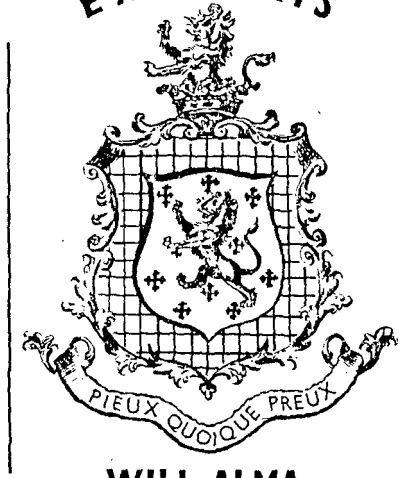




by PETER
WARLOCK

*The Best Tricks
with*
SLATES

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The Best Tricks With Slates

By

PETER WARLOCK

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To my
MOTHER AND FATHER
this book is affectionately dedicated.

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THE BEST TRICKS WITH SLATES

by Peter Warlock

In the following pages of this book you will find a complete course in the use of slates, a study of which will enable you to present only the "Best Tricks" in this field for the mystification of your audience.

You will find many effects that you can use at once, regardless of the conditions under which you are in the habit of working.

I have covered all angles from close-up to stage presentation, so that I feel you are certain to find effects to your liking.

In addition I have included several ways in which the slate may be used as a helpful auxiliary.

For the purpose of classification I have divided this book into five sections.

Part One deals with certain methods whereby writing can be obtained on a slate or slates, such slates being ordinary, i.e. free from any trick device.

Part Two deals with those methods of obtaining writing on a slate or slates, such effects being brought about by the use of a flap or flaps.

Part Three deals with those methods of obtaining writing on a slate or slates, by means of chemicals.

Part Four deals with methods for obtaining writing on slates not covered in the first three sections.

Part Five deals with the use of the slate as an auxiliary.

I should like to state that I have chosen methods and effects which appeal to me personally. To try to present every method of obtaining writing on slates, would be tiring to both audience and demonstrator. One point I should like to emphasise is that in all methods the audience are never left in doubt as to the unpreparedness of the slates.

SECTION ONE

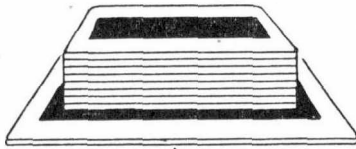
WHEREIN THE OPERATOR, USING ORDINARY SLATES, OBTAINS WRITING ON ONE OF THE SLATES

The first method I shall deal with is one that has found great favour with mediums for séance work, but which I have never seen

employed by a magician in the course of a magical entertainment. The first mention of it is, I believe, in *Spirit Slate Writing* by W. E. Robinson, a rather wonderful book, written over forty years ago when Robinson (Chung Ling Soo) had just finished his apprenticeship with the Great Herrmann. The drawback, from a magician's point of view, is the large number of slates involved. Where a magician is working under normal stage conditions this method has little use as a *magical* effect, but where he is able to dictate his conditions and have a small drawing-room audience, something good may come from it. Here is the effect:—

The operator shows a number of small slates stacked on top of a large slate. The large slate acts as a tray, and the small slates are offered for examination to individual members of the audience. In this offering the operator removes the slates one at a time, and as he takes each back it is placed under the large slate. The small slates are then stacked together and a question is written on the large slate. An answer to the question is then found on one of the slates in the stack. The essential weakness is that about eight slates are utilized in order to obtain a message on one.

The secret is simple. Underneath the large slate, the performer has a small slate bearing on the underside the necessary "answer." The other small slates (say seven) are placed on top of the large slate. As the performer receives the slates back he places them underneath the small slate, so that when all have been collected, the "message" slate is on top of the pile. All that remains is for the "question" to be written and the "answer" produced.



↑
SLATE WITH MESSAGE
UNDER LARGE SLATE

That is the method as described in the book, but as you can see, by the merest subterfuge the slate which bears the writing can be buried in the pile instead of being the top slate. You will have noticed that after two slates have been placed underneath the "message" and the large slate, it is physically difficult to add the rest of the slates. Therefore there is nothing easier at this point than to discard the large slate with some excuse, the rest of the slates being placed on top of the "message" slate.

JARDINE ELLIS ROUTINE

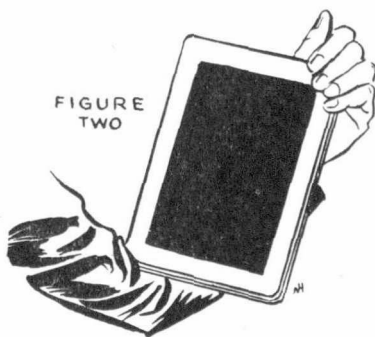
The next method is one introduced by the late Jardine Ellis. It bears that stamp of true magic which so often includes audaciousness.

The effect is apparently impossible. Three common school slates are cleaned and marked by the assistant one after the other; they are also marked on both sides and tested for any faking. In spite of all these precautions a long message completely covering one side of the middle slate of the stack, duly appears, written clearly in chalk. Further rigorous tests reveal nothing to either assistant or audience. You require three unprepared slates, a piece of chalk and a duster. Prepare for the trick by thoroughly cleaning and drying all three slates; note that they have not any accidental distinguishing marks, such as a large knot in the grain of the frame of one, or a flaw in the slate of another.

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



VIEW FROM SIDE
AWAY FROM AUDIENCE



Don't pick the most suspicious or supercilious member of your audience. Borrow, if you can, one of the genial and reasonably good-natured brand. And for goodness sake, having got him, keep him in

good humour, for your whole aim is to win his confidence and make him believe that, up to a certain point, you have not done a suspicious sleight or move. If you arouse any irritation or an even good natured desire to "get one back on you," you are lost and there is no "get-out."

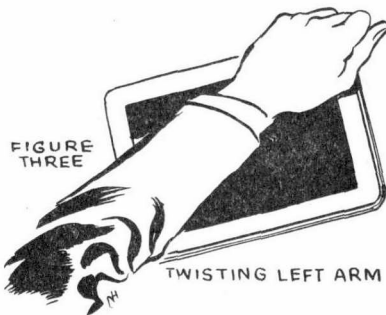
Invite him to the chair furthest from you (he stands on your left), you stand beside the other chair, one foot resting carelessly on



one of the side rungs of the chair under the seat, and still nursing your stock of slates. Patter genially, hand him the duster and also the first slate from the top of the stack. See that he wipes it thoroughly on both sides. Receive the slate back from him. Place it on the stack and produce chalk from pocket.

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

You are still holding the stack of plates as when you first came on. The assistant is starting to clean the second slate. Remark to him, "You have noticed, I suppose, that these slates are solid; there is no trick or mechanism in the frames. Let me show the audience what I mean—hold tight." You lean over your chair towards him and with the right hand grasp the edge of his slate and give one or two tugs—he, of course, pulling against you. It is at this moment, and under perfect misdirection, you twist your left arm, turning your two slates over and bringing the arm above them. Then, pressing the end of the stack against your body quietly restore your arm to its original position—but the slates are reversed. (See Figs. 3 and 4.)



When the first slate was marked it was replaced on the stack with the "2" uppermost. The blank side of the faked slate is now on top and that also shows a 2—to both assistant and audience nothing has happened. You have just leaned over and proved the second slate solid. You take it back, duly cleaned on both sides, and mark as before, 3 and 4, one on each side, and still at the right hand top corner.

Now comes the moment when you have to convince your assistant that he is being quite fairly dealt with; and it must be convincing. "Three on this side, four on this side," you continue (*writing as you talk*). "There is only one more slate. When you have cleaned it I will mark it five and six." The slates are slightly fanned—the fake slate shows its 2 in the corner—you drop it carelessly on the seat of your chair and on top of it the "3-4 slate." You at once hand the *lowest* and *last* slate to be cleaned. The problem is now solved—with a single objection. Yes, I *know* this slate was originally marked on one side only with a 2, but after the "turn-over," an active thumb obliterated this little item. You now mark the *last* slate 5 and 6, and *inform* your assistant that now he must watch you closely. The slates are stacked and placed on the seat of the chair and the fun begins.

(Acknowledgement to George Johnson, publisher of *Jardine Ellis Secrets*.)

ROUTINE WITH TWO SLATES

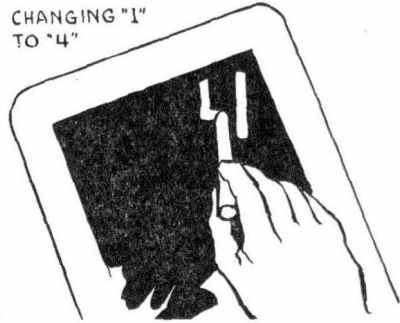
Now for a method using two slates. Two slates are shown and numbered on each side, and after being handed to a spectator a message appears on the side of one. Although there is nothing to prevent the message covering the whole side of a slate, I prefer to have a few words written diagonally, across it. The reason will be apparent in the explanation.

Think of your two slates as A and B. On one side of B, write a word or some words diagonally across its surface. When you have done this write a figure 1 in the top right hand corner. The slate is then turned over to bring the writing side underneath. Slate A is then placed on top of slate B. When commencing the effect the performer picks up both slates together and standing preferably with his right side to the audience, places the slates on the left forearm, the fingers of the left hand gripping the corner of the slates whilst the opposite corner lies in the bend of the arm. As the writing has been made diagonally there is no chance of the audience seeing anything on the lower slate. Taking a piece of chalk from his pocket the performer writes 1 in the top right hand corner of slate A. Slate A is then lifted by its left side, turned over and slid underneath slate B. On slate B, 2 is marked in the top right hand corner, and while

this is being done the thumb of the left hand rubs off the 1 on slate A. Slate B is then lifted and turned in exactly the same way as slate A, great care being taken that no glimpse of the message is seen. Slate A now lies on top and in the right hand top corner the performer writes 3. Now a different move is made. Instead of lifting this slate and sliding it underneath the other, *it is lifted to a vertical position and simply turned over*, the performer then placing a 4 in the top right hand corner. (This side is the original side marked 1.)

The slates can now be fanned, so that the numbers are all displayed to the audience without displaying the message. A large elastic band is then snapped round them and in due course the message is disclosed.

If the moves are carried out in a straightforward manner, there is no suspicion by the most astute that the slates have not been shown and marked on all sides. Just a note here. If your audience is slightly below you there is little need to erase the 1 originally written, as a couple of strokes with the chalk will change the 1 to 4, the top of the slate not being seen.



MARO'S ROUTINE

Another method utilising two ordinary slates was used by the late Maro. It is a method which few could use and get the full effect, but with the necessary personality it could prove as good as any. The procedure is that the performer walks down into the audience with the two slates. One is handed to a spectator with a request that he give it a thorough examination. The slate is taken back and the other offered. When examined it is taken back and placed against the other. A message appears on the side of one slate.

That is the effect to the audience. What actually happens is this. First of all the performer needs two slates. On one side of a slate a message is written. The slate is turned over and on top is placed a similar slate, which is unmarked on both sides. Descending into the auditorium, taking care that the message is not glimpsed, the performer walks to a spectator and asks him to examine one of the slates. As he says this, the performer takes the top slate and hands it to the spectator; when it has been looked over the performer asks

for it back. As he takes the slate with one hand the performer makes some verbal comment which serves to distract the attention of the audience from his hands. At the same time the examined slate is *brought over the top of the message slate*. Turning to another member of the audience the performer effects what is really a top change by handing on with his other hand the same slate that was examined at the commencement. After the slate is handed back it only remains to place them face to face and eventually reveal the message. It can easily be realized that if the performer has sufficient personality this effect can be made to excel every other method. Maro was a man who not only had this personality, but also had the confidence of the originator who has something good which cannot easily be copied. Incidentally, this method is, I believe, the first manipulative method of slate writing on record.

BLANK ON BOTH SIDES

There may be many of you who have seen instructions for showing a slate (upon one side of which a message has been written) to be apparently blank on both sides. The method of doing this is based on the old "cricket bat" dodge. With a knife or paddle such a move is entirely deceptive, because part of the article can be rotated. A slate comes into a very different category and such a move has to be done too quickly to be really convincing. Whilst experimenting with two slates I did hit upon the exact moves which make something magical. The two slates to be used should be of the very small type. On one a message is written; the slate is then turned over and placed on top of the other. The two slates stacked should be placed on a table or chair on the performer's right. The performer facing slowly right picks up both the slates with his right hand, fingers on top and thumb underneath. Still facing slightly right, the left hand comes across the performer's body and removes the top slate, thumb on top, fingers underneath. The attention of the audience is called towards the slates and at the same time the left hand shows the other side of slate by turning it over (it is advisable to hold the slates by the corners). At the same time the right hand also apparently does the same thing, but what really happens is that the "cricket bat" dodge is used, the turning of this slate is simply simulated by an upward movement of the wrist. Synchronising with these hand movements the operator turns slightly left, which all helps to heighten the illusion. There is no need to use great speed, but naturally the movement of the right hand is slightly greater than the left. As the audience is not capable of seeing accurately more than one action at the time, the fact that three actions blend together makes this very decep-

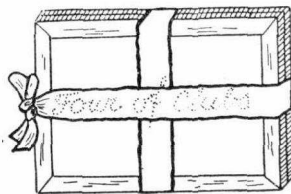
tive. I am sure that where a magician finds that he has two slates and nothing else to achieve an effect, he might find this method of use.

EDWARD VICTOR'S ROUTINE

The last method in this group is that originated and popularised by that great manipulator Edward Victor. There must be few that have not read *Magic of the Hands* and in consequence only that few may not be acquainted with the method, and so with Mr. Edward Victor's permission I will give both the effect and the method.

