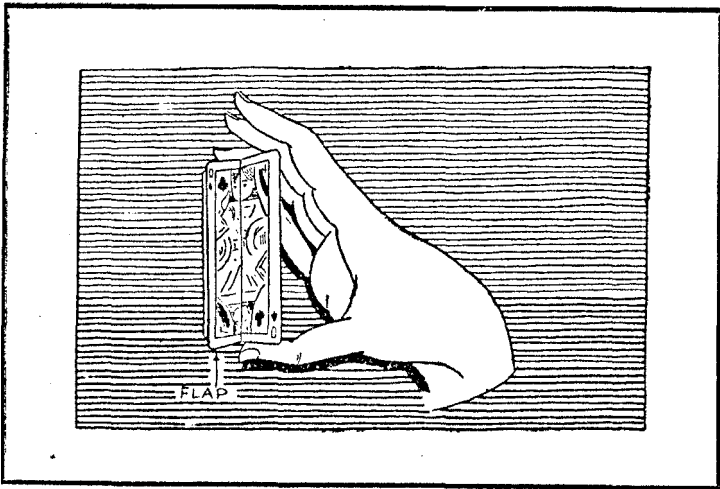


Price



GOOD CONJURING

IN PRACTICE & THEORY

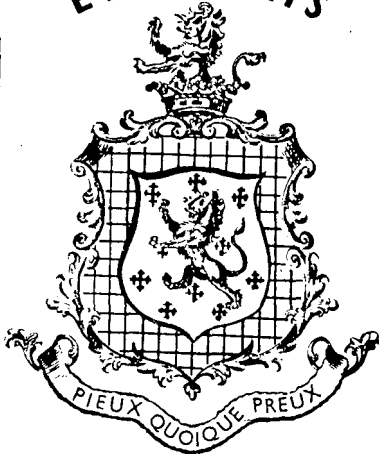
By
S. H. SHARPE

LONDON:
GEORGE JOHNSON, 24 BUCKINGHAM STREET, STRAND, W.C.2.



1 9 3 6

EX LIBRIS



WILL ALMA
M.I.M.C. (LONDON)

*Made and Printed in England by
SAINT NICHOLAS PRESS LTD., 31a St. Nicholas Street, Scarborough*

PART ONE

GOOD CONJURING

IT is surprising how many elements go to make up a complete conjuring performance. More surprising still to find a conjurer who realises the scope of his art and the complexity of the science that serves it and enables him to produce his effects. Yet it is only by studying our subject in all its aspects and applying our findings in practise that we can achieve really satisfactory results—the results arising from good conjuring. This is simple common sense, not fireside theorising. How often does a conjurer stop to think what reaction the articles he uses in his performance will cause in the minds of his spectators, for instance?

THE OBJECTS USED.

A conjurer should take into consideration the kind of apparatus to be visibly introduced into each effect—whether such could be simplified or discarded, or made more *appropriate* to the style of presentation. Apparatus admissible in an Oriental or Cabalistic setting would be out of place in modern drawing-room conjuring. Cabinets and mechanism in general often indicate inferior conjuring; and objects of a size to suit a theatre stage are out of proportion at close quarters, and *vice-versa*. Lucky the beginner who cannot afford to buy sufficient paraphernalia to gladden the dealer's heart. He at least starts with a fair chance of becoming a good conjurer.

Sufficient attention is rarely given to the choice of articles used in an effect, with the result that harmony is lacking and maximum results are not obtained. If, for instance, an effect is of a bizarre character, everything used should be in keeping with the fantastic atmosphere it is intended to create. An impersonation of a Japanese conjurer should not include objects only to be found in China or India, let alone the East End of London! Sometimes a conjurer will attempt an impression of a performer of several decades ago yet include tricks of recent invention in his programme. Such details may pass the average spectator's notice but cannot fail to make a critical on-looker impatient with the performer's lack of artistry.

Where a vague or abstract impression is aimed at, the use of objects with commonplace associations will break the spell in a similar way. For example, Will o'

the Wisp conjurations with billiard balls or golf balls will bring to mind these pastimes. But if the balls are simply "balls" of no recognisable character—crystal balls perhaps—the imaginative nature of their antics will be supported and the desired impression induced in the onlooker's mind; particularly if the sequence is given an imaginative title, such as "Magic of the Spheres." Luckily, the fact that magical effects themselves are abstract in character makes most conjuring interesting to people with widely different outlooks quite apart from the objects used in the effects. But if "The Floating Ball" is performed with a football, for instance, it is obvious that the feat will become more circumscribed in its appeal and be less mysterious than when a golden or silver globe is used, because a football is an everyday object; but the ball of an unfamiliar nature leaves room for the play of everybody's imagination no matter what their age or particular interest. On the other hand, the version with the football would concentrate the attention of one particular type of spectator.

Again, for a comedy conjurer to use flowers or anything dainty is as inappropriate as trying to be profound over some vapid trick.

The use of commonplace rather than abstract or universal objects of necessity narrows the appeal of an effect and makes it more local. "The Chinese Rings" are no particular kind of rings; neither have the "Cups and Balls" any commonplace associations: consequently these feats interest people just as much in Timbuctoo Tooting or Tahiti. Great art of every kind is based on universal or abstract ideas and uses objects of general interest because only in this way can it avoid being circumscribed in its appeal.

MISDIRECTION.

This important subject is of the utmost importance in my opinion. A performer who selects effects calling for little ability in misdirection admits himself to be in the novice class of conjurers.

Magic pretends to one cause for its effects while relying on another: and it is in disguising the real method and making the fictitious cause seem feasible that misdirection is brought into play. Conjuring is only bewildering when it seems unnatural; but without carefully planned misdirection tricks cannot mystify though they may surprise. Magic, like nature, must conceal the means by which its effects are produced if it is to be really enchanting. We cannot cease wondering how nature

works her miracles owing to the cause of the commonest phenomenon being concealed from us. We know that if you do this, that will happen; and if you do that, the other will result; but we do not know *how* the effects are produced. We do not even know how a seed turns into a plant, which in turn produces other seeds. And when we think we have discovered "how it is done" we suddenly realise that we have been misdirected. The magician misdirects his audience in the same way. In fact conjuring chiefly consists in making people "look the other way."

The invention of suitable misdirection is really part of the originator's task, though he frequently leaves its arrangement to the practical conjurer. But as misdirection is an essential part of every finished effect, the originator has only partly completed his work if he leaves others to design it. A trick and its misdirection are equally important parts of any effect; and one must be timed to suit the other, without which it is useless. Furthermore, the misdirection, like every other detail, must be *appropriate* to the audience. Procedure that misdirects adults may not always succeed with children.

CONSTRUCTION.

Construction covers skill in Combination (or Sequencing) and Finish. The construction of the effects themselves rests with the originator or magic-maker; but programme construction is the conjurer's own task unless he employs a producer. The exponent of conjuring is servant to the magic-maker in this respect, but there is nothing to prevent him being his own master. Now though an originator may invent good magical plots, good dramatic plots, good misdirection, and good methods, success will only result if he has the ability to add these elements up into one unified total in which all the parts fuse, each doing its appointed task—no more and no less—without obtruding itself. It is as though you had a complete set of parts for a wireless set and had the task of making them into a complete receiver. The parts are so many things: the receiver one thing compounded of them. There is only one sensible test of any part of a thing: Does it serve its purpose satisfactorily? If a part may be discarded without making the work less complete, or altered to the work's advantage, it is a blemish even though it be perfect when judged by itself. Though a sleight, for instance, is suitable in one effect, it may prove quite unsatisfactory in another through failing to harmonise with the necessary actions or routine.

CHARACTERISATION.

Taking advantage of an object's natural characteristics when designing an effect also calls for thought and skill. Conjurers often try to adapt a fresh object to an old effect without realising the importance of Characterisation.

From the technical point of view it should be obvious that articles require different sleights and different methods of faking, owing to their varying sizes and shapes. You cannot palm a card as you would a ball, or switch a coin by the same sleight that is satisfactory with handkerchiefs.

But the characteristics of objects influence effects as well as methods: and a first-class effect with any object should, I suggest, be characteristic of that particular object. "The Linking Rings" can only be performed with rings and affords a good example of what I mean. "The Multiplying Thimbles" is characteristic of thimbles because they are produced on the finger-tips—their natural position. To produce thimbles *between* the fingers, like balls, shows a disregard for characterisation. Knots are characteristic of rope; smoke of cigarettes; colours dividing and combining in designs, of handkerchiefs and liquids; writing, of slates and paper; growth, of flowers; ticking and hand-movement, of clocks and watches; wetness, of liquids; heat, of fire; fragility, of eggs, tumblers and so on; chinking, of coins; tearing, of paper; and similarly with other objects. Cards, owing to their number and variety, lend themselves to more characteristic effects than almost anything else.

When using eggs for an experiment their fragile nature seems to the spectator to add to the difficulty of manipulation; and this characteristic should be emphasised. When a conjurer gets hold of an ivory egg he generally forgets that it is thought, by the audience, to be a real egg which is liable to crack unless carefully handled. I cannot agree with Devant when he advises doing "The Egg Bag" with an admittedly hard-boiled egg, and "Kling Klang" (in which an egg and handkerchief change places) with a ping-pong ball instead of an egg. And if it is suggested that the advice was intended for beginners, to make the handling easier for them, I should be inclined to reply that the beginner may as well begin the right way as the wrong way.

When it is wished to produce a familiar effect with a fresh object or on a different scale, it is not sufficient merely to make an exact copy of the original. For

instance, "The Floating Ball" is a far better small version of levitation than to levitate a doll in imitation of the lady in the illusion. In the same way, the various cut and restored ropes, handkerchiefs, cards and so on, are superior small examples of this type of effect than trying to do "Sawing Through a Woman" with a doll, because the latter is not convincing. Devant's "The Homing Bells" is a characteristic bell effect because the sound made by the bells is used as an essential part of the presentation. "The Miser's Dream" is good coin conjuring, partly because the noise of the coins arriving in the hat is used to emphasise what is happening. "The Bowl of Water Production" and "The Rice Bowls" owe much of their popularity to the apparent impossibility of manipulating bowls overflowing with liquid; that is to say they are characteristic liquid effects.

