rod running in staples under the table to the front edge. By kicking a projecting knob fixed to the rod as the table was being swung round, the lady would actuate the triggers, causing the feathers to fly into position.

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