The operator brings forward a pair of slates around which a piece of ribbon has been tied length- and cross-wise. The initials of a spectator are now asked for, and when given they are written in chalk, by the operator, in one corner of the top-most slate; the stack of slates, still tied, are turned over, and the slate now on top is also initialled. The ribbon is now untied and the remaining two sides of the slates are initialled. The two slates are placed together and the ribbon re-tied around them. A message then appears on the inner surface of one slate.

Like all really good things the secret is simple. First of all procure two slates of similar size. A piece of ribbon long enough to go easily round the slates. (For slates 11in. x 9in. this means a length of nearly two yards.) The ribbon should be 2in. wide and if it can be obtained should have a narrow border of black or gold. (This has an illusory effect of making the ribbon seem narrower.) The message that is to appear is now written across the surface of one slate. Care must be taken that the height of the letters is not greater than the width of the ribbon. This slate, message side up, is now placed on top of the other slate, the ribbon being placed over the message and tied around the slates. It is advisable that the bow of the ribbon should come on the narrow side of the slates.



The performer advances with the slates in his left hand and a piece of chalk in the right (the message side of the slates faces the audience). Asking for a spectator's initials, they are written in one corner of the message side. The slates are then turned over and two more initials placed on the slate facing the audience. Remarking that he wishes all sides to be initialled, the performer unties the ribbon, removes it from the slates and drapes it over his left arm. The top-most slate is then turned over, this incidentally allowing the audience to see the two inner sides blank. The top-most and unprepared slate

is then initialled, after which it is placed behind the message slate, with the result that the blank side of this latter now faces the audience. This too, is initialled.

The slates can now be fanned in such a way that although the *initials* all show, no *message* can be seen. The ribbon is then handed to a spectator with the request that he should re-tie it around the slates. The message now awaits to be revealed.

This is indeed a beautiful method and in *Magic of the Hands* Mr. Edward Victor has appended many drawings which can be utilised in conjunction with this effect. All these drawings have the advantage over the written message inasmuch that when revealed it would seem an impossibility that a mere piece of ribbon would conceal any one of them, as they seem to nearly occupy the slate.

I like all the methods I have described because the spectator can hardly say afterwards that the performer casually showed the slates or that he moved them about too quickly. There are, alas, too many methods used in magic where slates are too casually shown, and because of that they do not come within the scope of this paper.

SECTION TWO

METHODS OF OBTAINING WRITING ON A SLATE OR SLATES BY THE USE OF A FLAP OR FLAPS

The actual construction and materials used in the manufacture of slates intended for use by magicians are sometimes a matter of importance, and therefore, before detailing some effects with slates in which a flap is used, I will classify some types of slates.

Firstly there is a genuine school slate. In the preceding effects with ordinary slates and manipulation there is little reason to use any other type. An advantage too, is that they can be obtained in different sizes. An excellent flap for a real slate can be made from a piece of zinc. The zinc should be cut to the exact size needed; it should then be thoroughly flattened and placed in moist earth for a period of about three weeks; at the end of this period it will be found, when cleaned, that a splendid imitation of slate results. Care should be taken that the earth is packed tightly round the zinc and it is also advisable not to put the zinc in the ground when there is danger of frost.

Secondly there is the silicate type. The writing surface is made from fibre board and coated with blackboard paint. Its advantages are found in its lightness (sometimes an important factor), a dead

background for chalk writing and the fact that a flap can be easily made to match the existing surface. At this point I should like to mention a satisfactory dead black paint. Purchase a one pound tin of good flat paint, remove the lid and pour off the liquid part of the contents; this will leave you with a thick viscous black substance. Now add to this sufficient quantity of turpentine to fill the tin and then stir well with a piece of wood. This paint mixture when applied not too thickly to wood, metal, or cardboard, gives a dead black surface.

A new type of writing surface to be used in the manufacture of slates is Bakelite. Walter Wandman at his works in Birmingham, England, makes great use of this comparatively new substance in many ways, its durability and strength combined with lightness making an appeal to the magician who wishes to travel as lightly as possible. Walter Wandman's slates in which this substance is used are beautiful products; not only is the finish excellent, but because of accurate machining every slate is of similar size.

An unbreakable slate appeared some while ago in the Woolworth stores. The writing surface was made of metal. Apparently only small stocks were released or else the demand was too small, as they seemed to be unobtainable after a period of a few months.

GETTING RID OF THE FLAP

I should now like to particularise the various types of flap slate. There is first and foremost, the ordinary slate with a loose-fitting flap. The general use of such a slate is well known, i.e., a message is written on the slate proper, the flap is then placed on top with the result that the slate appears unmarked on both writing sides. By disposing of the flap surreptitiously the operator can at a later stage show the writing on the slate. The business of getting rid of the flap is a matter that has been treated in a very off-hand manner by most conjurers. In many cases the side of the flap that lies against the message has a piece of newspaper pasted over it, the object of this is to allow the operator, in putting down the slate, to drop the flap on a similar piece of newspaper which is lying on a table or chair, with apparent concealment of the flap. This is done in a very slovenly manner without a real excuse for placing such slate on the table or chair. I would at this point like to digress and draw attention to an action in a trick. This action is similar to the placing of a slate on a table, and appears in a book by David Devant, called *Magic Made Easy*. The action requires the placing of a cricket bat on the magician's table, at the same time the psychological effect on the specta-

tors must be that the magician adds nothing to the bat. This is the passage from that book:—

“Now,” says the conjurer, getting into the position usually assumed by a batsman, “when I say ‘play,’ you are to bowl the cards at me. No underhand bowling, mind, because everyone knows there is nothing underhand about conjuring. Hold the cards so that I can see them, please. Don’t bowl them until I say ‘Play!’ Now then, one, two . . . No, no, sir, you are not holding them right.” (Here performer raises the bat with his right hand, places it across his left hand, and going to the right hand side of the table, places the bat directly over the handkerchief. He presses the bat down just for an instant, taking care neither to pause too long nor to look directly at the table or the bat throughout the movement. After putting the bat down the conjurer walks across to the boy and shows him how to hold the cards.”

There you see the operator has given his audience a natural reason for putting the bat down. Similar excuses can also be found for the action of placing down a slate in order to dispose of the flap. You will notice that the Master refers to placing it on a tartan handkerchief. It is just as easy to cover the flap with material as it is with newspaper. Most magicians if they do not carry their own tables often carry a table cover. A piece of the same material will serve well. Newspaper, unless there is a real reason for its introduction seems to have no real affinity with a slate. With this type of slate it is unfortunate that it cannot be examined before and after the effect performed although it is only in exceptionally close-quarter work that such examination would be required. After all, if an article has been examined once, and the audience have no doubt that at some later stage such an article has not been changed, further examination is unnecessary and time wasting. Let us suppose that a slate has been examined at the beginning (a logical procedure), the climax of the trick will be the obtaining of a message, etc., on the slate. The trick is finished, further examination, unless called for by the audience, would constitute an anti-climax. In this respect it is important to remember that if the operator is using the loose-fitting flap and he requires the slate to be examined at the beginning of the effect, the flap with a message on it will have to be added instead of extracted. If such procedure is adopted an addition of two pieces of conjurer’s wax at diagonally opposite corners on the side of the flap which will lie against the surface of the slate will, after pressure has been brought by the fingers, make for greater ease in handling in the final stages of the effect.

GETTING RID OF FLAP

Another clever method for getting rid of the flap has been used successfully by Doc. Nixon and Al. Baker. In this instance one side of the flap is covered with two or three sheets of white paper to match in size the sheets of a writing pad. When ready to drop the flap, the slate is held in the right hand with the flap side down. The writing pad is held in the left hand. To dispose of the flap, the right hand approaches the left momentarily, the slate is brought over the writing pad and the flap drops onto the face of the pad. The left hand holding the pad and flap as one, moves away and lays the pad on your table. The slate, now free of the flap, is set against some object with the message to the rear to be revealed later.

THE LOCKING FLAP

The introduction of a device for locking the flap, gave the operator the opportunity of allowing the slate to be examined both before and after the effect. My first slate with a locking device was one made by the late Bretma. It consisted of a silicate slate with a cardboard flap; the flap was held in place by spring pressure, a firm movement with the finger tips causing dislodgement of the flap. I liked this piece of apparatus so much that I had a similar model made, real slate being utilised in its construction. Owing to the fact that I had to content myself with a flap taken from another slate this naturally made the finished product rather heavy. The late Bretma's business was taken over by Mr. Shannon who produced the Bretma slate in real slate. To avoid the weight occasioned by the flap, both bed and body were reduced in thickness by grinding. Shannon supplied another slate unprepared but similar in weight and size, so that once the magician was rid of the flap, the slate with writing on could be placed on top of the unprepared slate and a two slate effect be obtained. The locking device applied to one slate is to be found in the product of Mr. Walter Wandman. The idea is that of the late C. O. Williams of Cardiff, and by using bakelite as a slate surface and for a flap, Mr. Wandman has turned out a splendid product which combines lightness with unbreakability.

One of the most ingenious sets of slates is that marketed by Thayer of Los Angeles. A flap is locked in one slate. When placed upon a slate of similar size and appearance the magician can with the smallest amount of effort cause the flap to be released and fall on the other slate where it is re-locked. Both slates will stand the most stringent and meticulous examination.

The draw-back with the Thayer slates is that although beautifully constructed and finished they bear no resemblance to the type

of slate that we know in England. Owing, however, to the fact that they can have the most critical examination, this is not insuperable, and no doubt many members will recall the late Douglas Dexter, on the occasion of an Occult Committee exposition, using such a pair of slates with great effect.

It may well be asked, "Is the locking device worth while?" Personally I think it is, although the consideration of time, place and operator, play a very important part.

EFFECTS WITH THE FLAP SLATE

I am now going to detail various methods and effects in which the slate or slates with a flap take part, and in one of these the effect as stated could only be achieved by use of Thayer or Shannon Slates. If you think that the effect is good it is quite obvious that the locking device is worth while.

Just one more thing. Chalk has a habit of smudging easily. In some of the effects to be described it is important that no such smudging takes place—for instance, where there is writing on both the slate and flap. There are two ways to obviate this defect. The first is to write the message with ordinary chalk and then to spray it with "Fixatif." This is a solution sold by dealers in artists' sundries and is used by workers in pastel for fixing their pictures. The other way is to put the message on with "chemical" chalk. This latter will be referred to later, in Section Three.

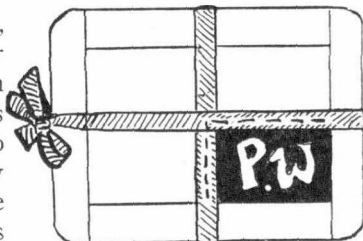
Now for the methods. The first, as you will see, is a natural follow-on from the Edward Victor method which has just been described. I call it

A NEW SLANT ON A SLATE THEME

First of all I will describe the procedure, which is as follows: The operator picks up from the table a velvet bag, from which he removes a pair of slates tied lengthwise and breadthwise with a piece of ribbon measuring about an inch in width. The velvet bag is replaced on table. Holding the pair of slates with his left hand, the performer takes from his pocket a piece of chalk. Asking for a spectator's initials, the performer writes them in corner of one side of a slate. The slates, still tied together, are turned over and another pair of initials requested, which are also written on a corner of the slate. At this stage the ribbon is untied and hung over the performer's left arm. Two more sets of initials are requested and these are placed, one on each side of the remaining two sides of the slates. A spectator is then requested to tie the ribbon round both the slates, and hold them in that condition. In due course a message is found filling practi-

cally the whole of the inside of one of the slates. You will notice that the actual showing and marking of the slates is identical in effect with Edward Victor's method, but instead of the ribbon serving to mask a message as in that method, it serves to mask a peculiarly shaped flap.

Preparation. Two slates of almost exact dimensions are required, also a flap which will fit either slate. I myself prefer slates with zinc flap. A quarter of this flap is now cut away so that when the flap is placed on one of the slates, only three quarters of it is covered (see illustration). Heavy dotted lines show position of flap.



One side of the flap is then covered with the same type of velvet of which the bag that contains the slates is made. We will now imaginarily number the slates 1 and 2, and the sides of these slates respectively A, B, C, and D. On side A of slate 1, a message is written which will fill approximately three quarters of it, i.e. the portion of the slate that would be covered by the flap. Such filling should not be too obvious. The flap is now placed over the message with the velvet side against the chalk. Slate 1 with flap side on top, is then placed on slate 2, and the two slates tied together with ribbon, care being taken that the paths of the ribbon across the slates in both directions hide the outline of the flap. The slates in a tied condition are then put into the velvet bag. I have said very little about this article, but would suggest that it is simply a plain bag of velvet with a cord or tape running round the opening. In his right trousers pocket the operator places a piece of chalk.

Presentation. On the performer's left should be a small table, and to the left of the table a chair. The bag containing the slates is lying on the table. The performer removes the bag and slates from the table. I will now tabulate numerically the essential moves:—

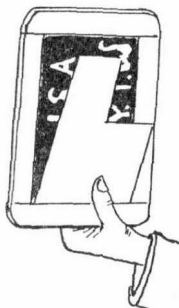
1. The slates are taken in the left hand and held in a vertical position, so that side A of slate 1 faces the spectators. Right hand takes chalk from trousers pocket.
2. Initials are requested, and written in corner of slate not covered by flap.
3. Slates, still tied together, are turned over so that side D of slate 2 now faces the spectators. Right hand pulls on the ribbon

(which should be tied in a bow), releasing it from the slates, and places it over left arm.