There are other matters of characterization easy to overlook despite their importance in any work of art. When, for instance, Chung Ling Soo occupied the stage, he was not Mr. W. E. Robinson *dressed up*, but Chung Ling Soo, The Great Chinese Magician. A change of costume does not produce a change of character: and, unless the dress-suit conjurer is able to metamorphose himself to match the atmosphere he wishes to create, all the magical technique in the world will be of no avail in impressing the audience with his prowess. It should not be thought that characterization implies speaking the character's language where this is either foreign or dead. A Chinese conjurer is not bound to speak in either Oriental language or pidgin English or else keep dumb: otherwise, on this reasoning, "The Mikado" would needs be spoken in Japanese, and "Julius Cæsar" in Latin. To create the correct impression it is only necessary to simulate the *style* of the character being impersonated. The difference in tongue is then overlooked. It is not sufficient for a costume conjurer to don an elaborate dress and then "do his stuff": he must be an actor. A technical slip is of less consequence than lack of expression or faulty portrayal of character.

Other details bearing on artistic construction have been discussed in *Neo Magic*.

The five elements so far dealt with mainly concern the designer or originator; the three enquired into hereafter are the exponent's care.

TECHNICAL MASTERY.

If the conjurer's skill is in any way apparent to a spectator, his presentation is faulty. No manipulation or the like is perfected until it reaches the stage of second

nature; and even then there is all the difference between being able to perform a sleight by itself and using it unobserved to produce some effect *during the course of an actual presentation*. There should be no more need for a conjurer to look at his hands during a sleight than when he raises a glass of—whatever he drinks from glasses—to his mouth. When a performer finds it necessary to attend consciously to the execution of his tricks they have not been sufficiently practised to warrant public use, because he will be unable to give sufficient thought to the dramatic side of his performance if matters of technique are on his mind. He will, in fact, be called upon to do two things at once and probably manage neither in a finished manner. The performer who shirks effects requiring considerable technical skill in order to avoid practice or through fear of mishaps ought to be ashamed of himself. When we visit a conjurer, or a singer, or an actor, we want to see what *he*, the man, can do, not what his apparatus of the assistants are capable of. A magician is one who conjures, not the minder of penny-in-the-slot machines. I must say that I never form a very high opinion of a conjurer unless he does something I cannot do myself, or in a way I cannot fathom. I, for one, want to see a conjurer vanish coins by his own magic; I do not want to watch him turning black-backed coins over on a black-faced board in a bare-faced manner. It is this personal factor—or characterization—which lifts a performance from the level of a mere “show.”

Yet one can be a good artist without faultless technique provided the desired effect is produced, for the simple reason that the impression created and the feelings evoked are always of paramount importance. I will quote two musical criticisms in support of this assertion :

“Complete accuracy is desirable, but it is not the highest quality in pianoforte playing. The fact that Rubenstein notoriously hit handfuls of wrong notes on occasions does not prevent him being one of the two greatest pianoforte players of the nineteenth century.”

“When I left out something in a passage, a note or a skip, which in many cases he (*Beethoven*) wished to have specially emphasised, or struck a wrong key, he seldom said anything; yet when I was at fault with regard to the expression, the *crescendi*, or matters of that kind, or in the character of the piece, he would grow angry. Mistakes of the other kind, he said, were due to chance; but these last resulted

from want of knowledge, feeling, or attention. He himself often made mistakes of the first kind, even when he played in public."

The chief effort must go to the emotional and intellectual side of the work. Technique is cold mechanism. But there is a flowing out of vitality in a good artist which magnetises the audience.

DRAMATIC ABILITY.

Good conjuring demands considerable ability in the actor's art, and few of the effects described hereafter would be worth attention without such ability. For instance, though in "Poor Yorick" (see page 27) the feat, apart from the climax, is simply a repetition of jaw-clicking by a skull, the conjurer must express such varied emotions as Soliloquy, Surprise, Fear, Irony, Contemplation, Pity, Wonder, Amusement, Irritation, Disgust, Curiosity, and Sorrow: and express them so convincingly that the spectators will themselves feel these emotions in sympathy with him. An effect calling for so wide a range of feeling in addition to technical skill puts a sufficiently heavy strain on the performer to be a good test of his merits as a conjurer.

MANNER.

The *manner* of presentation depends largely upon the performer's individual personality. He may be judged by his self-confidence, power of working up a sympathetic understanding in the audience, handling of assistants, and so on; but to *teach* a man "manner" would be to teach him to be himself. Two things one can safely advise. First, that his manner be that of a gentleman. Second, that care be paid to finished presentation. It is by attention to details that Fine Art is produced. Rough or clumsy work clashes with that term's etymology, which implies graceful, delicate, and painstaking *finish*. Rhythmic, illusive legerdemain—or nimble conveyance, to use the delightful Elizabethan term—is to cold manipulation as dancing to walking, song to speech, or poetry to prose. One is commonplace, the other is shaped with an eye to beauty. One enchants, the other is merely useful. A graceful manner—which is a vastly different thing from an effeminate manner—makes conjuring pleasant to behold. We are told that even Youth and Mercury (the God of Eloquence and the Arts) were powerless without the Graces. How much more so then must we expect a conjurer to be!

SPEED OF PRESENTATION.

As for the speed of presentation, the chief thing to watch is that it is appropriate to the manner and effect under consideration. Some tricks demand fairly quick working and drag if any attempt is made to spin them out. Others—particularly more elaborate ones—can only be appreciated to the full when every point of importance is emphasised and time is given for the details to sink into the spectator's minds. But as a general rule, it is far better to err on the side of rapid presentation than to be painfully slow—a point which amateurs might well realise.

It might be helpful if designers of new effects and *mise en scenes* would suggest the speed of presentation in their descriptions.

STYLE.

Manner and Style are frequently confused. I use the term Style here to indicate the *class* or school of presentation to which the performer belongs; Manner, to characteristics depending upon the individual artist.

Profound, Decorative (Cabalistic, Oriental, etc.), Dramatic, Fantastic, Sensational, Conversational, Comical, Trivial. Whether these varied styles can be justly compared seems doubtful because, other things being equal, the Profound must always be given precedence. Most effects are capable of presentation in any style by adapting the patter and *mise en scene*: and the more serious the idea behind the plot the greater its worth, since the aim of a magician is to evoke *wonder*—that is the characteristic which distinguishes him from other artists—and the more trivial his style the less will wonder be evoked. Buffoonery and magical skill are conflicting characteristics. Fun may be caused by an apprentice or an onlooker mixing the spells, or by the conjurer himself in the guise of a Mephisto or a Puck playing some diabolically mischievous prank—as in turning a man into an ass, or putting him into any other uncomfortable situation. But to cause the greatest bewilderment the magician must be serious and of high character; because once he begins stunting in any way he surrenders the true magical atmosphere. Fantastic humour is legitimate in magic; but a comedy conjurer is a caricature of a conjurer. Broad comedy is necessarily the result of some kind of horseplay such as one cannot imagine a real magician indulging in.

Here is a true little story :

Two people were discussing a concert they had just been to. "How did you like the conjurer?" asked one. "Conjurer?" said the other. "Oh, you mean So-and-

So. Well, of course, he isn't really a conjurer, is he? He just does a few tricks to hang his patter on."

As a matter of fact the performer in question was quite a good conjurer but he wanted to be a comedian at the same time.

Still, the very nature of magic makes it incongruous and therefore laughable at times without the aid of jokes. If you see a pointer moving round a dial of its own accord to indicate chosen numbers, you first feel puzzled and then you want to smile. It is so silly because it is impossible. Yet though it is impossible for the inanimate pointer to act so, it *does* act so: and you laugh because you know it can't. It is only when the atmosphere is so strained that the audience is held in *unrelieved* suspense and never relaxes sufficiently to reach the incredulous state that conjuring fails to create amusement in addition to wonder.

No one is awed by a person of similar or inferior mentality to themselves. If a conjurer's manner is prosy and fatuous the result will only excite momentary interest however much cleverness is displayed; whereas stately mystery impresses itself deeply on the tablets of human memory. Further, the profound style is by far the most difficult to master, making its attainment all the more glorious. Who can admire the man who always chooses the easiest path? He may, if he be lucky, gain fame with the general public, but it will only be ephemeral. It cannot last because it is on a jerry-built foundation.

In the old world magic was a serious affair influencing every member of the community; magicians, poets and prophets being considered the links between men and gods. As science advanced the wonder-workers gradually died out, having served their purpose in the evolution of humanity. Magic lost its power and awe but remained as an entertainment practised for its own sake. Why it should be reduced from a serious and profound art to the puerily plaything so often seen nowadays is difficult to understand—unless it be a case of one extreme being followed by the other. But frivolous amusement soon gets tiresome and we long for deeper experiences: to hear something that evokes thought, or to see

". gorgeous Tragedy
In sceptred pall come sweeping by."

Of course we don't all think alike. Some shun amusement of a solemn character, thinking that to be serious and gloomy are the same thing, though that is all nonsense.

It is only the serious things that produce real lasting joy. Broadly speaking, Tragedy, in its true meaning, includes everything nobler and more stately than average life: Comedy everything meaner or more grotesque.

Seventy odd years ago, jolly old Septimus Piesse was bemoaning the fact that "The modern conjurer has degenerated into a serious black-tailed coat and white necktie gentleman. As to making you laugh with a good Ha! ha! Hi! hi! Ho!—oh, dear! that is quite out of the question. As Sam Slick says, 'Taint conjuring now: 'tis illusion, an' no laughing allowed!' When I was a boy and went to see the conjurer, I didn't get over it for a week; my sides used fairly to ache with laughing, and the tears gushed out of my eyes till I couldn't see."

One can imagine Robert-Houdin saying (with Molière), "*Nous avons changé tout cela,*" while still agreeing that "all styles are good except that which is wearisome."