4. Two more initials are requested and written in corner of side D.

5. Slate 2 is now turned over and two initials placed on side C.

6. Slates at this stage should be held in the left hand, supported from the back, i.e., side farthest from spectators, with thumb. By



Showing how flap is allowed to fall away slightly.

pressing on the front of the slate facing audience the flap which is resting against the thumb is allowed to fall away from the top of the slate, the ridge of the slate acting as a fulcrum (see illustration).

7. Right hand grasps at a point near where they are being held by the left hand, the position of the flap being maintained. Left hand is removed. Left hand now slides slate 2 up in front of slate 1, and places it in between the flap and slate 1. The flap is now pushed flat against slate 2.

8. Performer has now marked slates on all four sides. Requesting a spectator to help him by sitting in the chair on the left of performer, this spectator is handed the ribbon.

9. Performer requests the spectator to hold the ribbon horizontally. Whichever way the spectator sets about this task, the performer tells him that it is wrong. "This is the way," he says and at the same time places the two slates on the velvet bag, and crossing to spectator, shows him the way to hold the ribbon.

10. Slates are now picked up from the table, the flap being left on the velvet bag.

11. Spectator ties the ribbon round slates, and ultimately the message is disclosed.

I have simply described the procedure for obtaining the desired message—a message which incidentally can be rather long. In using this effect where the audience has been small, I have asked the person whose initials are written on the message side to choose a color. The resultant message has read something like this; "Red was the color chosen by" followed by the person's initials. This is a small point but it has a psychological value.

SECOND METHOD WITH ENVELOPE

The next method is one which I think is an improvement on the usual flap and open envelope idea. The idea I refer to is the effect where the operator has a brown paper envelope just large enough to hold the slate. In front of this envelope or bag, a hole is cut out so that when the slate is inside, a part of it can be seen through the hole. The slate used is the usual type of flap slate and one side of

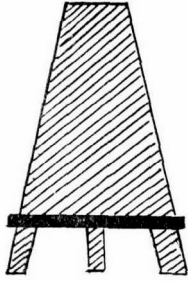


Fig. 1
The easel

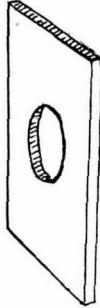


Fig. 2
Type of
envelope

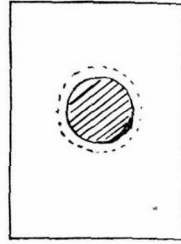


Fig. 3
Dotted lines show
position of match-
ing piece under
brown paper.

the flap is covered with the same kind of paper as that used in the making of the envelope; but when the slate is withdrawn the flap is left behind and because of the paper covering on the flap the inside of the envelope seems to be empty.

The improvement I have effected is to have a bag with two holes one in each side, much in the manner of a gramophone record holder (see Fig. 2).

The other requirements are a small wooden easel, a slate and a flap to fit it.

Presuming that you have made an envelope capable of accommodating the slate, and the holes having been made in each side, the flap of the slate is inserted. The operator now marks on the flap with a pencil, the position of the hole in the envelope in relation to the flap when this latter rests on the bottom of the envelope. A piece of paper similar to that used in the construction of the envelope is taken, and a hole of the same shape and size cut from its center; this is now placed over the flap and the hole adjusted to the pencil markings. The type of easel that is used is illustrated in Fig. 1. I suggest that it be made in ply-wood and covered with an imitation wood paper. This paper can be obtained from your Magic Dealer. A piece of

this grained paper is then taken and cut to the same contour, but its size overall should be about half an inch greater. The method should now be obvious; the piece of grained paper is stuck on to the flap with seccotine, the loose piece of paper is stuck on the flap too. If the flap is now dropped into the envelope, and the envelope and flap placed on the easel, it will seem that you are looking through both holes and seeing an empty envelope resting on a small stand. It is of course essential that the graining should run in the same direction on both easel and flap.

SLATE OF THOUGHT

The performer introduces to the audience a slate, which may be examined, a red cellophane envelope, some colored chalks and a deck of cards. On the table stands a glass. The slate is then initialled; these initials are placed in the corner on each side. The patter theme is that of photographing thoughts. Like the ordinary photographer you need a dark room in which such thoughts can be developed. This is represented by the red cellophane envelope. The slate represents the plate and in order to present an emulsified surface for the reception of the thoughts, the operator covers the whole of one side (allowing the initials in the corner to still show) with white chalk. The slate in this condition is now slipped into the red cellophane envelope; the initials can be seen by the audience and both sides appear blank. The slate in envelope is now stood on top of the glass so that it is completely isolated.

The performer now takes a piece of black chalk and a piece of red chalk and slips them inside the envelope.

A spectator is asked to select a card from the pack and to concentrate upon it for a few moments. The performer picks up the envelope, tipping the chalks out. The slate is then withdrawn, and in the appropriate color is seen written the name of the selected card.

The requirements for this effect are one red cellophane envelope large enough to contain the slate. As a suggestion it is better that a brown paper envelope be made first and then most of the sides cut away so that windows are left. In these windows the red cellophane can be fitted and attached with adhesive paper. This envelope is much stronger than one made simply of cellophane. The slate used should have a flap to fit it, one corner of this flap being cut diagonally. The other requisites are a deck of cards, some pieces of black, white and red chalk, and a glass. The necessary preparations are as follows:

The flap must first be covered with white chalk, the name of a red card is then written in red chalk on the white surface. In order

to prevent any smudging I suggest that the whole be sprayed with "Fixatif." The flap is now placed message side down on the table. The red cellophane envelope is laid on top of the flap and then on top of this is placed the slate itself. Regarding the slate, it is advisable to lightly pencil the position of the flap—or rather where the flap is cut away. The glass is placed on the table just in front of the slate.

The card whose name corresponds with that written on the slate must be available for forcing. In this respect *I should like to emphasise that no doubt should be left in the mind of the audience that the choice of the card was other than haphazard.* I therefore leave the operator his individual method for obtaining this part of the effect: The pieces of chalk are dropped into the glass.

In presenting the effect the performer hands the slate for examination; while this is being done, chalks are tipped out of the glass on to the table. Taking back the slate the performer draws diagonal lines across one corner on each side of the slate, these corresponding with the lightly pencilled marks (these latter need not be more than two dots, providing they form sufficient guide). Asking two spectators for their initials, the performer writes them in the marked-off corners. He next coats one side of the slate with white chalk, leaving the initials in the corner untouched. The slate is now placed on the table, white side down, with one hand, while at the same time the other hand removes the red cellophane envelope, so that the flap is covered with the slate. If the timing is accurate the flap will not be glimpsed by the audience. Care must be taken in putting the slate down to see that the initialled corner on the slate corresponds with the position of the cut out corner of the flap. Having shown the cellophane envelope the performer picks up the slate and the flap together, being careful, of course, that the side against which the flap rests is kept away from the audience. In this position the slate and flap are inserted in the envelope. Now because of an elementary scientific principle, the slate inside the envelope can be shown on both sides; the color of the cellophane neutralizes the color of the chalk on the slate so that the writing is invisible to the audience. The initials being on a normal black surface show up distinctly, and it has occurred to me that as an extra piece of chicanery the initials might be put on with the red chalk, as the red on the dark surface of the slate would be visible through the cellophane while that on the white surface would not.

The effect, apart from the forcing of the card is now finished and the build-up towards the desired climax rests with each individual operator.

THE GHOST OF LITTLE WILLIE

Now for a slate effect in which two messages are obtained on one slate. The first version of this original effect of my own, appeared in the *Magic Circular* for May, 1931. It appeared later in the summer number of *The Jinx*, 1939, under the title of "The Satchel." This is the effect in a later form.

The operator picks up a satchel, and opening it, withdraws a number of books, a slate, a piece of chalk and a duster. The patter theme runs along the lines that the satchel belonged to one little Willie, since departed, and how now, strange things happen inside the satchel. Cleaning the slate the operator marks it on one side with a given name or initials. Whilst this is going on the satchel can be examined by a member of the audience. Receiving the satchel again, the operator places the slate and piece of chalk inside it. The satchel is then hung by its strap on the back of a chair. Advancing with the books, four or five in number, one is selected by a member of the audience. The selector of the book is then asked to open it where he pleases and to tell the operator the number of the pages at which it is opened. We will suppose that the numbers are 20 and 21. One of these numbers is selected and the holder of the book is asked to count to the word on that page. The operator now calls upon the satchel and Little Willie to manifest themselves by writing on the slate, in chalk, the word selected. The slate is withdrawn from the satchel and the operator shows that the word has been written on the slate. The holder of the book says that the word is not the one selected; it is, however, remarks the spectator, "the word next to that selected." "What a pity," says the operator, "But then Willie could never count; let's give him another chance." The slate is cleaned and replaced in the satchel. After the necessary interval it is withdrawn and the correct word found written on the slate.

Although only an ordinary flap slate is used in the making of this effect, it will be noted that *two messages* are produced instead of the usual one; also that there is no doubt in the minds of the spectators that both the slate and the satchel are free from preparation, as both articles are passed to members of the audience at some time or other during the presentation of the effect.

The requirements for the effect are as follows. One school satchel, a flap slate, a piece of chalk and a number of books, one of which is Stanley Collins' *Transcendental Book of Poems*. This latter is capable of forcing two words, "dear" and "one" in the most simple manner. On every page, on which a poem appears, the numbers of that page and its opposite are the numbers at which those particular

words appear in the poem. In making the necessary preparation for presenting the effect, the word "dear" is written on one side of the slate. The word "one" is written on one side of the flap and this side of the flap is placed against the writing on the slate, so that the slate now appears blank on both sides. The books, slate, and chalk together with a piece of material (an ink-stained handkerchief might be used) are placed inside the satchel, which is slung by its strap on the back of a chair. Everything is now ready for presentation, which is as follows:—

The operator removes contents from satchel and passes this latter for examination. The books and duster are placed on table or chair whilst slate and chalk are held. Asking for a name or someone's initials, the operator writes this on the non-flap side of the slate. Taking satchel back from the spectator, slate is placed inside and satchel re-placed on chair. The book of poems is then forced in the usual equivocal way, and then the opening of the book wherever the holder of the book chooses, results in the choice of the word "one," the word "dear" preceding it. The slate is later removed from the satchel the flap being left behind. It is handed to spectator ostensibly for him to read what is written there namely the word "dear," but also *so that he can handle the slate and convince himself that it is unprepared.* The word being proved wrong the operator takes the duster and erases it from the slate which is then replaced inside the satchel, but is placed behind the flap. A few moments elapse and the slate and flap are withdrawn as one by the right hand, ample cover afforded by the satchel allowing the operator's fingers to adjust the flap into the slate. The word "one" now appears to be written on the slate. Simultaneously with the withdrawal of the slate, the satchel is turned over with the other hand, allowing chalk to drop to the floor, and without audible comment calling attention to the fact that the satchel is empty.

* * * * *

Most slate effects, with the exception of these in which the operator is obtaining a broad effect, are more suitable for intimate work; the effect just explained is one, and so is the following: I call it

COHESIVE COLORS

Where the audience is small and everyone known to each other (small Masonics are a splendid example) the effect is one that "causes talk." Let me first give a description.

Two slates are passed for the closest examination. Whilst this is being done a member of the audience is requested to write on a card the name of some famous person, past or present. This having

been done the card is sealed within a small envelope which is then placed in a prominent position for everyone to see that it is not tampered with during the course of the effect. The operator now collects the slates. One is placed on his table, the other being retained. On this latter the operator places a number of colored chalks which up to now have been lying on his table. Advancing to a spectator the operator asks him to take the slate and to choose one of the pieces of chalk. This having been done, the operator takes back the remaining pieces of chalk and drops them into his pocket. The slate on the table is now picked up by the operator, who also takes in his hand a piece of white chalk. "I am going to print a number of letters in a haphazard manner on this slate, and I wish you to do the same," says the operator addressing the person who has the other slate. Both sides of both slates are filled, the operator's with *white* letters and the spectator's with *coloured* letters. The operator places his slate on the table and takes the spectator's slate. "This," he says, "is an experiment in which I shall attempt to prove that matter can neither be created nor destroyed." Then, with a duster, he erases the chalk marks on both slates, so that every side is now blank. The slates are now placed face to face and elastic bands slipped around them. In this condition they are handed to the person who wrote on the card in the envelope. He is asked to hold them high in the air, so that everyone may see that there is no tampering with the slates.

The operator now recapitulates what has been done and says that he will now try to resuscitate on one of the slates the letters necessary for the spelling of the name on the card. The person is asked to say what he wrote on the card. This having been done, the operator opens the envelope and removes the card, passing it to another member of the audience for confirmation. The elastic band is now removed from the slates, and this name is revealed written on the inside of one of the slates, in *alternate letters of white and the selected coloured chalk!*

As the effect is of a rather complicated nature I am going to summarise in the briefest manner what has happened.

1. Slate examined.
2. Name written on card and card then placed in envelope, this latter being sealed and placed in prominent position.
3. Slate handed to spectator, who is also asked to select coloured chalk.
4. Operator takes piece of white chalk and the other slate.
5. Operator and spectator both print letters haphazardly on both sides of their respective slates.

6. Both slates cleaned on all sides, placed together and the elastic bands slipped round them.
7. Name revealed by writer, confirmed by opening envelope.
8. Elastic bands removed from slates, and selected name revealed in alternating letters of white and the selected coloured chalk.