If we are agreed that good conjuring is conjuring which mainly depends upon the performer's own ability rather than on apparatus or assistants, and which mystifies the audience for whom it is intended (*i.e.*, that it is appropriate), evidently the best conjuring is that which appeals to and mystifies the best type of audience: and that, snobbish though it may seem, means the audience capable of responding to noble ideas. A gathering of cultured (not necessarily wealthy—let alone suburban) people well versed in matters magical, tolerably critical and unwilling to praise botchwork, is the best judge of any art. "But," you may say, "that means conjuring for conjurers, against which we have so often been warned." Of course I do. The best conjuring is conjuring for conjurers; the best music, music for musicians; and the best plays, plays for critical playgoers. Is Beethoven's Ninth Symphony interesting to a non-musical layman? Or Shakespeare or Shaw to the casual theatre-goer out on the spree? No more is the best conjuring attractive to a popular audience; *not* because it is obscure—it must never intentionally be that—but because the *full* appreciation of any art calls for a love of that art. Only the musician can appreciate good music to the full, and only a conjurer can understand finished conjuring. Spectacular and sensational magic, like jazz or revue, is easy to follow because there is nothing beneath the superficial effect to call for serious mental application; and "the tired business man" may let his troubled mind relax while enjoying the pre-digested fare put before him. Good work demands an attentive and critical audience. The conjuring for conjurers which is not good conjuring is the

kind designed simply to trip up the wight who thinks he knows all. Thus magic degenerates into the kind of thing one expects to find on the joke counter of a toy-shop. *As a catch* it is often amusing. Most of us have spent many happy hours showing each other stunts of this kind and look forward to many more similarly occupied; but I doubt if tricks of this kind could be called *good conjuring* on that account.

MAGIC-ARTIST VERSUS SHOWMAN.

A discussion on Good Conjuring would be incomplete without some reference to showmanship.

To me, showmanship, journalism, salesmanship, and sophistry are all of a kind. They may be classed as arts that gain their ends by pleasing the public—"the public" always being those members of the community whose knowledge of a subject is nothing worth mentioning. The arts of persuasion depend, not upon skill or sound knowledge of *the matter dealt with*, so much as in playing to the desires and weaknesses of human nature in order to gain peoples' confidence and sympathy. The shrewd old diplomat, Lord Chesterfield, wrote in one of his letters: "the business of oratory is to persuade people; and you easily feel that to please people is a great step towards persuading them," which dictum is as much the basis of showmanship as political speech-making. The man who understands human nature sufficiently to know how to please different classes of people by pandering to their individual weaknesses in a plausible manner is more likely to gain the support of the masses than one who has real ability but refuses to lard his opinions with false sentiment or suppress them in favour of others which he thinks will gratify public taste; for persuasion is subtle force.

The popular journalist knows practically nothing of many subjects on which he writes, but he disguises the fact from those who are equally ignorant under an interesting style of writing. Advertisers, salesmen, and politicians puff and discourse on any and every matter with the least possible backing of facts, if they think it to their advantage. They have learnt how to gain attention and support by either appealing to people's frailty or frightening them over the alleged terrible consequences of not following their advice. It is just the same with the showman. So far as conjuring is concerned, he may know next to nothing about magic and be feeble so far as technical skill is concerned, yet be able to persuade "the public"—which, I repeat, are those persons whose knowledge of magic is negligible—to credit him with the title "Great" by his impudence and self-confident bluff.

Showmanship, then, seems to be a kind of veneer generally used to give *the appearance* of excellence to shoddy work, and to lead the uncritical into thinking it good work—an alluring jacket on the book of entertainment. That the generality of people do not mind being taken in by this kind of artifice makes it no more praiseworthy. The finished artist, content to be judged by capable critics, but unheedful of what the masses think, has no need for showmanship, knowing that it cannot make good work better and only makes poor work *seem* better. He does not try to persuade people into applauding his work at any cost or if they do not understand it, but is satisfied with genuine approval should it come his way. The *artiste* is guided by public opinion; the Artist by his own ideals.

Nevil Maskelyne was quite wrong when he condemned the use of the term *artiste* on the grounds that it was simply a pretentious form of "artist." Usage has made the two words distinct. "An *artiste*" is synonymous for an *entertainer* or performer: that is one who plays to public taste; which the Artist ignores, being guided in doing this or that by his own ideas of perfection. It is because he is always trying to please the public that the professional entertainer is so seldom an Artist. Having his living to get he can't afford to be.

The *artiste* is generally a showman: the true artist is never a showman. In proportion as he introduces showmanship does he become the lesser artist because by so doing he surrenders his sincerity to general opinion. He no longer says what he thinks but what he hopes people would like him to think. Still, his work may be produced by a showman provided it is not tampered with in the process of being made attractive to the general public. But a suggestion of showmanship is always liable to arouse suspicion about the real merit of a work among the sophisticated; just as is a gushing advertisement, an over-complaisant salesman, or elaborate printing to puff some doubtful shares in the money-market.

The showman aims at producing *the appearance* of ability; he tries to impress people that he is clever when he isn't. The artist tries to impress people that he is not clever, though he is, by masking skill under an effortless style of presentation. The *artiste* relies on the ignorance of his audience; the artist on their intelligence.

Good art seems artless because it is so carefully planned that the skill used in producing the result passes unnoticed and the finished effect appears to be spontaneous.

The showman is shallow; the artist is deep. The artist soars high; the showman is mercenary. The artist is the servant of one unswerving single-purposed mind—his own. The showman is the slave of a million-headed monster with as many fickle minds all clamouring together. The artist's metal will stand the acid test; the showman's is mere pinchbeck.

Legitimate showmanship is that which begins where art ends. It may be said that *Art* is a means of conveying an artist's feelings and imaginings to others; *Technique* the craftsman's skill used in producing the work; and *Showmanship* a way of making the result attractive—a lure that must neither interfere with the work nor give a false impression of its quality. There is no reason why a showman should not entice unsuspecting human flies into his parlour providing he has something sound to offer them when they get there.

The *artiste* flirts with applause; the artist courts beauty. You can never be a fine artist by trying to please anyone but yourself; that is against the whole nature of art. An artist is essentially one who expresses *himself* regardless of how people judge the result. He decides to serve Art and risk being misunderstood rather than to serve The Public in an attempt to gain their plaudits.

It is probably safe to say that all showmanship is based on Human Interest. If, for example, a conjurer employs a person who is "in the news" to take part in an illusion he may expect to attract good audiences; but this doesn't make his conjuring any better: it may make it worse by diverting notice to some extent from the magical effect. The introduction of local or topical interest in any way is a type of showmanship which can often be used helpfully; but it has no real influence on the *quality* of an effect itself though it assists in keeping a show alive and fresh.

Another type of showmanship is to seek applause through other channels than personal ability. It is usually managed by satisfying a "want" or stimulating an emotion. Producing various flags, the largest of which represents the country in which the conjurer is performing, is an instance of Patriotic Stimulus. Conjuring-up eatables or drinkables and passing them round, knowing that many people feel well disposed to anyone who pleases their bellies, even if his conjuring is slipshod, is another familiar way of cadging—or rather *buying* popularity. It may be termed Appetite Satisfaction. There is no reason why a conjurer should not do these things provided he

does not substitute them for skill, as performers like Anderson have done. The only thing for which a conjurer should expect applause is his magic.

Art is manner not matter. A thing is done artistically if it is done with the idea of making it perfect: not only functionally perfect but æsthetically or imaginatively perfect.

The artist's work is sound through and through not merely where it is noticed. An artist, being essentially a lover of beauty, cannot bear to scamp the unseen part of his work, though he may get no credit for troubling to perfect it. His conscience pricks him if any part is less perfect than he could have made it. His satisfaction comes of working to an ideal. To make a thing in a way that appears to him less perfect than it might have been, simply because a greater number of people are likely to praise it that way, seems an underhand proceeding. He feels in his own way as that great sculptor and fresco-painter, Michael Angelo, felt when he said: "Nothing makes the soul so pure, so religious, as the endeavour to create something perfect; for God is Perfection, and whoever strives for perfection, strives for something that is God-like." A conjurer's business is not to deceive but to evoke wonder by artistically-perfect magical effects.

Showmanship and stage-craft are closely allied. I think the difference between them is that stage-craft deals with elements *essential* to the performance of an effect in such a way that the utmost is made of it, including the handling of suspense, surprise, climax, timing, contrast, entrances, exits, and a hundred other details of presentation; while showmanship is something substituted or super-imposed solely for the purpose of pleasing those who do not understand good craftsmanship. The introduction of irrelevant jokes or patter; of unnecessary spectacle; of show-ladies and happy endings where they have no place; of unnecessarily sensational climaxes; and everything over-done to catch applause, is showmanship.

In brief, the showman-artist is a quack.

SUMMARY.

Good Conjuring is *Attractive, Clear, and Magical.*

Unless it is Attractive people will not bother to watch the Conjurer.

Unless the intended effect is Clear to everybody they will be unable to follow what is going on, and thus lose interest.

If the performance is Attractive and Clear but not Magical, it cannot properly be called Conjuring.

PART TWO

POEMS IN ILLUSION

CATCHING THE POST

AN envelope is shown empty and held before a light to prove that nothing is concealed. If working close up it may be examined and initialed by a spectator. It is then sealed and placed in the clip of a display stand, or leant against some article in full view.

Patter: "Have any of you ever posted a letter and then found that you have left something out—such as a photograph or a cheque. You can't get the letter back and wonder what you had better do. I will show you how a magician saves himself the ruinous expense of using another stamp to send the overlooked snapshot separately. But first, will someone name a court card that we will use to represent the cheque or snapshot that has been left out. The Queen of Diamonds. Very well, we will take the Queen of Diamonds from the pack. Here she is. All the magician has to do is to toss the snapshot in the direction of the letter-box in which the letter has been posted, and at the same time exclaim *Post Haste!*—like this. *Post Haste!*" The card is tossed in the direction of the envelope and it vanishes. It is really back-palmed. The back of the hand is shown once only in a natural way without any suggestion of manipulation, and then reversed again, leaving the card back-palmed. The hand drops to the side and comes up again to take the envelope as the conjurer walks towards it. As the envelope is taken, the card is reversed to bring it into contact with the envelope so that both can be held together.