The requirements are as follows. Two slates of similar size, a loose flap capable of fitting either slate, a small card approximately $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. x $3\frac{1}{2}$ in., two envelopes of the wages type which are of sufficient size to accommodate the card, a pencil and some pieces of coloured chalk. May I here emphasise that *good quality* chalks should be used. Chalks of the cheaper grades are of little use as the colours are not definite enough to be identified at even a short distance. Supposing that six colours are to be used, six duplicate sticks will be required; from each of these about a quarter is broken off at the attenuated end. Next, six sticks of white chalk are taken and an equivalent amount broken off from each piece. The short pieces of coloured chalk are placed against the long pieces of white chalk and a piece of adhesive tape wrapped round the two parts so that a stick of chalk is formed one end of which is white and the other coloured. To facilitate handling at a later stage it is advisable to shorten the length of white chalk so that the proportion of white to coloured instead of being three to one becomes two to one. The remaining requisites are two large elastic bands, a duster and a small box. The box I use is a chromium plated cigarette box capable of holding one hundred cigarettes.

To prepare for the effect, several letters are printed haphazardly in white chalk on one side of the flap. The flap is now placed towards the rear of the operator's table, lettered side down. The slates with the rubber bands around them are laid on top of the flap. Taking one of the envelopes, a small window is cut, size $2\frac{1}{2}$ in. x $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. on the address side. The other envelope is then sealed, torn open, and placed in a crumpled condition in the operator's left hand trousers pocket. In one end of the cigarette box are the ordinary sticks of coloured chalk and at the other end are the faked sticks. On top of the chalk the card and envelope are laid. The pencil and the duster are kept in an accessible pocket. Everything is now ready for the presentation, which is as follows.

Picking up the slates, the operator removes the bands, which are dropped on to the table. The slates are passed for examination. Taking the card from the box and the pencil from his pocket, the operator requests someone to write the necessary name on the card. Whilst

this is being done, he takes the window envelope from the box, the window naturally being kept hidden from the audience. Advancing to the spectator who has the card the operator requests him to keep the name hidden by turning the card over, and to insert it in the envelope. As this is done the operator is holding the envelope in left hand, window to palm, the thumb and third finger pinching the sides of the envelope to allow easy entry of the card. The operator now lifts the envelope to his face so that he can damp the flap with his tongue. This having been done the envelope is turned round, the operator rubbing the flap of the envelope with the fingers of the right hand. (This a purely natural action when sealing an envelope.) The window faces the operator and a glance gives him the name written on the card. The envelope is now propped up against some object so that it can be seen by everyone throughout the course of the effect.

The person who is holding the slates is asked to keep one and hand the other to the operator. This he does, and the chalks are taken from the box and the spectator with the slate is requested to choose one. (In order that no one can suggest that the spectator was influenced in his choice, I suggest that the six chalks be placed on the spectator's slate, and whilst the operator turns his back for a moment the spectator picks whichever color he pleases.) The spectator is now requested to write some letters on the slate that he holds, the operator drawing attention to the fact that he, also, is going to print some letters in white chalk. As he mentions this he takes from the box the faked stick of chalk which bears a color at one end similar to that taken by the spectator. The operator now covers one side of the slate that he holds with letters in white, and holds it up. He also asks the spectator to show the audience how he is getting along. This serves an important purpose, as it enables the operator to see the characteristics of the spectator's printing.

The slates are turned over and both the spectator and operator apparently commence to print more letters on the other sides of the slates. Actually the operator prints in alternate letters of white and coloured chalk the name that was written on the card in the envelope. This is easily done by using the faked piece of chalk, alternate swivelling of the stick producing the desired result with the minimum of effort and without any appreciable break in the hand movements. When using the coloured end, the operator should, if possible, try to imitate the characteristics of the spectator's printing, as this greatly heightens the ultimate effect. If the name is a short one, the simulation of printing more letters should be obtained by the operator pressing his finger-nail's instead of the chalk against the surface of the slate. Both operator and spectator having finished their task, the op-

erator places his slate, name side down on top of the flap lying on the table.

Now comes that part of the effect when it is mentioned that "matter can neither be created nor destroyed." At this point the operator takes back the spectator's slate and rests this also on the table at the side of the other slate. The slate with the name on it is picked up together with the flap. In this state it be shown to have on *both sides some letters in white chalk*. Taking the duster, both sides are cleaned, and the slate is then replaced on table, flap downwards. The spectator's slate is then picked up and is also cleaned and shown to be blank on both sides. Picking up the slate from the table, but this time leaving the flap behind, it is placed on top of the slate, already in operator's hand. Elastic bands are placed round both slates, and in this state they are handed to a spectator to hold.

Whilst this is taking place the operator has obtained possession, in his left hand, of the crumpled envelope. With the right hand the envelope containing the card is taken, care of course being taken that the window is not revealed. The spectator who wrote the name is asked to state what it is. This he does, and the operator impresses on the audience that this is the first time during the course of the effect that it is known what has been written. The envelope is now placed in the left hand (which it will be remembered holds the crumpled envelope) whilst the right hand tears one end open; the card is then removed and handed to another spectator for confirmation. The left hand at the same time crumples the faked envelope into a ball and in a casual way apparently drops it upon the floor. Actually the faked envelope is retained and the unprepared one dropped. This little subterfuge is well worth while, as, if there should be any suspicious member of the audience, he is sure, at the first opportunity, to seize hold of the envelope and examine it. Such unrequested examination is far better for the reputation of the operator. The name having been confirmed, all that remains is for the elastic bands to be removed and for the operator to reap the reward of an insoluble mystery. The following is a summary of the moves:—

1. Bands removed from slates, the latter being passed for examination.
2. Card and pencil handed to member of the audience, each with the request that he write the name of some person past or present.
3. Envelope picked up, window to palm. Card inserted face down and envelope sealed. Operator sights name.

4. One slate taken by operator, and spectator with other slate is offered choice of coloured chalk.
5. Operator takes faked stick of chalk from box, color at one end corresponding to that chosen by spectator.
6. Operator and spectator each print letters with their respective chalks, on one side of slate they hold.
7. Slates turned over and operator prints name in alternate letters of white and coloured chalk. Slate then placed on top of flap on table.
8. Operator takes slate from spectator and places it on table.
9. Operator picks up his slate together with flap, cleans both sides and replaces it on the table. Spectator's slate is also cleaned.
10. Operator's slate picked up from table without flap and laid on top of spectator's slate. Elastic bands slipped around them.
11. Envelope opened, card passed out for confirmation, envelope switched and thrown away.

Many fingers have gone to the making of this pie. In one of the early books Annemann outlined the basic part of the effect and in so doing gave thanks to Al Baker for adapting a medium's slate artifice. In a copy of *The Jinx*, Norman Ashworth thought of the spectator using coloured chalk and the operator white, the name appearing in coloured chalk only. In a letter to the Editor of *The Jinx*, I pointed out that the result was illogical as there seemed no reason for the use of white chalk by the operator. In the same letter I outlined the effect described above in which the name appeared in *alternate* letters of white and colour, thus producing a logical ending. In his reply Annemann agreed and I surmised that in the novelty of having a colour selected, the logical conclusion of the effect had been overlooked.

I should next like to give a presentation for the Thayer or Shannon Slates. I call it—

THE FAMOUS MATHEMATICIAN

The performer, remarking that he wishes to attempt a mathematical problem, takes a paper pad, pencil, and a pair of slates. These latter are handed for examination. Approaching a member of the audience the performer asks for a three-figure number. This is written down on the pad by the performer. Two other spectators are asked to give three-figure numbers; these are written underneath the first. The pad is then handed to a fourth spectator with a request that he

totals the three lines of figures, about an inch below the last row. The spectator then tears the page from the pad, and he is further requested to tear off and keep the total, and hand the performer the three lines of figures.

The slates are then shown to be devoid of any writing. The piece of paper with the figures on is now burnt, the ashes being allowed to fall on the surface of one of the slates. The other slate is placed on top and an elastic band placed round them; the slates are then handed to a spectator to hold.

The performer remarks that he hopes to raise the shades of a famous mathematician who will give the answer to the sum which members of the audience have supplied. After a brief wait the spectator is asked to remove the elastic band from the slates, the latter then being taken by the performer. The top slate is lifted and on it appears the words: "Isaac Newton" (or some other well-known mathematician). The slate is then handed for examination. "What," says the performer to the spectator who added the sum, "did you make the answer?" The spectator gives the total. "Amazing," says the performer, "because that is just the number written on the slate." As this is said, the performer flicks off the pieces of ash, shows the number, and hands this slate too for examination.

The requirements are a pair of Thayer or Shannon slates, a pad of paper, pencil and a large elastic band.

The preparation is as follows. The number which appears on the slate is of course forced. We will assume it is to be 1641. The flap is released from its locking device in one of the slates and this number is written on one side. (If I am showing before a group of people likely to include mathematicians, I always write down about three wrong numbers, crossing each out, and finally putting down the total with one figure altered. This "dig" is always appreciated.) On one surface of the slate the name of the mathematician is written. A piece of paper from the pad is burnt and the ashes dropped on top of the name. The flap is replaced with the figure surface towards the name surface, and locked. This slate we will call A. The other slate, B, is unprepared. It is essential that some small mark of identification should be placed upon the slates for the performer's guidance. The slates, together with the remaining accessories, are placed on a chair or table and the performer is ready to begin.

The slates are first handed for examination and the performer goes to the first spectator who is asked to whisper a three-figure number. We will suppose he says 345. The performer allows him to see it written down. The next spectator is approached and asked to

whisper a number; this time the spectator does not see it written down. The performer simply puts under the first three figures the number 654, which has the effect of raising the first total to 999. (This procedure of raising the total to 999 is adopted in every case unless the first spectator himself gives that number—in that case the operator goes to only *one* other spectator.) Going to a third spectator, another number is requested. Whatever is given the operator writes down 642, which of course brings the total to 1641. (As the spectators are normally sitting and the operator standing, the boldness of the procedure makes it undetectable.) A fourth spectator is asked to total the figures, tear the paper, keep the answer, and hand the performer the figures. The slates are then taken back and the piece of paper burnt. Not only does this procedure help to make the effect, but it also destroys some incriminating evidence. The ashes are dropped on to slate B. Slate A is placed on top, and the flap released. The slates are encircled with the elastic band and all that remains is for the performer to build up the necessary climax.

It will of course be realised that the above effect can be obtained with a loose-fitting flap, with the consequent non-examination of the slates.

Another Presentation with Thayer or Shannon Slates can be obtained with the use of a deck of E.S.P. (Extra Sensory Perception) cards. I think it was in 1937 that Professor Rhine of Duke University introduced his printed cards, designed for the purpose of testing the extra sensory perceptiveness of individuals. Twenty-five of these cards go to a pack and there are five designs. Experiments were also carried on in England under the auspices of the University of London Council for Psychical Investigation. For these experiments our distinguished member, Mr. Harry Price, designed for production by Messrs. Waddingtons, a pack known as "Telepatha." These, whilst keeping to five character designs, are far superior in quality to the Rhine-Zenea cards and are to be recommended. The use of these cards is a welcome change from ordinary playing cards.

For this presentation remove the flap from a Shannon or Thayer slate. Take one of the cards from the pack and draw the pattern of the card on the slate. Place the card on top face towards the drawing, and replace the flap. In presentation the two slates are examined and the pack of E.S.P. cards shown; they are spread on a tray, and a spectator, without looking at the card, is asked to take one and drop it face down on the non-flap slate. The flap slate is placed on top, flap released, and the elastic band placed around slates which are then given into the custody of a spectator. When the band is removed

and the card turned over, the audience see for the first time what it is. It is shown that a similar design has appeared magically on the slate. The fact that there is obviously no force of card and the fact that the slates are out of the performer's possession makes this very effective.

Another method. I now come to a method in which two slates are used with one flap and writing is obtained on one surface of each slate. At the same time the flap is completely eliminated at the end of the effect, the slates being able to stand examination. An appropriate presentation would be the "Great Mathematician," or the selection of an article or card, descriptions of which can be spread over the surfaces of the slates.

The requirements are two slates with the common fitting flap. One slate we will call A and the other B. In addition to the slates and the various articles required for the force, a tray slightly larger than the flap is required. The preparation of the slates is as follows: On one side of slate A chalk the figure 1 in the top left hand corner; this side of the slate is then filled with one of the messages. On slate B, chalk the figure 3 in the top left hand corner; and then fill in this side of the slate with the remainder of the message. Place the flap on side marked 1 of slate A. This slate is now placed on top of slate B, which is message side up. The manipulation of the slates to achieve the effect is as follows:

The slates are picked up with the right hand and are casually shown. They are then placed in the crook of the left arm and held with the left hand, the surfaces of the slates tilting slightly upwards and away from the audience. Taking a piece of chalk with his right hand the performer writes a figure 1 in the top left-hand corner of the top slate (really one side of the flap). This slate and flap are now gripped with the right hand at the bottom left-hand corner, lifted up and both sides shown. (In doing this the remaining slate must be held so that no glimpse of writing on its upper surface can be seen.) It is then turned over and replaced on slate B; it should actually be replaced with an overlap of about two inches and then slid, this action allowing the flap to arrive on the written surface of B without any "talking." A figure 2 is now chalked on the top left-hand corner of slate A. During this action the left arm has allowed the slates to adopt a downward tilt so that the faces of the slates can be seen. Slate A is now slid off and placed under slate B, this latter because of the flap covering it, now appears blank. Care of course must be taken that the writing on the underside of slate A is kept well away from the audience. The operator now chalks a figure 3 on the top left-hand

corner of the flap covering slate B. After this the slate and flap are picked up as one by the left-hand bottom corner, shown on both sides and then turned over, but this time, instead of the flap being allowed to fall, the left hand slides slate A along and holds it on the left-hand side between the first and second, third and fourth fingers. Slate B, which has just been turned over, is held, flap and all, between the thumb and first finger. A figure 4 is now chalked in the top left-hand corner with the right hand. Slate B is now lifted and shown once more and is placed *under* slate A.