During these actions, the envelope should be on the conjurer's left side of the stage and the manipulation be done by his left hand. With his right hand he takes up a paper-knife and slits open the envelope. After replacing the knife on the table he holds the envelope with the open edge downward and shakes it, at the same time letting the card fall into the right hand. The card seems to come from within the envelope and creates a better illusion than apparently taking it out from the top.

CARD BUBBLES

This is another effect utilising the back-palm.

Under cover of a handkerchief a chosen card is apparently dissolved in a glass of soapy water said to possess magical properties. Using a clay pipe, the conjurer then blows several bubbles with this water and bursts each in turn by catching them between finger and thumb. The third bubble changes on bursting into the chosen card.

Method.

A piece of clear celluloid the size of a card is on the top of the pack.

Have a card freely chosen. Palm the fake card in the right hand and place the pack aside. Receive the chosen card back on the palm of the left hand and then take it in the right hand, secretly placing the fake over it so that both can be held as one. Do not look at the chosen card but hold it up for all to see.

Remove a handkerchief from the breast pocket and throw over the card and fake. Take hold outside with the left hand and palm the card in the right. Now take hold of the celluloid through the handkerchief by the right hand, holding the fake by the side so that there can be no doubt that a card is there.

Hold up the tumbler of soapy water and explain that it contains a chemical capable of dissolving anything placed in the solution. Lower the handkerchief over it so that the fake card is submerged in the liquid. Hold one corner of the handkerchief in the right hand to help conceal the palmed card.

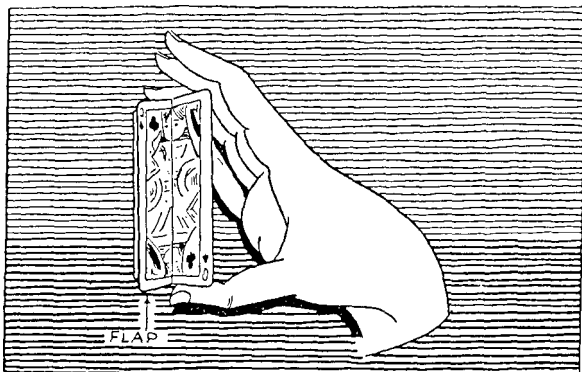
After a few moments' pause "to allow the card to dissolve," smartly draw away the handkerchief and hold the glass up to the light to show the card has become invisible. The soapy water helps to hide the fake.

Standing with the right side to the audience, place the handkerchief on the table and take up the clay pipe. Blow a bubble and burst it with the left hand. Turn to the right, lowering the right hand and back-palming the card as the left hand holds the pipe and another bubble is blown. Burst this with the right hand keeping the card hidden. Casually lower the hand again to avoid any unnatural position of the fingers being noticed, and blow a third bubble. Keeping well away from it so that all may see the effect, burst it between the fingers and thumb of the right hand, at the same time producing the card from

the back-palm. Hold the hand quite still in this position while you count four slowly, meantime looking steadfastly at the card so that the effect will have time to register on the minds of the spectators. The card should have been palmed with its face to the palm in the first instance, so now the back will be visible. Ask for the name of the chosen card; then turn the card in the hand over slowly, and it will be seen to be the one required. A little glycerine added to the water will help to make the bubbles less likely to burst spontaneously.

LOVE: THE MAGICIAN

"A little romance called "Love—The Magician."
I hope you will love the magician for showing it to you!



"We will use the King of Hearts to represent our hero (removing it from the pack and placing it upright against some object on the table), and one of the black Queens for the love-lorn lady. Which do you prefer, Spades or Clubs? Clubs! Very well, the Princess of Clubs comes along and falls violently in love with the handsome King as soon as she sees him. (The Queen of Clubs is removed from the pack with the Queen of Hearts secretly behind it, and held in the right hand facing the King on the table some distance away. The pack is placed on the table).

"The King is so enraptured by her grace and beauty that in his eyes she seems to be an angel. (The card is turned to face the audience, who see that it is now the picture of an angelic-looking Queen of Clubs with wings. This is managed by using a prepared card which can be

changed from a Queen into a painting executed in similar style and colours by secretly turing a flap while the card faces away from the audience. The flap is made with the hinge down the length of the card—not across it—as there is then less chance of the change being detected owing to the arc through which it swings being smaller. The card is held as shown in the drawing with three fingers at the top edge and the thumb at the centre of the lower edge. Only the third finger supports the top of the card. The second finger loosens the flap and pushes it forward. As soon as the flap is past the centre the little finger presses the back of the card slightly, and this bending causes the flap to spring to its new position against the card. The card behind the prepared one does not interfere with this manipulation, which leaves the two cards held ready for the next sleight.)

“As the passion is mutual, they soon become engaged. (The Queen is placed face down—on, but not quite covering the King. In taking the Queen in the left hand from the right to do this, the palm-change is executed, which leaves the prepared Queen of Clubs palmed in the right hand, the Queen of Hearts alone going on the King. The palm-change is made by sliding out the back card from between the front card and the palm by the left thumb, and at the same time pressing the front card into the right palm with the left fingers. This change is very deceptive. Pick up the pack with the left hand.)

“Before long they are married (make a pass over the two cards), and of course the lady becomes the Queen of Hearts. (Show the change and quietly pocket the palmed card during the distraction. Or it may be dropped behind the card-casel if one is used.)

“But the Queen’s father does not agree with the match and has her kidnapped and hidden away in a secret castle. Half the pack shall represent the castle. Which part do you prefer—the top or the bottom? The top. Then please place the Queen on top of these cards and cut them to bring her to the centre where she will be quite inaccessible. (After the King and Queen have been shown they are placed face-down on the table or against a support. During the conversation the pack has been casually shuffled without disturbing the top card, which is the Jack of Hearts, it having been placed there when finding the cards at the beginning of the trick. In placing the King of Hearts down, it is substituted for the Jack by the top-change. Half the pack is chosen. If the top is named, the pack is cut and the upper part handed to the spectator. If the bottom, the top card—the King of

Hearts—is slipped to the lower part in cutting so that in any case the King is on top of the chosen packet. The Queen is picked up, shown, and handed to be placed on the packet and cut to the centre.)

“The King of Hearts, of course, is living in his own castle, which shall be represented by the rest of the pack. *(Take up the Jack of Hearts and place it on the other packet of cards, letting it be seen just sufficiently for anyone to notice that it is a red Heart court-card but not to detect the change from King to Jack. Cut to the centre.)*

“When he finds that his lady has been abducted he is almost driven to distraction. But Love the Magician surmounts all obstacles. Under his all-powerful spell, distance and difficulties of all kinds melt away so that nothing can prevent the lovers from finding each other. In fact I shouldn’t be surprised if even while we have been talking the King of Hearts has found the lady of his heart. Shall we investigate? *(Running through the cards in which the King was placed.)*

“Well, he has left his own castle anyway. Will you kindly see if he has found where his Queen was hidden? He has! Then I think this little romance proves that, even in Cardland, Love is a Magician.”

THE TWO JEWELS

A Fable.

“There were once two explorers. The first set out to find jewels with his hands *(Showing them empty by the change-over sleight. A large property jewel, red and brilliant, is really palmed and left in the right hand.)* in the far-off mountain streams; and after a while he discovered a valuable gem of rare size and beauty. *(Producing the jewel from the air.)*

“He showed his find to the few companions that were with him *(passing it from hand to hand for all to see)* and then set off with it for civilization. He never let his treasure leave his person and slept with it clasped in his hand. *(Palm-passing it to the left, which is then tightly clasped as though holding it, and held aloft so that all can see. The right hand disposes of the palmed jewel.)*

“But one of the companions he had shown it to was a rogue. He followed the owner of the gem and stunned him in the night and stole the jewel. *(The hand is opened and shown empty.)* And the explorer never saw it again.

“The second explorer set out in a different way. Instead of going abroad he stayed at home and did the

exploring with his mind. For he was a philosopher and sought for jewels of thought. This is his hat under which the thoughts came. (*Showing hat empty, and turning it upside down.*) Like the first explorer, he too found a valuable jewel. He had often come across jewels with his mind before, but this one was exceptional and more precious than rubies; for whoever should own this jewel and never cease contemplating it would be eternally happy. (*Producing a transparent gem from the hat and then putting it back.*)

"This explorer did not try to keep his gem, or even to sell it: he gave it away. (*Removing the gem from the hat and placing it on a black velvet-covered tray.*) Now the funny thing about jewels that adorn the mind, that makes them so different from jewels which adorn the body, is that everyone in the world can have the same mental jewel at the same time. So this explorer gave his precious jewel of thought to another person, and another, and another. (*Producing a succession of jewels from the hat.*) In fact he gave it to everybody who would have it. (*Handful of gems are produced from the hat and placed with the others on the tray. They have all been hidden under a mask in the same manner as in the "Eggs from a Hat."*)

"And yet, owing to the peculiar property of mental jewels I have just mentioned, after he had given this one away to so many people, he still had it left for himself. (*Producing a final jewel and placing it apart from the others.*)

"So everybody was happy."

If preferred, the jewels could be produced from an inexhaustible box, which could represent the philosopher's study.

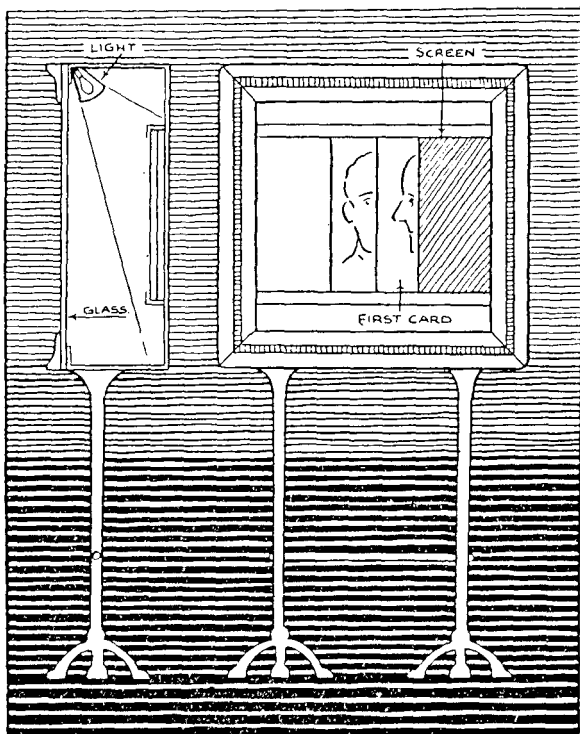
REFLECTED THOUGHTS

On the stage is seen a large mirror in a frame supported on standards. A lady is invited to assist in the experiment; and it is first suggested that she use the mirror in the approved manner. She next selects a postcard from a pack of them, each of which bears the photo of a film star, and is asked by the conjurer to look at it and then gaze steadily into the mirror, thinking the while of the star chosen. It is explained that thoughts are tangible, but as their rays function on a different plane from those of physical bodies they are invisible to normal eyes. A magic-mirror can reflect thoughts and so make them visible. Upon the magician making a cabalistic pass between the lady and the glass, a reflection of the thought—that is to say, a large reflection of the star's photo—gradually forms in the mirror.