The position of the slates should be this: Slate A, side marked 2 on top, the under-side marked 1 and bearing message. Slate B, 4 side up, under-side marked 3 and bearing message, covered with flap at bottom.

Now, holding the slates at each end, the performer approaches table or chair; the slates are momentarily laid on this object and the flap allowed to drop. The hands now move to form two sides of a triangle, the flap forming the base (a card castle with slates) the message being inside. The foregoing moves will come quite naturally if the instructions are read with the slate in hand.

When the object has been forced it is placed on the tray together with a piece of chalk, the tray then being placed inside the "tent" formed by the two slates. The tray in this position covers the flap, therefore the performer when reaching the climax of the effect can quite safely allow a member of the audience to step forward and pick up the slates.

FRED HOCKING'S SLATE MYSTERY

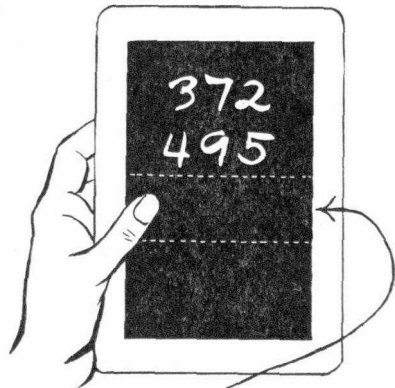
One of the most ingenious uses of the flap that I have seen is in an effect originated by Mr. Fred Hocking. With his permission I will describe it.

The performer offers a slate for examination and it can be marked if necessary, on both sides. The performer now tells the audience that he is going to write on the slate some numbers which he wants them to give him, but before doing so, they can choose which side of the slate they would like him to use. This having been decided upon, the performer asks for a three-figure number. This is written on the slate in view of the audience. Another two sets of numbers are requested and these, when given, are written underneath the first. Under the last three figures the performer draws a line across the slate. The slate is now given to a member of the audience, with the request that he holds it face downwards. After the performer has explained that he is going to obtain a magical answer to the sum, the assistant holding the slate turns it over and reveals that the answer has magically appeared in the space allotted for the total.

Before describing the working of the effect, I should like to emphasise the stringent conditions under which the effect is obtained. First, the slate is subjected to the closest examination. Secondly, the numbers are given by disinterested members of the audience, *i.e.*, there is no collusion between the spectators and performer. Thirdly, the audience sees the numbers as they are written. Fourthly, the slate can again be subjected to the closest scrutiny at the end of the effect.

To present this effect the performer requires one slate, which should be of the silicate type. Supposing that the size of the slate surface is 7in. x 9in., a flap 7in. x 2in. is required. The only other requisite is a piece of chalk. Prior to presentation the flap should be placed in an easily accessible part of the performer's clothing.

In presenting the effect the performer offers the slate for examination and due marking. When the audience have decided which side of the slate shall be used, the performer returns to the stage with the slate. On his way, the small flap is added to the chosen side—a by no means difficult move—and slid to one end. The first number is requested, and holding the slate so that the surface can be seen, it is written across the top of the slate. (The flap at this point is at the opposite end, *i.e.*, the bottom of the slate. The fact that a dull black slate is used with accompanying lack of high light and shadow, conceals the presence of the flap.) The next three figures are requested, and these, too, are written in full view of the audience, under the first line. The next three figures are requested, but at this juncture the performer stands facing the audience with the slate in front of him. The slate is tilted at an angle of forty-five degrees with the written numbers facing the performer. The performer's left thumb slides the flap into the position which the third set of figures would normally occupy, thus leaving the total space *uncovered*. The performer hears the third set of figures given and mentally works out the total of the three sets. At this moment the performer remarks that by the way the numbers have been given haphazard, there can be no question of confederates, etc. As he says this, the total, with as little hand movement as possible, is written



FLAP PUSHED INTO
POSITION BY THUMB

in the total space. The flap is then slipped back with the left thumb and the performer says: "Oh, by the way, what was the third set of figures?" The number is repeated and the performer writes it underneath the others, the audience being allowed to see this. A line is drawn across the top of the flap and a spectator is invited on the stage to assist. The performer explains that he wants him to hold the slate in front of him, one hand on each side of the slate, the back of the slate towards the audience. In passing the slate to the assistant the flap is stolen with the right hand, and although it cannot be palmed in the strict sense, it is not difficult to cover. This flap is disposed of in the performer's *profonde* and the effect is now finished from the performer's view-point.

There is one point that I should like to mention. There are many who, whilst their arithmetic will stand up to all normal requirements, does not function so well when operating during show conditions. The mental addition of three sets of three figure numbers may seem to be a stumbling block; the effect, however, is in no way spoiled by using two-figure numbers, and I am sure that I am betraying no confidences when I retail the fact that when Mr. Hocking worked this effect before Circle audiences in those unforgettable days at Anderton's, his stage-managing partner in crime, Mr. Ivey, stood at the side of the stage taking a note of the numbers as they were given, and after totalling them wrote the total in large figures on a board for Mr. Hocking to see in a quick glance. This subterfuge is to be commended as it leaves the performer free from cross-thinking.

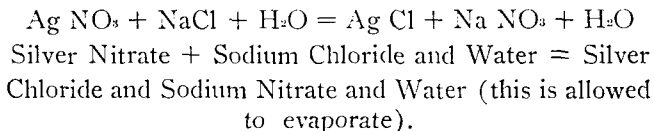
SECTION III

METHODS OF OBTAINING WRITING ON A SLATE BY CHEMICAL MEANS

There is nothing particularly new about the use of chemicals for producing writings or drawings on slates. Robinson's book[†] tells of a method used by fraudulent mediums some forty-five years ago; it is this: The message to be produced on the slate is written with one end of a silver nitrate (Ag NO_3) pencil. (Particular care must be taken by the operator in handling this chemical as it is a dangerous caustic.) The operator now breathes upon the message he has written; this has the effect of making it invisible. If now, in the action of cleaning the slate, a sponge saturated with saline solution—common salt and water—is wiped across the surface on which the message is written, and evaporation of the liquid allowed to take place the message will duly

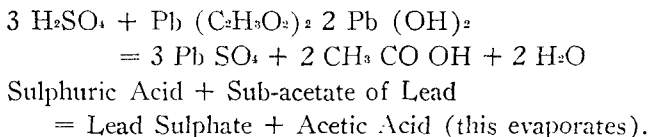
[†] *Spirit Slate Writing and Kindred Phenomena*

appear as though written with a slate pencil. This is the result of a chemical reaction, which is as follows:—



Continuous exposure to light will cause a change in the color of the precipitate—it will tend to turn violet. This fact which is rather important, is omitted by both Robinson and Hull* in their descriptions of the effect. Because writing done with a slate pencil, or as in this an imitation of such writing, is not easily visible from a distance, it follows that this method is only practicable for a small room. The séance parlour with its ruby light would be ideal and the resulting effect very good.

Another method in which a chemical reaction produces good results appeared in *The Sphinx* (1929, page 442). The two chemicals required to produce the effect are both poisons. One is sulphuric acid (H_2SO_4) which, as most people are aware, is one of the most corrosive of liquid acids, the merest drop burning into most substances it touches, including human flesh. The other chemical is sub-acetate of lead [$\text{Pb} (\text{C}_2\text{H}_3\text{O}_2)_2$ $2\text{Pb} (\text{OH})_2$]. This latter is added to water and used in solution form. The message which is to appear is first written in sulphuric acid on the surface of the slate. The contributor in *The Sphinx* mentions the use of a camelhair brush as a medium for the application, but I am afraid the operator would need a good stock of such brushes. The action of the acid would render them useless. The best thing with which to apply the acid is a glass stirring rod, and the application should be done with the minimum of acid. When the acid has eaten into the slate, the latter will appear at a very short distance to be free from any preparation. If now, in the action of cleaning the surface of the slate a sponge saturated with the sub-acetate of lead is wiped across the treated surface, the message will, when evaporation has taken place, appear as though written in white chalk. The following is the chemical reaction:—



This method is quite effective owing to the resultant message

* *Original Slate Secrets*

apparently being written with chalk and the fact that the slate is shown freely on both sides prior to washing.

In both of these methods, as water is the base of the washing liquid, evaporation is naturally slow. This means that the operator must play for time. Another drawback in both methods is that the slates treated can be used *once only*, because of the injury done to the surfaces of the slates by the corrosion.

The modern chemical method which has been publicised by Hull* is, paradoxically enough, one in which no chemical reaction is brought about for the ultimate effect. In this method the writing is done with specially prepared chalk on one side of the slate. The treatment of the chalk is to cause it to "fix." It must be realised that when the message is written it is fully *visible*. Only when in the action of cleaning the slate the washing liquid is applied does it become *invisible*. Thus, the treated side of the slate can only be shown to be free from writing when in a "washed" condition; subsequent descriptions of effects will show that this is no drawback.

In his book Hull, while not revealing the formula of his own chemical chalk, writes: "But I earnestly request that readers will test out the contemporary formula . . ."

- (1) Liquid A. Mucilage 1 part. Alcohol 1 part.
- (2) Liquid B. Benzole C.P. or Naptha.
- (3) Liquid C. Carbon Tetrachloride.

The first mixture is used to treat the chalk, whilst the liquids B and C are used for washing purposes. These latter will be recognised as highly volatile solvents. Benzole and Naptha are definitely out of the question, as Hull quite rightly remarks because of their inflammability. But as Carbon Tetrachloride is non-inflammable it serves the purpose. (There are other non-inflammable solvents sold under proprietary names, such as "Thawpitt," the great drawback, however, with all this group is their odour. Although Carbon Tetrachloride can be deodourised to a certain extent it cannot be made *odourless*.)

Whilst recommending the use of the "Hull" outfit it is doubtful if it can be obtained, because of the prevailing war conditions.

I have tested the contemporary formula given above, and by using a good gum and alcohol for treating the chalk, and Carbon Tetrachloride for washing, have obtained very good results.

To prepare the slate take a piece of chalk and dip the end into the alcohol and gum mixture, allowing it to soak well, then remove and wipe off excess moisture. With the chalk in this condition start

**Original Slate Secrets*. Hull. *Thirty (One-Man) Mind Reading Mysteries*.
U. F. Grant

writing the message on the slate. As it is applied it will not look a bit like chalk writing, but after a minute or so most of the alcohol evaporates, leaving the chalk and mucilage. This shows up in exactly the same way that ordinary chalk would, especially if written on a silicate slate. More applications of the mixture to the chalk will be needed according to the length of the message. If when the whole message is dry a silk sponge saturated with Carbon Tetrachloride is wiped over the surface the operator can test for himself that the message disappears whilst the treated surface of the slate is in a wet state.

Before describing some effects made possible by this method, I should like to make some remarks regarding the accessories necessary for accomplishing the effects in the most efficient manner.

First the sponge used should be non-abrasive. The one I use myself is made by placing a small piece of rubber sponge on a layer of cotton lint. Both are then wrapped round with a piece of china silk, the ends of which are sewn together (Fig. 1). This article fulfills the condition of non-abrasiveness whilst retaining the normal qualities of a sponge.



Shaded portion represents lint

Secondly, the container for the Carbon Tetrachloride should be made of glass and have a small lid. This latter is necessary owing to the volatile nature of the chemical. The Woolworth stores sell a glass butter dish with a "beat" lid which is ideal for the purpose. As, however, from the point of view of the audience the operator should do no more than pick up a sponge and clean the slate I think that the container should be out of sight. I therefore have with me a wicker waste-paper basket ten inches high. Two inches from the bottom I have fixed a shelf, and on this I rest the glass dish. When the sponge is in the dish it is an easy matter for the operator, with one hand, to knock off the lid and remove the sponge. The action, to the audience, is that the sponge has been removed from the basket. I am stressing this point because I have seen some magicians make a parade of removing the sponge from a *visible* container. On one occasion I actually witnessed the liquid being poured from a bottle into a bowl, the sponge then being dipped into the liquid!

There is just one other point. I have remarked about the volatile nature of the chemical; its drying action on a visible surface of a slate is evidence to the acute observer that the usual medium, water, has not been used for cleaning. To obviate such suspicion I suggest a smaller piece of sponge be attached to the silk sponge with a few inches of strong thread. This sponge is then dampened with

water. The silk sponge is placed inside the dish, the ordinary sponge being allowed to hang outside (Fig. 2). The lid is then placed on the dish, the thread offering little obstruction.

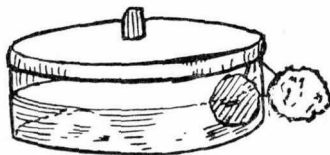


Fig. 2. The container for the Carbon Tetrachloride.

In cleaning the slate both sponges are picked up as one by the operator, one of the fingers separating the two surfaces. The treated side of the slate is now washed with the chemical, and the untreated side is washed with water. Thus, only the message side will dry quickly. The two sponges are quite easily handled and the fact that the hand has a natural excuse for continually moving, conceals the necessary jugglery of the sponges. By some this subtlety may not be thought worth while, but the magician who studies detail will include this in his routine.

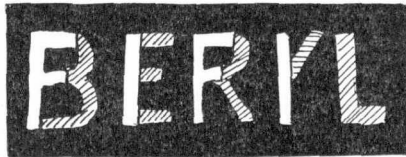
Before giving some uses of this method, I should like to give a warning. *Don't splash the carbon tetrachloride on a polished surface!* This includes polished flooring.

The most elementary method, but one by which the maximum effect is obtained is as follows: by dipping a piece of chalk into the mucilage-alcohol mixture a message is written on one surface of an ordinary slate; when dry the slate is placed message side downwards on the operator's table. To present, the operator's left hand takes up the slate, keeping the unmarked surface facing audience. The right hand takes the sponge soaked with carbon tetrachloride and commences washing the surface nearest the operator (the message side). Directly the chemical has soaked into and rendered invisible the writing, the slate is gradually turned round, the audience seeing a wet but unmarked surface. The simulation of cleaning is continued during the turning and for a moment or two more, until there can be no doubt in anyone's mind that they have seen two unmarked surfaces. The slate is turned round and the blank side washed. The slate can now be isolated and the message will appear directly evaporation has taken place. A very strong point is that a member of the audience can be asked to pick up the slate and show the audience that the impossible has happened. If this method is used it is not a bad idea to use ordinary school slates and leave them behind after the show.

Another advantage with this method is that one set of figures or letters can easily be changed into another set. Supposing that the ultimate group of figures giving the answer to a sum are 1 3 1 7. These figures are written with *treated* chalk on one surface of a slate; the addition of a few strokes with ordinary chalk can transform them into 4 8 7 9. In the accompanying and subsequent diagrams, the treated chalk is represented with white lines, whilst the ordinary chalk is shown shaded.



It will be seen that by putting a flap over the surface of the slate bearing the wrong total, the slate can be shown blank on both sides. With the elimination of the flap, using one of the methods previously outlined, the operator produces for the audience the wrong total—4 8 7 9. A wash with carbon tetrachloride the correct set of figures—1 3 1 7 appears.



The second diagram shows how the name BERYL can be changed into FIFI, whilst the third shows how the word BEES might first appear as BBBS and here again a wash with the chemical gives the correct word.



I now give an original and rather telling effect, and call it—

THE PROOF OF THE THEORY

The operator picks up a slate; one side is shown to be blank, whilst on the other side the following letters are printed in chalk:—

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	E	I	O

The slate is put down on a table and a book picked up. This is offered to a spectator with a request that he choose two words in it and remember them. Taking the slate again the operator remarks that his audience have heard of the theory that "matter can neither be created nor be destroyed." He goes on to say that he will prove this theory. The slate is then cleaned on both sides with a wet sponge. The sponge is placed down and the slate held facing the audience. "Watch!" says the operator, and as the audience watch some of the original letters re-appear visibly on the side of the slate facing them. Several letters, however, are missing from the original set. A check-up proves that these are to be found in the chosen words. "I said that I would prove a theory," says the operator, "the missing letters have not been destroyed—they have simply separated themselves from the other letters." At this point the slate is turned slowly round and on the other side the missing letters are found forming the selected words.

Requirements: A slate with a loose fitting flap, some ordinary chalk, a mixture of alcohol and mucilage, non-abrasive sponge, dish, carbon tetrachloride and the means for forcing two words from a book. In this connection nothing can be better than the Stanley Collins' book of poems previously mentioned, which forces the words "DEAR ONE" in the most straightforward manner. Before a large audience such a force is highly desirable.

Preparation: Dipping the chalk into the mucilage-alcohol mixture and allowing it to *soak well*, it is removed and the excess moisture wiped off. The following letters are now printed on the slate (supposing that the words DEAR ONE are to be used):—

-	B	C	-	-	F	G	H	I	J
K	L	M	-	-	P	Q	-	S	T
U	V	W	X	Y	Z	A	-	I	O

The missing letters marked with dashes are now printed in with ordinary chalk. The slate is now turned over and on the blank surface are printed with the *treated* chalk the words DEAR ONE. When these words have dried (a matter of a minute) the flap is placed on this side of the slate. With the dish well filled with carbon tetrachloride, the sponge inside and the book at hand the operator is ready for presentation which is as follows:—

The slate is picked up and both sides deliberately shown. It is then replaced on the table flap side down. The book is handed to a spectator who is asked to open it where he pleases. Supposing he opens it at pages 24 and 25; he is asked to note the 24th and 25th words in the poem and remember them. The operator now picks up the slate with the left hand, the flap being left behind on the table. Keeping the lettered side facing the audience, the right hand takes the sponge and making sure that it holds a good content of carbon tetrachloride, starts washing the side away from the audience (the side on which the words DEAR ONE are printed). Directly the liquid has made the words invisible the *left hand gradually turns the slate until this side faces the audience*, at the same time the right still passes the sponge across the surface. The audience have now seen what they think to be an unmarked side thoroughly cleaned. The slate is now turned over and the side with the printed letters washed with the chemical. Here the necessity for a non-abrasive sponge becomes apparent, as in this cleaning enough pressure must be exerted to erase the letters printed in ordinary chalk; any abrasive material used in this general washing would at the same time remove quite a lot of the treated chalk. (The operator must not be niggardly in applying the carbon tetrachloride or he will find that evaporation may anticipate his patter.) After the sponge is placed down, the slate is held with the last washed side facing the audience. As the chemical evaporates those letters written with the treated chalk visibly re-appear, whilst those written with the ordinary chalk are of course missing. The spectator is asked if the missing letters would form the words remembered. After the affirmative answer has been given, the slate is turned over to reveal the words.

There are some who would say that the visible re-appearance of the letters as the liquid evaporates is *prima facie* evidence to an intelligent audience that some chemical means is being used. By using a dead black surfaced slate and avoiding reflection of strong lights the transition from a wet to a dry state of surface is not too noticeable. I have tried it with many types of audience and have always found that the visible re-appearance of the letters on the slate has evoked that reaction from the audience which is apparent when they

“cannot believe their eyes.” As an alternative, however, I make the suggestion that the book be taken back in an opened state and laid on the table. After the cleaning of the slate has taken place the book is taken up and held in an open condition against the slate. When the time lapse has been judged for completion of evaporation, the book is removed and the ultimate effect accomplished.

Wishing to obtain writing on *both sides* of a slate under fairly stringent conditions, I devised the following. I call it:—

QUESTION AND ANSWER

This effect is intended for a small audience. The operator distributes about twenty small writing pads and pencils. Each recipient is asked to write a brief question. While this is being done, a member of the audience is requisitioned as an assistant. He, or she, is then seated on the right of the operator. The operator hands the assistant a silk bag for examination and then picks up a slate which he shows to be blank on both surfaces. The slate is placed down and the audience asked to fold the papers on which they have written their questions. The questions are collected on a tray and a spectator is asked to select one from the bunch and this is handed to the assistant holding the silk bag. The slate is now picked up, cleaned on both sides and put into the silk bag together with a piece of chalk. The assistant is now asked, first to open the slip of paper that he holds and read aloud the question, and secondly to take the slate out of the bag. On one side of the slate is found written in chalk, “You ask me the following question, will etc., etc. . . . P.T.O.” On obeying the instructions the slate is turned over and the answer to the question is also found in chalk. Everything can be examined.

Requirements: One slate with two loose flaps, one to fit on each side; a glass tray; mucilage-alcohol mixture; carbon tetrachloride with dish and sponge; writing pads and pencils; a silk bag large enough to accommodate the slate (the one I use is somewhat like an old-fashioned Dorothy bag, or slipper bag, with a piece of silk cord running through the hem at the mouth).

The question and answer that are written on the slate are, as the reader will guess, the result of a force. The slip removed from the tray by a spectator has to be switched in transit to the assistant with the tray. For this switch many methods may be used, but one that I can recommend is an Al Baker idea utilising a thumb-tip. To achieve this switch a piece of paper is folded and inserted inside a thumb-tip in such a way that when the thumb is inserted the paper rests against the ball of the thumb. A spectator is now asked to place a folded slip (which he has taken from the tray) on the palm of the

operator's left hand. Remembering that the assistant with the bag is on the operator's right, it will be seen that to pass the paper to him the most natural way will be for the right hand to take from the left thus: as the thumb-tip of the right hand contacts the paper on the palm of the left, the latter turns palm inwards to the body, its fingers closing lightly over the thumb-tip, which retains the selected paper against palm; at the same time right hand thumb slides paper out of thumb-tip whilst the first finger of the same hand grips the paper on the opposite side. If done in an unhurried and deliberate manner it is a perfect simulation of a natural action.

Preparation. On a slip of paper torn from one of the writing pads, write a question which is sure to be written by one of the audience. In normal times if you know your audience it is not very difficult but today a big percentage will undoubtedly write, "When will the war end?" This slip is then folded across say three times and inserted in the thumb-tip which in turn is placed in the operator's vest pocket together with a piece of chalk. On one side of the slate is now written with treated chalk, "You ask me the following question—When will the war end?" P.T.O. The slate is turned over and an appropriate answer written. One flap is placed over each surface so the slate now appears blank on both sides. The slate is placed on the table together with the pads, pencils—these should be attached to the pads—and silk bag. Sponge and carbon tetrachloride should be at hand. A slip of paper is torn from one of the pads and is laid on the table.

Presentation. The pads are distributed and the invitation to write questions made. An assistant is invited to help and is seated on the right and given the silk bag. Operator picks up the slate and shows both sides to be blank. Replacing it on the table the slip of paper is picked up and the audience shown how the papers should be folded—ostensibly with the excuse that no one but the person concerned can have any inkling of what is written. Actually the manoeuvre makes sure that the folded papers are of similar size to the one concealed in the thumb-tip.

The operator then takes the piece of chalk from his vest pocket, at the same time slipping thumb into the thumb-tip. The chalk is laid on the table with, or without, an appropriate remark. The operator now collects the slips on the glass tray, and handing this latter to a spectator asks him to pick one slip of paper and to drop it on his (operator's) hand. The switch as previously described is now made and the "force" slip handed to the assistant. Operator now picks up the slate with his left hand, leaving the bottom flap on the table and keeping the exposed side towards his body. Right hand now takes the sponge and washes this side. Plenty of carbon tetrachloride is

used and the slate is turned round gradually. At this point a remark is made that the assistant should have the chalk. As the right hand holds the sponge the left hand puts the slate down momentarily and picks up chalk and hands it to the assistant who is holding the bag; the left hand then picks up slate, leaving the flap behind, and the same moves are gone through in cleaning. The slate is now put into the silk bag, and the assistant asked to drop the piece of chalk inside. The paper is unfolded and the question read by the assistant. The effect is completed by the withdrawal of the slate from the bag and the exhibition of the messages. In taking the silk bag from the assistant, the operator can get rid of the thumb-tip and paper (which it will be remembered he is still holding) by dropping it inside.

SECTION IV

METHODS FOR OBTAINING MESSAGES, NOT COVERED BY THE PREVIOUS SECTIONS

J. F. Orrin's Method.

The first of the methods I wish to mention comes from the fertile mind of my friend J. F. Orrin. A silicate slate is used and the operator paints on the slate with white paint the word or message he wishes to produce. When the paint has dried the words are blacked out with black pastel. On top of the whole, a word or words are written with ordinary chalk. If the slate is vigorously cleaned the chalk and pastel will be erased, leaving the painted message showing. This is a beautiful idea, but the originator admits in one of his books the draw-back that is bound to occur. That is, the fact that an application of black pastel on top of the paint tends to discolor it, with the result that to get the best effect a new slate and painted message is almost necessary for each performance. In discussing the method with its originator some while back I offered him a practical means of overcoming the difficulty. It is as follows: instead of a silicate slate being used an ordinary school slate is taken and a message written in chalk. A piece of celluloid such as is found in children's tracing books, is placed over this with the matt side uppermost. This piece of celluloid should be slightly larger than the slate, so that it can be slipped under the edges of the frame and thus be held in position. In this state the slate should appear quite ordinary at a distance of a few feet. The celluloid is now damped slightly (this is merely in order to apply pastel more easily) and a pastel of slate color is smeared over its surface thus hiding the writing underneath. A message or word is now written with ordinary chalk on the celluloid surface. A wipe with

a wet sponge will now have the effect of erasing the surface message, and rendering the celluloid transparent and thus revealing the message on the slate. The uses for such a method will be apparent . . . the slate is covered with a flap, the flap disposed of and the wrong message revealed. Cleaning of the slate reveals the correct message.

THE CHALK THUMB-TIP

Another useful adjunct is a thumb-tip to which a piece of chalk is attached; you thus have a "Swami" thumb-tip with chalk taking the place of pencil. This can very easily be made if the reader possesses a metal thumb-tip. A small piece of chalk is taken and placed in position on the ball part of the thumb-tip. A piece of medical flesh-coloured adhesive tape is then wound round chalk and thumb-tip leaving about an eighth of an inch of chalk protruding (see illustration).



Dotted lines show position of thumb-tip under adhesive tape.

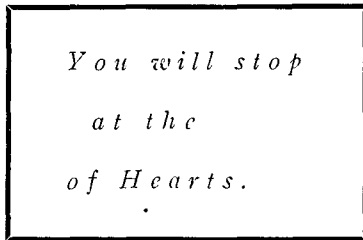
How figure is added on slate.

It will be found that if the operator places the thumb-tip on either of his thumbs and holds the slate in front of him with both hands, it is an easy matter to write on the surface of the slate nearest to him. It is obvious that the amount of writing to be done is limited, but the following is an example of its usefulness.

A spectator is offered a deck of cards with a request that he shuffles it thoroughly. He is then to think of one of the suits. He is asked which suit it is and the operator picks up a slate and writes something on it. Keeping the written side away from his audience, the operator asks the spectator with the cards to deal the cards face up, one at a time and stop at the first card of the suit he mentioned. Supposing that the suit was hearts, the spectator may stop at the four. Pointing out that the cards have never been in his hands and

that the choice of suit was free, the slate is turned round; on it is found written: "You will stop at the 4 of hearts."