The lady is now asked to forget the photo she is thinking of and make her mind a blank. Of course, the reflection fades away.

The experiment is repeated with a different postcard.

"It has been very kind indeed of you to mirror your thoughts in public." concludes the magician. "If you will take the postcards you have chosen and try the experiment again at home, you may be equally successful. If not, it will probably be because the magic spell has worn out."



The State Library of Victoria
"ALMA CONJURING COLLECTION"

Method.

The mirror is a sheet of ordinary silvered glass; but instead of the usual backing of paint and paper it is protected by another sheet of thin glass. Such a mirror acts in the usual way when lighted from the front; but when a stronger light is behind it than in front it becomes transparent.

A shallow box lined with black velvet is built behind this mirror as shown in the figure. In the centre of the back of the cabinet an enlargement of the second

card to be forced is fixed; and on it is focussed an electric light behind the top frame. The leads to the light bulb run through a rheostat-switch in the hands of an assistant off-stage. In front of this card is a big duplicate of the first card the lady is to "freely select," resting in grooved supports, enabling it to be drawn sideways behind a black screen. The concealed assistant manages this with the aid of a thread fastened to the card.

Working.

The pack of "stars" first shown is switched for another consisting of two banks of cards representing the two stars behind the mirror. An indifferent card similar to that in front of the first pack is on the bottom.

The top of this pack is fanned for the lady to take one. The assistant pulls over the switch, and the "reflection" gradually appears. Reversing the switch causes it to fade away. The front card is then drawn behind the screen. The second card is forced by fanning the bottom half of the pack and the process repeated.

The conjurer may quietly prompt the lady to approach the mirror and tap it with the cards or her hand at the conclusion to show that the glass is solid.

CITIZENS OF THE WORLD

A globe of the world some six inches in diameter, and fitted to revolve on a pedestal, is shown empty and spun round so that the whole outside can be viewed.

"When men first united in groups to fight each other and to defend their own particular traditions and territory, the each invented banners to represent their own tribe or clan. As years went by, these territories got bigger and bigger until most of the people in the world lived under one or other of about a dozen flags. (*Out of the globe the conjurer produces, one by one, silk flags representing the chief countries in the world; then he shows the globe empty again.*)

"But they were still divided against each other and kept fiercely warring over their grievances just as they always had done. Imagine a revolution now in progress. (*The flags are pushed back into the globe, which is then closed and revolved. The flags are removed a moment later all torn and burnt. The globe is again shown empty.*)

"The futility of such strife gradually began to dawn on the people whom these flags represented; so after a great deal of talking and bargaining they went into convention and decided to join hands by signing an agree-

ment to try working together for mutual benefit in future. (*The torn flags are pushed through a sheet of paper into a tube and emerge restored and tied together in a streamer. The tube is unrolled and seen to be empty; but on the paper is boldly written, "The League of Nations."*)

"After this state of affairs had worked satisfactorily for some time and turned out to be a good deal more pleasant way of settling arguments than using gunpowder and gas, the people gradually began to find that they no longer belonged to independant states, because they had all become "Citizens of the World." (*Gathering the flags in his hands, the conjurer suddenly changes them into a banner about five feet by four, consisting of a white background on which are ever enlarging circles of all colours.*)

The Globe.

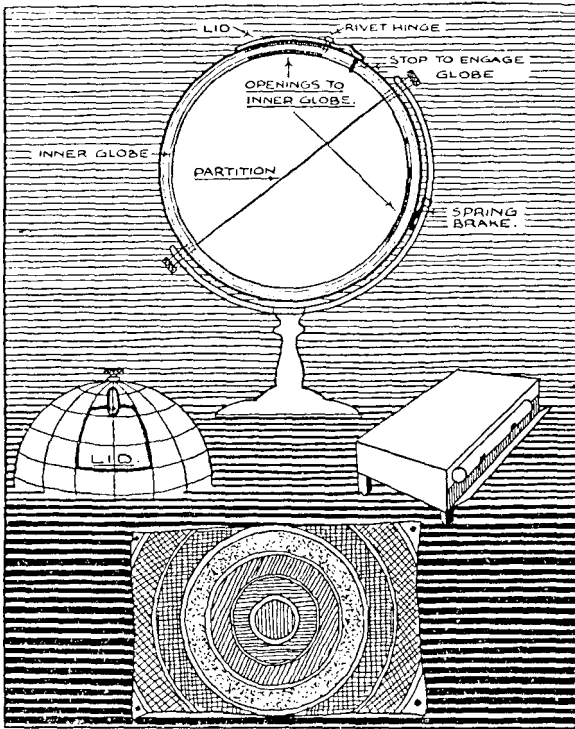
WORKING DETAILS.

In appearance the globe is an ordinary globe of the world revolving on a pedestal, except for having an opening at the top that can be closed by a door hinged with a single rivet so that it can be swung round to uncover the opening. Inside the globe there is a second globe which revolves on two pivots in alignment with those of the real globe. This inner globe has two circular openings cut in its surface in such positions that they register with the visible opening according to the relative positions of the inner and the real globe. The inner globe is divided into two compartments by a partition between these two openings.

Normally, the inner globe hangs with one side downward, as shown in the figure, owing to that side being just sufficiently weighted for the purpose. The upper opening is now under the door of the outer globe. A spring-stop is fixed to the wall of the real globe, so that when the globe is revolved the stop passes through the outer globe and engages a hole in the container, swinging it upwards with the outer opening under the door. This stop can be disengaged by pulling it upward on the weak spring-arm and swinging it sideways slightly so that the pin does not enter the hole in the outer globe. The globe may now be freely revolved without affecting the position of the container.

A spring fitted by a collar to the pedestal-arm (like a fountain pen clip), and having a piece of rubber or washleather on the end to prevent damage to the globe, presses on the surface of the globe sufficiently to act as a brake and hold it in position against the pull of the container's weight when the latter is being held up. This brake is twisted off or into contact as required.

As the same rivet acts as hinge to both the globe door and the stop-arm, the latter appears to be part of the door if it is noticed at all. Both door and stop are painted as though they were part of the globe itself.



The globe is prepared by packing the *lighter* of the two compartments (which are painted black inside, as is the outside of the inner globe), with first the torn flags, then the others. The weight will now carry this side down. The stop is withdrawn to the "off" position.

The working is as follows:—

After placing the hand in the empty side of the globe and turning it upside-down (the hand preventing the container revolving), the door is shut and the globe set spinning. In turning it round to bring the door to the top, the stop is released and engages the inner globe, which is thus brought with the loaded side uppermost. The brake is put on. When the door is opened the globe is seen to be full of flags, the first half of which are produced. The door is closed, the stop withdrawn and the

globe revolved. The loaded side will again hang downwards and the globe appear empty.

The flags are placed in. As this side is weighted, and the two sets of flags balanced, it will swing down as soon as the hand which has been holding the edge of the opening, apparently to steady the globe, is removed and the door shut. The torn flags are thus brought uppermost; and, after they have been removed, the globe can be shown empty again.

Second Phase.

The next phase of the effect is to change the torn flags to a streamer of renovated ones by passing them through a paper tube; and to produce the words "The League of Nations" on the paper itself. If the latter part is omitted, any version of the "Dying Silks" in which a changing tube is loaded and later disposed of can be used. Several versions are given in Hoffmann's *Later Magic*.

To produce the complete effect as described, the paper tube itself is switched for a duplicate containing a dye-tube of the regular pattern in which are packed the flags forming the streamer. The writing is done in bold letters on the inner surface of the paper; and on one end of the tube is a rubber band.

This loaded tube is placed on two hooks on the back of a table so that it rests just below the top edge, see Plate. The back of the table below the tube is open, the removed part being hinged at an angle to act as a chute, so that anything dropped on it goes into the padded box-top of the table.

The substitution is made by standing at one side of the table to roll up the paper which is then held in the hand remote from the audience. The other hand takes a rubber band from the table and puts it on one end of the tube. In taking up a second band, the tube is quietly dropped on the chute and the hand moved forward to take the duplicate. The conjurer should look at the audience and make some remark at the tricky moment; and there should be no perceptible movement as the switch is made. The second band goes on this loaded tube.

As the streamer is removed by the right hand, it is gathered in small loops into the left hand, which holds the tube near the bottom end. The dye-tube, which is covered with a piece of flag to act as camouflage, is allowed to slide into the bunch of flags as the streamer comes out, and flags and tube are placed on the table. The paper can now be opened to show the writing; this

action incidently showing that the torn flags are not inside it.

Third Phase.

The Flag of the World is loaded from the body in a similar way to the butterfly in "The Invisible Silkworm," described on page 24 of *Conjured Up*. In lifting the streamer from the table, the fake goes into the chute-servante. While gathering the streamer into loops the load is secured; and when the big flag is opened with a flourish the bunch of small flags is held behind one corner; to be dropped on to the table as the flag is spread over it.

If preferred, body-loading can be avoided by having the banner in an open well in the table and secretly picking it up with the streamer.

THE WORLD'S PEARL

This illusion is intended to form a sequel to "Citizens of the World" for stage use.

The flag in this case is made bigger and hides the conjurer as it is unfurled by cords from the wings hooked to the upper corners; it also hides the globe, which is attached to a floor-stand. Both globe and conjurer have been standing on a small platform raised from the stage. At a clap of the magician's hands the flag is slowly raised to disclose, instead of the little globe, a monster one supported on the shoulders of a human Atlas.

CONJURER (*making appropriate gestures*): "The world's mine oyster, which I with wand will open." (*The globe slowly opens like an oyster, the upper half being pushed up by a lady symbolizing Peace.*)

PEACE: I am the Pearl of the World:

A gem in restless toil the nations seek
In vain to trace and set; for then the leak
Of human blood will end, and all strife cease.
My name is Peace.

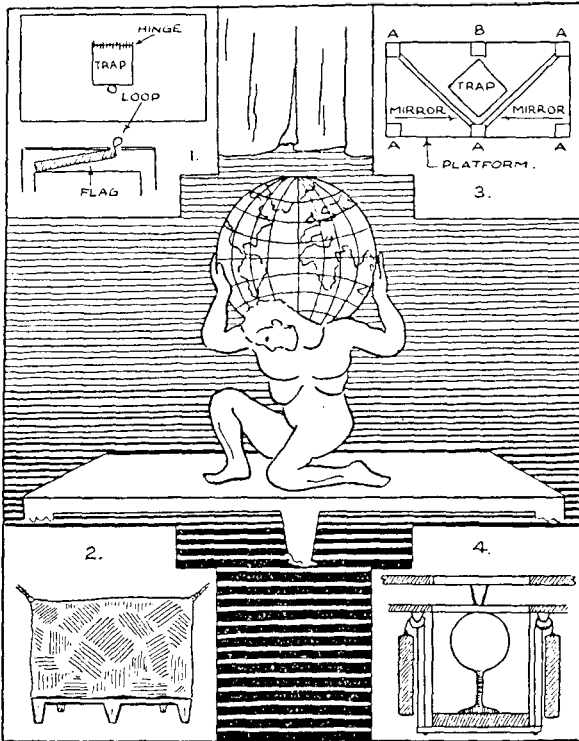
Curtain.

Working Details.

The big flag is pleated and rolled into a cylindrical shape and secured with two tissue bands. In this condition it is placed in the table-top through a square trap covered by a loosely-hinged door, the hinge being towards the audience, see Plate. A wire loop from one corner protrudes through the trap.

In taking up the flags from the table, the loop is secured and the load drawn out of the trap, which falls to again of its own accord. The ends of the two cords

from the wings are hooked together and hang in the air over the platform. The conjurer reaches for these and clips one to each ring on the flag that is held among the bunched-up streamer. At the correct moment the cords



are rapidly hauled in by assistants, whipping the big flag into view so that it hides everything on the platform which its bottom edge touches. The conjurer drops the small flags under the globe and steps from behind the banner.

The platform is supported on six legs; and from the front-centre leg to the rear-corner ones are fixed two mirrors at right angles, as shown in the illustration, which reflect the front corner legs (A) to represent the one (B) at the back that they hide.

To a trap in the platform within the mirrors is fastened the globe-pedestal. The big globe containing the lady is attached to a strong iron support screwed to a small platform the size of the trap opening that is controlled by counterweights beneath the stage.

Under cover of the flag an assistant reaches through a trap in the stage and releases the bolts holding the platform-trap, which is then removed bodily beneath the stage, the small globe and flags going with it. An assistant representing Atlas takes up his position on the counter-weighted platform, crouching in front of the globe-support so that he himself appears to be holding up the globe. The platform is run up in the guides and takes the place of the trap just removed; the flag being then hauled up to disclose the transformation.

By producing the illusion in a Black Art setting the trap could be dispensed with. The big globe would be on a platform behind a background-mask and be pushed into position under cover of the flag. An invisible assistant would remove the small globe and the discarded mask before the flag was raised to disclose the transformation.

POOR YORICK!

Enter the conjurer thoughtfully handling a skull and removing pieces of earth.

“To think this skull once had a tongue in it and could sing. It might be the pate of a politician which that ass of a grave-digger o'er-officed; (*ironically*) one that could circumvent God. Why did he suffer the rude knave to knock him about the sconce with a dirty shovel? Or of a courtier, which could say, 'Good-morrow, sweet lord! How dost thou, good lord!' Yet the knave sayeth 'tis Yorick's skull, a king's jester of olden time. Alas, poor Yorick! Where be your gibes now? Your gambles? Your songs? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar? (*The jaws click several times. The conjurer looks astonished and quickly places it on a table, rear-centre.*)

“How now! Art haunted? Wouldst clamp thy jaws to make mine own teeth chat, and mock with grin right high-fantastical? (*Three clicks.*) Thou must indeed be Yorick to jest in such a mouldy plight. (*Three clicks.*) Thrice clicked his jaws. What meanest he? Yea or no? I have't! Prithee, skull, canst click thy jaws? (*Three clicks.*) Again thrice. Three clicks mean Yea; y-e-a. Then two mean no; is't so, jester? (*Three clicks.*) Yes! Dost thou know who thou art? (*Three clicks.*) Thou dost! Good! Then tell me; art Yorick? (*Three clicks.*) Yea! Tellest thou the truth, skull? (*Two clicks.*) No! Thou liest, then? (*Two clicks.*) No again! A plague take the coxcomb; he neither lies nor telleth the truth. Thou hast a nimble wit for a numbskull, jester. Where be thy brains?

He answereth not! Hast any brains? (*Two clicks.*) No! 'Tis clear thou hast none, for thy pate holds nought but dirt.

"Dost thou think Mussolini will look o' this fashion i' the earth? (*Three clicks.*) Yes! Then pomp, it seems, spans not the wormy grave.

"And my lady? Though she paint an inch thick, to this grim favour must she also come? (*Three clicks. Then despondently:*) E'en so. And smell so, too? Puh! (*Holds handkerchief to nose, then throws it over skull. Three clicks are heard.*) One, two three. She must. (*The covered skull is placed on a plate on a small table to the side of the stage in front.*)

"One, two three. She must. (*The covered skull is placed on a plate on a small table to the side of the stage in front.*)

"Methinks thou could'st do with new lodgings. (*Conjurer moves to far side of stage as though the smell is objectionable.*) Can'st hear me now, jester? (*Three clicks are heard.*)

"Maybe thy sight doth also serve thee still. How many fingers seest thou? (*Holds up one finger. One click.*)

"And now? (*Four fingers. Four clicks.*)

"This time how many? (*None held up. Silence.*)

"Come! Art blind? O strange paradox; to see, yet have no eyes; to hear, yet have no ears. Thy spirit must indeed be immortal, jester. How many years hast been under the sod? (*The skull begins to tap deliberately until it reaches about seven, when the handkerchief collapses. The performer rushes over in surprise and carefully lifts the handkerchief. He picks up a few small objects from the plate and throws them back one by one; they are teeth.*)

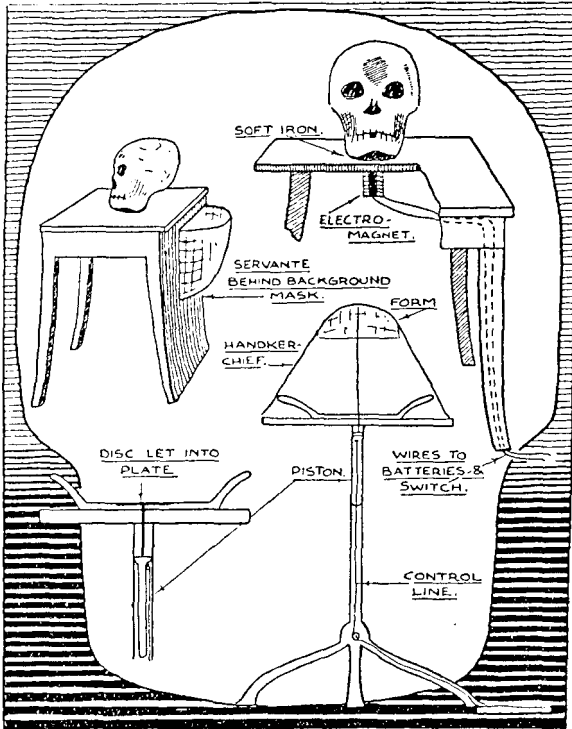
"Alas! 'Twas too much strain for thine old head. (*Blowing a cloud of dust from the plate which he has taken from the table.*) "Poor Yorick!"

First Method.

While the skull is being held, the jaw is secretly moved by the hand remote from the audience.

After it has been placed on the table, either the familiar horizontal thread across the stage with one end in the hands of an assistant, or the electro-magnetic control may be used. The latter is the cleanest and most deceptive method and is managed by having an electro-magnet hidden in the table with the wires led down the legs to batteries and a switch behind the scenes. In the skull's jaw, which is normally closed by a balance-weight,

a piece of soft iron is loaded. This is arranged to come just above the pole of the magnet in the table. Every time the circuit is closed by the assistant the iron is attracted and the jaw opens, closing again when the current is switched off. Alternatively, the batteries may also be hidden in the table with the switch concealed under a carpet so the performer may actuate it with his foot.



The size of the magnet and strength of current required to work the jaw depends on the distance between the jaw and upper pole of the magnet. Given sufficient power and a carefully counterweighted jaw, the magnet may be under the floor instead of in the table-top.

A suitable magnet for fairly close work can be made by winding 18 s.w.g. double cotton-covered or enamelled copper wire on a soft iron core 3 inches long and $\frac{1}{2}$ an inch diameter, with discs of fibre pressed on each end to form a bobbin, making a coil 2 inches in diameter. Use six volts current.

A fine wire form is over the skull from the start, and this represents the skull under the handkerchief after

it has been secretly dropped into a large bag-servante behind the table, hidden by a background-mask fitted between the back legs, the top, and a strengthening-bar on the legs about nine inches from the floor. The illustration shows the mask reaching to the floor. This would make it necessary to have the floor-covering the same colour as the background.

A dark screen is behind the table, apparently to show off the skull. A table-cloth may be used to hide the servante instead of the mask if preferred.