The secret is as simple as it is subtle. When the suit has been chosen the operator writes on the slate—



A space being left for the denomination of the particular hearts card. The operator holds the slate with the message facing him. The spectator now deals and stops at the first heart. In recapitulating what has happened the operator has ample time to add in the blank space the figure 4. The beauty of this effect is that most people will be prepared to swear that the suit decided upon was chosen *after* the prediction was written.

If the thumb-tip is on the right thumb, the best writing position is obtained by holding the right edge of the slate between the first and second fingers (this gives full play for the thumb) whilst the left hand holds its corresponding edge in a similar manner. Care must be taken so that the audience get no flash of the chalk.

MAX HOLDEN'S METHOD

A favorite method originated by Max Holden utilizes starch as a writing medium. For impromptu and close-up work this is unequalled, because there is absolutely no sound while the thumb writing is being done. Mr. Holden's thumb tip consists of a small circle of adhesive tape with a small hole cut out of its center. In this hole is placed a small lump of starch. Lay the adhesive on your table, sticky side up, where you can obtain it when needed simply by pressing down on it with your thumb. This Holden tip is used as explained in the above trick.

VERRALL WASS' METHOD

Another method for adding a single figure was outlined by Verrall Wass. This was an adaptation of a rising card idea by Tom Sellers. The operator has his wand tucked under his left arm. One end of this wand has attached to it a piece of chalk instead of the

more usual celluloid tip. It can be realised that if a slate surface is brought in contact with it a slight movement of either slate or wand will produce the desired figure.

WOODHOUSE PITMAN'S METHOD

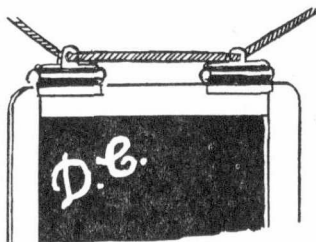
One of the most effective methods for obtaining writing on a slate which can be examined and marked on both sides, was originated by Woodhouse Pitman. Some of you may remember it being presented at a Grand Séance many years ago. This method of accomplishing an apparent impossibility is again the acme of simplicity. A piece of fairly heavy black paper is taken and a word written on it in white chalk (this word, needless to say, is one that the operator intends to produce on the slate as a climax to his experiment.) This word is then cut out with a pair of scissors (for this reason the operator should see that the writing is continuous—a specimen is illustrated).



To obtain the effect, the operator, prior to presentation, folds a large handkerchief to a size slightly larger than the cut out word. This handkerchief is placed at the rear of the table. On the non-chalk side of the cut out paper a few dabs of some viscous substance, such as Seccotine, are placed. I have actually found, laughable as it may seem, that treacle answers best for the purpose. This piece of paper is now laid on the handkerchief tacky side upwards. The procedure is now as follows: The operator offers a slate for examination and asks that it may be marked plainly on both sides. Returning to the stage, the slate upon some pretext, is laid down on the cut out paper. The presence of the handkerchief affords enough pressure to press the paper against the surface of the slate. It only remains now for the operator to bring the effect to a conclusion. If the cutting out is well done the illusion is perfect at a few feet.

A presentation that I have used with this particular method is as follows: The stage is set with the operator's table central; on this rests the handkerchief with the necessary cut out on top, and in front of the handkerchief rests a tray. This latter contains the slate and a number of postcards on which pictures of famous magicians are portrayed. About 3 ft. above the table and running from one side of the stage to the other, is fixed a piece of silk ribbon. At the sides of the

stage this ribbon should be fastened as high as possible and before being placed in position two large bulldog clips are threaded. These clips will naturally fall to the lowest part of the ribbon—over the table. The central portion of the ribbon is now lifted and slipped over a hook at the rear of the stage, thus allowing freedom of action around the table until the ribbon is required. A cup, used for the Cups and Balls trick is at hand, also a piece of chalk. The cut-out I used was the name “Comte.”



Method of suspending slate from ribbon.

The procedure is as follows: The operator picks up the slate and postcards and advances into the audience. The slate and chalk are handed to a member of the audience with the request that he will examine the slate and then make some distinctive mark on each side. Whilst this is being done the operator forces the postcard bearing a picture of Comte. Leaving this postcard in the spectator's hands, the operator takes the slate and returns to the stage. Mentioning the fact that he wishes to raise the spirit of the selected magician under test conditions, the operator deposits the postcards on the tray whilst the slate is laid down on the cut out as the operator steps back to release the ribbon. This is now steadied over the table with one hand whilst the other picks up the slate, the side to which the cut out is adhering being kept away from the audience. A clip is now fastened at each end of the slate and in this state is left suspended over the table. Stating that he has in his possession some article that was used by each of the magicians portrayed, the operator asks the spectator the name of the magician. When “Comte” is announced the operator removes the cup from its hiding place. The piece of chalk is taken and the usual pass made for apparently putting a ball under a cup. “Now we shall see some of Comte's magic!” The cup is lifted showing that the chalk has disappeared. In placing the cup down the chalk is introduced. The slate is then removed from the clips, showing the name “Comte” written across the marked surface, and as a logical conclusion the cup is lifted, revealing the chalk once more.

It will be noted that the use of the ribbons and the clips gives a perfect pretext for putting down the slate. It is also effective to have the slate marked with coloured chalk, the word to appear being written in white chalk.

METHODS OF PSEUDO MEDIUMS

A method which is good because the slate can be examined before and after the message appears, is one which was in fashion for a while with pseudo mediums. We will suppose that the operator is demonstrating an effect in which the answer to a sum appears on an examined slate. On the presumption that as the result of a force the figures will be 9167, the operator obtains a piece of good quality felt and upon its surface writes the numbers in the correct order. With a pair of sharp scissors he then carefully cuts the figures out of the felt. Laying the figures in the order in which they will appear on the slate, their surface is smeared with seccotine and a piece of cardboard laid on top; a heavy book or paper weight is laid on the cardboard. When the seccotine is dry the cardboard is turned over and the figures will be seen in reverse. To incorporate this fake with the effect, it is placed on the operator's table and a quantity of French chalk dusted across the surface of the felt. The slate, after being examined, is cleaned with a damp sponge and under some pretext is placed down on top of the felt. The fact that the surface is damp causes the particles of French chalk to adhere to the surface of the slate and form the required set of figures. Giving the moisture time to evaporate, the operator turns the slate round; if water is found to be too slow in evaporating, carbon tetrachloride might be used. A natural pretext for placing the slate down was given in the previous method and could serve a similar purpose here.

COMEDY TYPE METHOD

A picture or message is drawn or written on a silicate slate; over this is placed a piece of black flash paper cut to fit just inside the slate frame. By means of a small dab of conjurer's wax at each corner, the flash paper is stuck to the slate. In this state the slate at a distance of a few feet (provided the flash paper has not been crumpled before use) looks unprepared. If the tip of a lighted cigarette is now pressed in the center of the flash paper it will not flash off in the usual way, but will burn outwards from the centre to the edges, creating an unusual effect which culminates in the appearance of the message or picture on the slate.

Besides simply obtaining a picture or message by burning the paper, a drawing could be made on the flash paper as well as on the

slate proper, thus causing a transformation. A few ideas in both directions are as follows:—

1. The operator remarks that he will show how the modern magician produces a rabbit from a hat. The slate is shown with drawing of hat on it. A touch of flame and a rabbit appears on the slate.

2. The operator talks of an unscrupulous person who burnt his house in order to get the insurance money. Picture of a ramshackle house on slate. "He started a fire with a cigarette end." Flash paper is touched off and a picture of a cheque appears on the slate.

3. The operator says he will try to raise the spirits. Blank slate shown; flash paper is touched off and drawing of a "Johnnie Walker" bottle appears.

4. Operator mentions the Indian Mango trick. Slate is shown with mango seed drawn upon it. Flash paper is touched off and a coloured picture of a flowering tree appears.

5. By using a flap as well, the operator can show the slate blank on both sides. A wrong message is produced, written on the flash paper. This is then touched off and the correct one produced.

ONE OTHER METHOD

Taking a slate, the operator writes with a piece of stearine the message he wishes to produce. This marking, at a little distance, is invisible. By simply, in the act of cleaning the slate, dusting a quantity of French chalk over the stearine, it is caused to adhere, and the message appears, apparently written in chalk. I have found that a lady's powder puff is the best medium for applying the French chalk.

SECTION V.

THE USE OF THE SLATE AS AN AUXILIARY

To those who indulge in mentalistic magic, the slate is not only an object which fits naturally into the setting, but is an invaluable assistant in innumerable ways, of which the undermentioned form a few:—

1. The secreting of information.
2. The conveyance of information to an assistant.
3. As cover for opening billets.
4. As a drawing board. Used by a spectator in this respect, methods have been devised whereby drawings made by a spectator, on a slate, are duplicated by the operator on another slate.
5. As a cover for billet switching.

THE SECRETING OF INFORMATION

As an illustration I will describe a simple but extremely effective magazine test which I have used for some years. It has formed a closure in drawing room work to three effects in which the odds against the operator being right are multiplied with each effect. The second effect is the stabbing of a chosen card whilst blindfolded. After this effect I ask a spectator to lift up a pile of magazines from the table and to ask some other spectator to choose one. The magazines are returned to the table by the assistant, who is then asked to hand me a slate and a piece of chalk from the table. He does this and returns to his seat. I now ask for a number between 1 and 10; when it has been given I write it plainly on the slate. Another number between 1 and 10 is asked for and when this has been given I write this underneath the first figure. Supposing that the numbers given are 6 and 2, the spectator with the magazine is asked to turn to page 62, count down to line 6 and concentrate on the second word. Turning over the slate I write, a letter at a time, the chosen word.

Requisites: one real slate, a piece of chalk, a pencil, and several magazines all with similar contents but having covers of different issues.

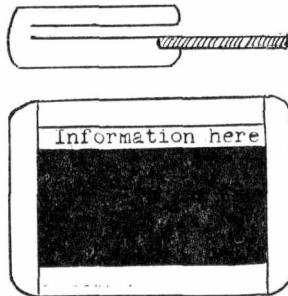
Preparation: Before actually giving this I should like to point out that from the spectators' point of view, because of the writing of the numbers underneath one another on the slate, the impression is that a page, line and word in that line have been freely selected. If this were so, the odds against the operator being successful would be thousands to one. Actually only 80 words are involved, starting with line 1, word 1, on page 11, and finishing with line 9, word 9 on page 99 (incidentally in working this effect some dozens of times I have never had the second number given as a duplicate of the first). The operator takes a pencil and writes the eighty words on the slate (where the second cipher is 0 the word is of course omitted). I suggest that they should be written in four columns of 20 per column, the page number being placed in front. Although invisible at a distance of a few feet it is easily seen by the operator by getting it at the right angle with the lighting, the glaze of the graphite standing out. Prior to presentation the slate, with pencilled side down, is laid on the table, a piece of chalk put on top, and the stack of magazines placed by the side.

Presentation: A spectator is requested to take the magazines and have one selected. When he returns with the remainder the operator asks him to put them down and hand him (operator) the chalk and slate. The numbers are asked for and written on the slate by the

operator, one at the top, and one at the bottom. When doing this keep the eyes closed (it is a good axiom when working with a blindfold, never to peek until occasion demands). The selected page is turned to, and the line and word found. Verbally stressing the hard task that has been set him, the operator turns the slate round and peeking down the blindfold sights the necessary word; this is then written a letter at a time on the pencilled side of the slate. The writing should cover the slate, thus helping to cover the pencilling. The slate is then turned round and the written word shown. There is, of course, no need for the operator to be blindfolded, but I have found it more effective that way.

In a similar way a series of drawings can be made on a slate surface. Supposing that the operator has a set of different designs or simple pictures on cards. These cards are stacked in a certain order, a duplication of the designs in this order is now drawn on the slate. If a set of cards is broken at any point and a card withdrawn by a spectator who is asked to concentrate on the design, a cut of the cards will bring the card immediately above the chosen card to the bottom of the stack. By sighting this card and in attempting to draw the spectator's card, the operator looks at his key; the design following the one which he sighted being the one in the spectator's keeping. If the pencil is made with an HB it will stand up for several shows providing the chalk marks are erased with a piece of heavy pile plush.

The operator who may feel dubious about his ability to see pencil marks on a slate, may be interested in a trick slate which I had constructed some time back. It consists of an ordinary silicate slate, on top of which is a flap capable of sliding backwards and forwards, incisions in the frame allowing for this movement. Where the slate surface is exposed by the movement of the flap, a piece of white paper is pasted, and on this the necessary information is written. The illustration should make this clear. Supposing that an effect similar



Section of slate showing slot for flap.
Lower sketch shows flap slid down exposing information. Dotted lines indicate its position in frame.

to the one already outlined is being presented, the operator picks up the trick slate and a piece of chalk. A slight pressure of the thumb slides the flap in whichever direction is needed and the operator is in possession of the desired information.

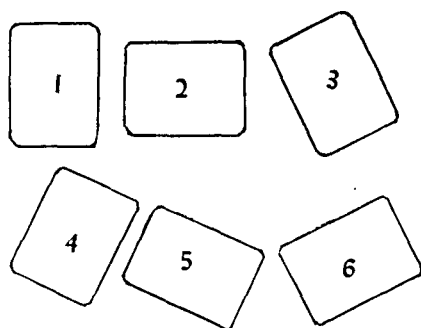
The reader will realise that other mechanical slates can easily be devised, the method of revealing the information depending upon the mechanical ingenuity of the designer.