The side-table is fitted with a piston actuated by an assistant. The end of the piston fits into a socket in a disc let into the plate. As the handkerchief is placed over the plate, the piston is raised to support the form. The assistant is also responsible for the sound of clicking heard when the skull is covered. This must, of course, be more muffled than the other clicks and should be in a position directly behind the handkerchief so that a complete illusion is produced.

The handkerchief falls when the piston is released and the form is removed and dropped unseen to the floor in taking up the handkerchief. The teeth are on the plate (which should be deep) all the time, hidden by the front edge. As the piston-disc is loose and painted on top to match the plate, the plate can be removed from the table to assist misdirection without disturbing the piston itself.

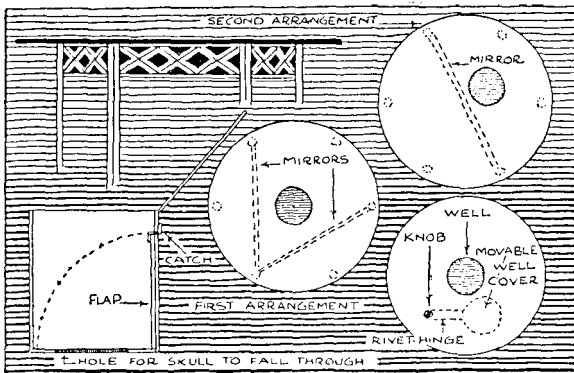
Second Method.

The skull remains throughout on the centre-table, which is built on the "Sphinx" principle. The assistant behind the mirror-masks works the jaw by means of a fine wire rod pushed through a hole in the table-top. The vanish is managed by him lowering the skull on a removable (not hinged) trap, which is then replaced with the teeth and heap of dust on it.

Instead of vanishing the skull from under a handkerchief, a box may be used. A fairly large inexhaustible box of the tip-over type (*Modern Magic*, p. 391) would be suitable; the skull being placed on the V section and concealed by tipping the box forward on the table to leave the skull behind before opening the lid.

A different method would be to use a box as illustrated with the bottom made to hinge up inside against the back and be held there by a catch operated from outside the box. This box would stand over an open well in the table into which the skull would fall. The well would then be closed by pushing a knob on the surface of the table-top connected to a disc that would swing over the opening under the table-cloth, a slit being provided for

the knob to move in. In closing the lid of the box, the catch would be released to allow the bottom to fall into position.



The well could be concealed either by a drape or by two mirrors on the Sphinx principle adapted to the upper part of a table of the type illustrated. As the open-work design of such a table forms a partial obstruction to the view, a black screen between two legs (as in the second mirror-arrangement illustrated—the single mirror or background-mask should face the audience and not be at an angle as shown) would be practical under most conditions.

In each of these cases the box could be held in the hands and secretly tapped with a finger-nail to imitate the jaw clicking inside; or it might be left on the table, an assistant behind the scene providing the clicks. The best method is the one that best suits the conditions of presentation.

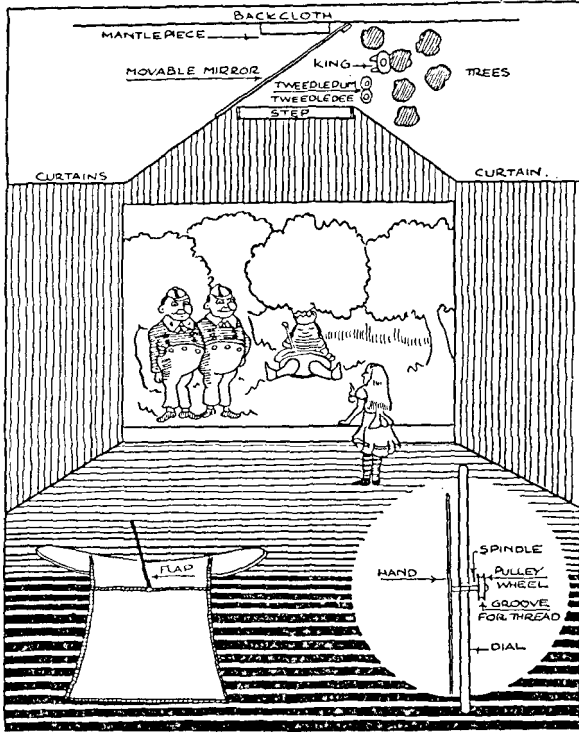
The final vanish may be omitted where its inclusion is impracticable, the effect finishing with the skull (in response to the question "How many years has been under the sod?") clicking on and on and on. "Poor Yorick!" exclaims the conjurer.

ALICE IN CONJURELAND

(With apologies to Lewis Carroll.)

LOOKING-GLASS PEOPLE.

The scene is a curtained set; and in the centre of the stage stands a chair and a mantelpiece on castors, over which is a large mirror against a section of wall, see Plate. A curved metal rod fitted to the mirror-frame carries a curtain that can be drawn to hide the middle of the mirror.



Alice is squatting on the chair gazing at the mirror.

ALICE: "I wonder who lives in Looking-glass House. I know there is a little girl who looks just like me, because I've often seen her. But there must be other people besides."

(As she watches, a reflection of the MAD HATTER eating bread and butter gradually forms in the mirror. After a moment this fades away and the reflection of the MARCH HARE appears; which is followed in turn by TWEEDLEDUM and TWEEDLEDEE, and the RED KING.)

"What strange people. I do wish they would come back again. Perhaps I shall be able to see them if I get on to the mantelpiece." (Climbing up by way of the chair and pressing her face against the glass.)

"I wonder if they have a fire. Oh! I do wish I could get through into looking-glass House."

THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS.

(The MAD HATTER steals in from one side and draws the curtain round ALICE. ALICE'S voice is heard.)

"Let's pretend the glass has got all soft like gauze so that we can get through. Why, it's turning into a sort of mist now, I declare! Oh! what fun; I'm through into Looking-glass House already."

(The MARCH HARE enters from the opposite side to the MAD HATTER and draws the curtain back, showing that ALICE has gone. Then they both turn the mantelpiece round on the castors to show the opposite side, which is a duplicate of the other, with ALICE just through the mirror.)

"Won't they be cross when they see me through the glass in here, and can't get at me! *(Jumping down.)* Oh! who ever are you?"

HATTER: "Don't you know it's rude to ask personal questions?"

MARCH HARE: "Speak when you're spoken to. No one invited you to the tea-party."

ALICE: "Why! I didn't know you were having a tea-party. I don't see any tea things."

THE MAD HATTER.

HATTER: "That's because you aren't looking in the right place. Your hair wants cutting."

ALICE: "Now *you're* making personal remarks. I think you're very rude. But where are the tea things?"

MARCH HARE: "In there." *(Pointing to the MAD HATTER's hat. The HATTER takes it off and hands it to ALICE, who looks inside, handling it so that the audience can see it is empty.)*

HATTER: "Have a glass of wine."

ALICE: "Don't be silly. There isn't any wine in the hat: or anything else for that matter." *(Handing the hat back.)*

HATTER: "Are you good at riddles?"

ALICE: "Well, if they're not too hard."

HARE: "When is an empty hat not empty?"

HATTER: "When it's full of tea-cups and saucers."

(Taking some from the hat and passing them to the MARCH HARE, who puts them on the mantelpiece. These are followed by spoons, a milk-jug, a tea-pot, plates of bread and butter, and two napkins. The HATTER and the HARE tuck the napkins in their collars. ALICE watches in amazement.)

ALICE: "But I'm sure they weren't in your hat when I looked."

HARE: "They aren't in his hat now, anyway."

HATTER: "It isn't *my* hat."

ALICE: "Surely you didn't steal it?"

HATTER: "I keep them to sell. I've none of my own. I'm a hatter."

(*The HARE and the HATTER keep eating bread and butter from the plates.*)

ALICE: "You do seem hungry; how long is it since you began your tea?"

HATTER: "Not above a week or so; and what with the bread and butter getting so thin—and the twinkling of the tea—"

ALICE: "The twinkling of *what*?"

HARE: "It began with the tea."

ALICE: "I know twinkling begins with a T. Do you take me for a dunce? Time's too precious to waste it like this."

HATTER: "If you knew Time as well as I do you wouldn't talk about wasting it. It's *him*."

ALICE: "I don't know what you mean."

HATTER: "If only you keep on good terms with him he'll do almost anything you like with the clock. But I fell out with him last March, and ever since its always been five o'clock. It's always tea-time now."

(*Looking at a transparent clock-dial hanging from a stand on the mantelpiece. The single hand points to five.*)

ALICE: "You must get tired of having tea. Do you think Time would do what *I* liked with the clock? I'm sure I have never offended him."

HATTER: "He might. Suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, for instance, just time to begin lessons (*the pointer swings round to nine as they watch*) and you whispered a hint to Time, round would go the hand in a twinkling to one o'clock, time for dinner." (*The hand moves to one.*)

HARE (*aside*): "I only wish it was."

ALICE: "That would be grand certainly; but then, I should not be hungry for it, you know."

HATTER: "Not at first, perhaps: but you could keep it at one as long as you liked."

ALICE: "But I thought you said this clock always said five now?"

HATTER: "So it does. (*The hand swings back to five. The HATTER goes up to it and spins it several times. It always stops at five. Then he says—dejectedly*): Always five o'clock. It's always tea-time now."

ALICE: "Curiouser and curiouser! But the clock hasn't any works, so it can't be right."

HATTER: "That's where you show how ignorant you are. It's the works in a clock that make it go *wrong*."

HARE: "Where's the doormouse?"

HATTER: "In the teapot."

ALICE: "Ough! I shouldn't think the tea would taste very nice."

HATTER: "It doesn't taste *very* nice: just ordinary nice."

ALICE: "If you had been properly brought up you would ask me to have a cup with you."

(*The HARE and the HATTER look startled. They put their cups and saucers on the mantelpiece in a hurry, and between them drag it off the stage, shouting*): "There's none to spare; none to spare; none to spare."

ALICE: "Well! of all the greedy things. But never mind; I don't want any of their silly old tea out of a top-hat."

WHOSE DREAM?

(*As ALICE gazes about in a dazed way, the back curtains part some distance in the centre disclosing a woodland setting. In the distance a figure can be seen hunched up asleep near a tree. Towards the front stand TWEEDLEDUM and TWEEDLEDEE.*)

TWEEDLEDUM: "If you think we're wax-works, you ought to pay, you know. Wax-works weren't made to be looked at for nothing, nohow."

TWEEDLEDEE: "Contrariwise, if you think we're alive, you ought to speak."

ALICE: "I'm sure I'm very sorry."

TWEEDLEDUM: "I know what you're thinking about, but it isn't so, nohow."

TWEEDLEDEE: "Contrariwise, if it was so, it might be; and if it were so, it would be; but as it isn't, it ain't. That's logic."

(*The sleeping figure begins to snore loudly.*)

ALICE (*alarmed*): "Are there any lions or tigers about?"

TWEEDLEDEE: "It's only the Red King snoring."

TWEEDLEDUM: "Isn't he a *lovely* sight? Snoring fit to snore his head off!"

ALICE: "I'm afraid he'll catch cold lying on the damp grass."

TWEEDLEDEE: "He's dreaming now, and what do you think he's dreaming about?"

ALICE: "Nobody can guess that."

TWEEDLEDEE: "Why, about *you*. And if he left off dreaming about you, where do you suppose you'd be?"

ALICE: "Where I am now, of course."

TWEEDLEDEE: "Not you! You'd be nowhere. Why, you're only a sort of a thing in his dream."

TWEEDLEDUM: "If that there King was to wake, you'd go out—bang!—just like a candle!"

ALICE: "I shouldn't! Besides, if *I'm* only a sort of thing in his dream, what are *you*, I should like to know?"

TWEEDLEDUM: "Ditto."

TWEEDLEDEE (*shouting*): "Ditto, ditto!"

ALICE: "Hush! You'll be waking him, I'm afraid, if you make so much noise."

TWEEDLEDUM: "We're all things in each other's dreams. *Our* noise won't wake *him* up any sooner than it'll wake *you* up."

TWEEDLEDEE: "Contrariwise. Whoever wakes first sends the others to nowhere. You don't think you're real, do you?"

ALICE: "I am real. (*Crying.*) If I wasn't real I shouldn't be able to cry."

TWEEDLEDUM: "I hope you don't think those are real tears. (*Then, excitedly pointing to something on the ground*): Do you see *that*?"

ALICE: "It's only an old rattle."

TWEEDLEDUM: "I knew it was! It's spoilt, of course! My nice *new* rattle. (*To Tweedledee*): Of course, you agree to have a battle?"

TWEEDLEDEE (*glumly*): "I suppose so."

(*They begin to scuffle, making a lot of noise with the rattle. The whole scene through the curtains is gradually transformed to a room with the mantelpiece and mirror at the back. ALICE dreamily enters and lies down on the hearth-rug; then turns and knocks over the fire-irons with a clatter that wakes her up.*)

ALICE (*rubbing her eyes*): "I don't know where I am. Where are those funny Looking-glass people? Of course, I remember; the Red King was part of my dream—but then, I was part of *his* dream too! I wonder if either of us were real? (*To the audience*): What do you think?"

Curtain.

WORKING DETAILS.

Looking-glass People.

The mirror is made of silvered glass backed by another thin sheet of glass instead of the usual protection of varnish and paper. Such glass acts as a mirror on either side in reflected light, but is transparent when lighted from behind. At the back of the mirror is a smaller plane mirror is fitted at an angle of 45 degrees as shown in the figure.

In the wings is a plane mirror about three feet wide by four feet high fixed parallel to the stage-mirror so that the two form a kind of periscope. In front of this mirror, and strongly illuminated, stand the people to be reflected. A black screen should be behind them for a background. The distances between the figures and the mirror, and the first and second mirrors, reduces the size of the final image sufficiently for it to occupy the centre of the visible glass. This image is seen by the audience through the trick-glass on the mantel-piece provided the stage lighting is very feeble. The lamps illuminating the figure are dimmed while the actors change places, and are then turned up again to show the fresh reflection. When this phase of the effect is over, the plain mirror behind the looking-glass must be removed by an assistant through a stage-trap.

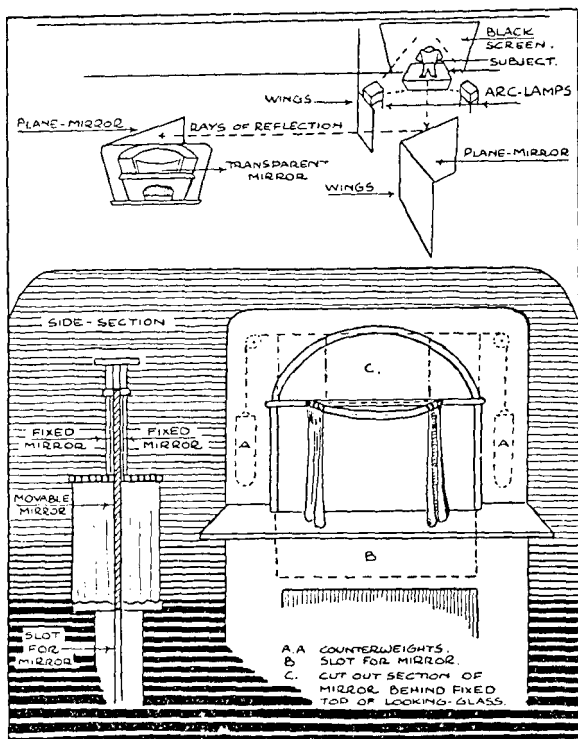
If preferred, the two mirrors could be arranged on the periscope principle to work from below the stage, through the trap, instead of from the wings.

As an alternative, these two secondary mirrors may be dispensed with. Behind the transparent mirror a shallow cabinet would be arranged as in "Reflected Thoughts," page 19. The characters would then secretly enter this cabinet in turn by the trap and have the lights gradually turned on them so that their heads and shoulders would be visible through the looking-glass to the audience. The trick-cabinet would finally be lowered through the trap.

Through the Looking-glass.

The section of the looking-glass enclosed by the three straight sides of the frame and the straight curtain-bar (see Plate) is movable and can be pushed down into a slot in the mantelpiece like an old-fashioned window. On each side at the top, the mirror extends behind the visible top section. The space between these extensions is for the passage of Alice when the glass is lowered. Counterweights suspended over pulleys in the mirror-frame are fitted to the movable glass—also like a window. The straight bar across the mirror—which appears to be part of the curtain-rod fitting—hides the junction between the moving and fixed parts of the glass. The space between

the straight and curved curtain-bars is filled with material to prevent any top view by people in the upper circles of the hall.



When the curtain is drawn round her, Alice moves the glass by pressing one end of a Z-shaped piece of steel wire in a small hole in the top of the glass and pulling it down. She then climbs through the space between the mirror and rod and shuts the glass again behind her. Though the sides of the mirror move down during the action, the fact is not noticed by the audience (provided there are no tell-tale marks on the surface) because the extensions at each side come into view. The opening in the glass is within the curtains.

If preferred, the glass can be arranged to move up instead of down, as in Alexander Herrmann's "Vanity Fair" illusion (see Hopkin's *Magic*).

The Mad Hatter.

The tea things are in the hat all the time hidden by a black cloth-covered disc fitted about three inches down from the brim. One side of the disc is hinged at the

centre to open upwards so that it can be swung over for the removal of the load. The hat must be strengthened inside to bear the weight of the load, though this can be reduced to some extent by having most of the "crockery" made of *papier mache*. The napkins are arranged to prevent rattling.

The hand of the clock is slightly weighted so that it normally hangs pointing to five. The boss of the hand jams on to the spindle, which revolves in a bearing fitted to the dial. On the back of the spindle is a pulley-wheel. A horizontal thread is raised by two assistants in the wings and lowered over this pulley-wheel; and by it the hand is controlled. See Plate. When the thread is removed by drawing it to one wing the hand returns to five through being weighted.

Whose Dream?

The transformation of the woodland scene in which the conversation with Tweedledum and Tweedledee takes place, into a room, is managed by the "Walker Illusion" as shown in the plan on the accompanying Plate.

The small scene viewed through the opening in the curtains is raised about nine inches from the stage proper. A plane mirror having its forward vertical edge prepared by sticking a strip of very thin mirror over it to prevent a hard line being seen, slides across this small stage at an angle of 45 degrees, thus hiding the room-scene and showing a reflected image of the wood-scene that is built behind the curtains. This reflection appears to be a substantial scene to the audience; and it is to the images of Tweedledum and Tweedledee—not their real selves—that Alice talks from her position on the front stage.

The transformation occurs by assistants rapidly withdrawing the mirror behind the curtain, silent rollers being fitted to the supporting carriage for the purpose. To the audience, one scene seems to dissolve rapidly into the other; and Alice can now enter the "room" and approach the mantelpiece at the back unhindered as the mirror has been removed. The lighting on each side of the mirror should be about equal in strength.

A similar change could be worked by using a *transparent* reflector across the back stage as in "Pepper's Ghost" (see Robert-Houdin's *The Secrets of Stage Conjuring*); but in this case Alice would not be able to approach the mantelpiece for the finale unless arrangements were made to withdraw the glass—a thing that has never yet been done (to my knowledge) with this illusion. Of course, it is always withdrawn in "Metempsychosis," which illusion is explained in Hopkins's *Magic*.

J CONJURED UP

By

S. H. SHARPE.

Tricks, Illusions, Patter, Theory.

Uniform with "Good Conjuring."

Well Illustrated. Demy 8vo.

U.S.A. 2/6 Post
75c. 1½d.

J NEO MAGIC

By

S. H. SHARPE.

A book on the Art of the Conjurer.

Cloth. Demy 8vo.

U.S.A. 8/6 Post
\$2.10 4d.

J HOFZINSER'S
CARD CONJURING

By

OTTO KAR FISCHER.

Illustrated English Edition.

Edited with Notes by S. H. SHARPE.

Cloth. 184 pages.

U.S.A. 10/6 Post
\$3.00 4d.

J THE MAGIC WAND

Famous the World over.

Annual

Subscription 10/6 2/6 By post 2/8

QUARTERLY

BOOK LISTS, New and Second-hand, 1½d.