THE CONVEYANCE OF INFORMATION TO AN ASSISTANT BY MEANS OF A SLATE

Possibly one of the easiest ways of accomplishing this is by using a thumb-tip pencil writer. Let us suppose that the operator's assistant is seated in another room. The operator asks a spectator to select any card he wishes from an ordinary deck. Whether the operator has the card selected face down or face up is a matter for himself, but assuming that he has gained knowledge of the card taken, he adjusts a thumb-tip pencil writer on his right thumb. With this same hand he picks up a slate from the table, while with his left hand he takes a piece of chalk from his pocket. Impressing on all present the sheer impossibility of his assistant having any knowledge of the selected card, the operator asks someone to take the slate and chalk to the assistant. Whilst he is saying this the operator, with the pencil writer, puts the initials of the card on the frame of the slate, or on the slate itself. The latter is better, but more difficult. The slate is taken to the assistant, who looks at the pencil marks and then writes the name on the slate. The slate is then brought back to the operator and another experiment in pure thought transmission is brought to a successful conclusion. This method can of course be used for things other than cards. With the operator and assistant memorising a number of articles and associating them with a number, the mere penciling of such a number on the slate gives the necessary clue.

ANOTHER METHOD in which the slate plays a useful part in conveying information, is that in which the relative positions of slate and chalk are placed. Supposing that the information is required for cards; it is possible by the positioning of a slate to give six values. If the slate has a slight mark on the frame on one side, by turning the slate over twelve values can be obtained.

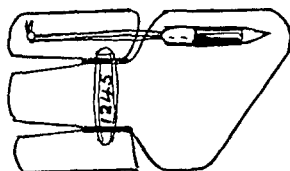
The illustration shows the positions for obtaining these values, and thus assuming that a deck of cards is intended for use, the ace to the Queen are represented. (Let us leave the question of the King for the moment.) The suits are represented by different pieces of chalk. A long piece that has been used both ends represents hearts, a short piece used both ends represents diamonds, a long piece broken



at one end represents clubs, whilst a short piece broken at one end represents spades. The presentation is such that the operator's assistant is outside the room. The slate which is to be used rests on a chair. The two pieces of chalk representing the black suits are placed in the operator's left side pocket and those representing the red suits are placed in the right side pocket. A card is selected from the deck. Once again the operator stresses the impossibility of his assistant having any knowledge of that card. Whilst saying this he takes the slate from the chair and places it on a table in the position necessary to represent the value of the card. He then takes the necessary piece of chalk from his pocket so that the suit is denoted—an easy thing as the red suits are in one pocket and the black suits are in the other. The chalk is laid by the side of the slate *unless the card selected is a King*. Quite obviously in this case the position of the slate doesn't matter, the fact that the chalk is *on* the slate is definite evidence that such a card has been selected. To complete the effect, the operator has the assistant summoned back to the room, whilst he goes to the extreme end. The assistant writes the name of the selected card on the slate. It will be seen that if *this method* is used first, the previous method with the thumb-tip writer may be used to repeat the effect under more stringent conditions.

THE THIRD METHOD does not really involve the slate as a medium of transmission, but, as a piece of chalk is necessary, a slate forms a natural complement. Although the method is old and can be found in Robinson's *Spirit Slate Writing*, it is remarkable to relate that thirty years after its publication the method was marketed by Julius Zancig at ten dollars. The method is simplicity itself. A piece of chalk is taken and one side filed or sandpapered until it has a flat surface. The information to be conveyed to the assistant is written *secretly* on this flat side of the chalk by the operator. The way in which this can be done is a matter for the individual, but I will give

two suggestions. Supposing that members of the audience have written several lines of numbers and these are finally cast, giving a total. It is this total the operator wishes to convey to his assistant who is



Fake for holding chalk in pocket.

seated in another room. While the casting is being done the operator with a piece of chalk and a small piece of pencil in his hands, which are held behind him, stands in a nonchalant way and at the same time writes the total on the flat side of the chalk. If the operator is good at casting he can beat the spectator to the total. This is, in my opinion, a method which in good hands requires a lot of beating, but if the operator is nervous of adopting such a bold procedure and would prefer some cover while the actual writing is being done, I suggest that a piece of thick cardboard be cut to the shape shown in the diagram. The addition of two elastic bands hold the chalk in place, making it quite a simple job to move it when required. A dance pencil is secured to one corner of this card and the whole is placed in the operator's right hand trousers pocket, the chalk side being away from the operator's body. He will now find it an easy matter, while standing hand in pocket, to jot down the necessary information. Whichever method the operator adopts, the subsequent procedure is the same: the piece of chalk is laid on the slate and given to a member of the audience to take to the assistant, who, after noting the information on the chalk, writes it on the slate.

III THE SLATE AS A COVER FOR BILLET READING

The magician who performs in public and features some form of billet reading, is often faced with the problem of secretly reading the contents of such billets. Unlike the fraudulent medium, he cannot always set his own conditions, and in addition he has, possibly, the attention of one hundred pairs of eyes instead of one or two. For such occasions the slate forms a perfect cover. Let me outline an elementary example. We will suppose that a member of the audience has been requested to write a name on a slip of paper. This same spectator is now requested to fold the paper once and again. The slip is now taken by the operator who in the act of dropping it into a glass

or passing to another member of the audience for safe-keeping, switches it for a blank slip. (The switching of billets is a subject on its own. The Al Baker switch mentioned in the effect "Question and Answer" is admirable for occasion, but as in most cases possession of the spectator's slip is important, it might be obtained in much the same way that the magician obtains a folded bank note which is placed in an envelope, *i.e.*, through a slit in the envelope or the use of a thumb-tip; the envelope, apparently containing the billet, is then burnt, whilst the operator is left with the needed billet.)

The hand containing the spectator's folded paper goes to the pocket to obtain a piece of chalk and at the moment the fingers are covered the paper is unfolded. The hand is withdrawn with the edge of the paper clipped between the first and second fingers of the hand, whilst the piece of chalk is held at the tips of the thumb and first finger. The left hand picks up a slate from the table. The slate is brought up to chest level, and the right hand with the chalk and billet meets it. This hand holds the edge of the slate between the third and fourth fingers. This way of holding brings the opened billet well over the surface of the slate which should be inclined so that no glimpse of the paper can be obtained by the spectators. The thumb of the left



hand reaches over and presses the billet against the surface of the slate. During the whole of this handling of the slate the performer's actions should appear casual.

The performer, indicating that he is going to undertake an experiment in thought reading under extremely difficult conditions, asks the person who wrote on the slip to visualise the name written. The performer, to emphasise a point, lifts the chalk with his right hand, the slate and billet being retained in the left hand. The chalk is lowered on to the slate and after glimpsing the name written on the slip, the performer writes the name on the slate. Whilst the right hand

is engaged in writing, the left thumb pulls the billet on to the rim of the slate. The performer asks the spectator who wrote on the billet, to state aloud the name he wrote. This having been done, the right hand moves across to the left side of the slate and with the left hand acting as a fulcrum swings it round to show that he has divined the spectator's thought correctly. At the moment the right hand touches the left side of the slate, the left thumb pushes the billet into the right palm.

Once the performer has possession of a billet the slate can always be used as cover, and although I have outlined a particular way of utilising such cover, it is for the individual to discover the method most suited to his particular needs.

IV THE USE OF A SLATE AS A DRAWING BOARD

One might say, quite rightly, that it always serves that purpose, but let us examine how its normal usage can heighten the effect of a conjurer's trick. Here is an instance. The performer has two slates, some chalk and a pack of "Telepatha" cards (these cards, as previously mentioned, consist of a number of straight-forward designs and were introduced for E.S.P. tests). One of these cards is selected by a spectator who is asked to impress the design on his memory. The card is then replaced and the performer pockets the cards. The spectator is handed a slate and a piece of chalk. Taking the other slate and another piece of chalk, the performer walks to the other end of the room. He then impresses on the audience that the spectator is thinking of a geometrical design. (*No mention is made of a card with a design having been chosen. The cards are now out of sight.*) The spectator is now requested to reproduce his thoughts by drawing the design on the slate he holds. The performer at the same time starts drawing. When both slates are turned round they show that the performer has duplicated the drawing. To a lay audience this effect appears as genuine thought transmission. I mentioned that the cards were out of sight; at the end of the experiment they are out of mind, and the effect on the audience is that the *spectator thought of a design*. It is psychological play entirely, and the slates, although playing a passive part, help to make the effect. The information regarding the card selected can of course be obtained in many ways; personally, I should stack the deck.

A SECOND ROUTINE

Another method in which a drawing made on a slate is duplicated by the performer, is where the use is made of a small convex (diminishing) mirror. The procedure is as follows:—

A spectator is requested to draw some geometrical pattern on a slate which he is handed together with a piece of chalk. Whilst this is being done the performer turns his back, this gives him the opportunity to secure the small mirror which he finger-palms in the right hand. When the spectator says that he has finished the drawing, the performer turns round and asks the spectator holding the slate to concentrate on the drawing he has made. "I want you to hold it right in front of you and visualise what you have drawn." As this is said,



the performer walks across to the spectator and gripping the spectator's right hand with his own left, raises this hand so that the slate in a vertical position is brought to the spectator's eye level. At the same time, apparently to help this action, the performer's right hand touches the top left hand side of the slate. This action enables the performer to obtain a reflection in miniature of the drawing on the

slate. The performer then picks up another slate and duplicates the spectator's drawing. Just one word: the move for glimpsing the drawing is not difficult but it must be practised so that the necessary angle for getting the reflection is obtained instantly. You cannot, however leisurely a worker you are, play indefinitely with the spectator's slate. To the audience it should simply seem that you are placing the slate on the spectator's eye level and nothing else.

A THIRD ROUTINE

Another method in which the performer duplicates the writing made on a slate by a spectator was published in *Jinx* No. 8. It was contributed by Dr. L. E. Duncanson. The effect is not quite the same as those mentioned previously, because here a spectator is asked to write a name and a number, as well as drawing a small geometrical pattern on a slate. This is all done whilst the performer's back is turned; in fact it can be done while he is absent from the room or hall. The spectator is asked to show the audience what he has written and then erase the chalk marks from the slate. This done, the performer turns round and taking the slate and chalk which have just been used the performer asks the audience to think of what was written and drawn on the slate. The writing and drawing are then successfully duplicated by the performer.

The means by which this effect is accomplished is by preparing the chalk. It is treated with oil, but I must digress for a moment. Dr. Duncanson instructs his reader to take a piece of chalk and let it soak in "three-in-one" oil and then allow it to dry. I have spent some time in experimenting and have found that even a slight application of oil to that part of the chalk which is to be used renders it useless as a medium for writing. Convinced, however, that oil and chalk in the U. S. A. may differ slightly from our own particular products, and believing that here was a first class effect, I tried out the method of dipping one end of a stick of chalk into some "three-in-one" oil and allowing capillary attraction to do the rest. I then broke off the end that had been dipped into the oil and used the rest of the piece. The result was satisfactory. That is the end of the digression and most of the preparation. There is, however, just one other thing, and that is that the slate must have its surfaces free from grease, and therefore, prior to use, should be wiped with a sponge dipped in a solution of ammonia. The procedure in the effect is as follows: the spectator is handed the slate, the prepared chalk and a duster. He is instructed what to do. Although in the effect as described three things were to be done, it rests with the individual operator. We will, however, suppose that the spectator has written a name, a number, and

then drawn a geometrical figure. He shows the slate to the audience and then, taking the duster, cleans the slate and erases the chalk marks. The small amount of oil in the chalk leaves a very thin line of oil which can be seen by the operator when he takes the slate and gets it at a certain angle to the light, easily found by experiment. It only remains for him to duplicate what the spectator originally wrote and drew. It is desirable that the spectator, when using the slate, should not be placed in too strong a light.

THE SLATE AS A MEANS FOR SWITCHING BILLET'S

I shall give just two methods. The first is very simple and has its use on some occasions. It is as follows:—

The operator picks up a slate on which rests a pencil and a piece of paper, which is already creased for folding. Under the rim of slate is a duplicate piece of folded paper, the same size as the spectator's piece, and this is picked up with the slate. (Or the spectator's piece may be folded and he is asked to unfold it.) The paper and pencil are proffered to a spectator with a request that he should write a message or name and then fold the slip. Supposing that the slate is held in the right hand, the operator receives the folded billet with his left hand. He then apparently takes the billet with his right hand, at the same time taking the slate in the left hand. To accomplish this change over the billet is passed under the slate. At the moment it is covered, the right hand moves away with the duplicate paper whilst the spectator's paper is gripped under the frame of the slate with the left. As a movement by itself it is of course of no value, there obviously must be a follow-through, and so the operator drops the paper in his right hand into a glass, or burns it in the flame of a candle.

THE SECOND METHOD is a mechanical one, and is used for switching visiting cards or similar cards in small envelopes. The means for achieving this is a slate made upon similar lines to the tray commonly used in the "Just Chance" effect. Markings on the slate effectively conceal any joins in the wood work.

I have now reached the end of this discourse dealing with a part of magic which has always interested me. To those who would wish to extend their knowledge regarding slate effects beyond this, I would recommend the following books, which although not constituting a complete bibliography, help to show the diverse ways in which such an ordinary looking article can be used in magic.

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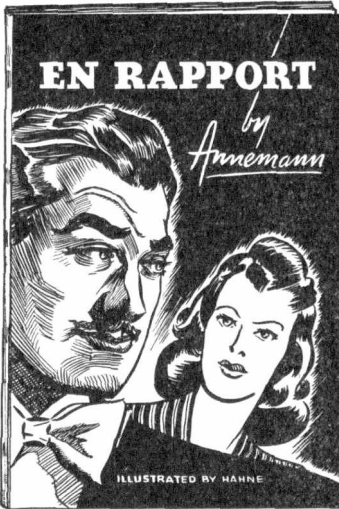
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