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WATER WIZARDRY

CHAPTER I

LITTLE TRICKS

The following tricks are suitable for informal performances. These tricks are easy, but I advise the amateur conjurer to try them over privately a few times before showing them to an audience. The first trick I call

THE IMPOSSIBLE

Three tumblers, a jug of water, and a piece of stiff paper about eight inches by four are required. Pour the water into the tumblers until each is about half full. Be very anxious—before an audience—to see that there is the same quantity of water in each glass, not that this little detail has anything to do with the actual working of the trick, but it may lead people to think that it has—until they see you do the trick.

Now, place the paper on the edges of two of the glasses, forming a kind of bridge between them. Pick up the third glass and let it rest, while the hand still holds it, on the paper bridge. Naturally, the paper will sink down under the weight. Then you move the two glasses a little nearer to each other and try again, and again the paper bends under the weight of the glass you place on it.

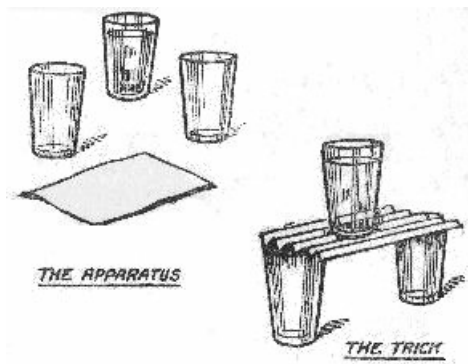


FIG. 1

You pretend to be in difficulties and encourage the "knowing ones" in your audience to jeer at you as you try the trick again and again. You explain that there is a way of resting the glass on the paper in such a way that the paper shall not sink down. Some brainy person will then say, "Impossible!"—or it is to be hoped that they will—because that will give you the opportunity of saying:

"Thank you. I remember it now. 'Impossible' happens to be the name of the trick; thanks for giving me the clue. It won't be such a bad trick—will it?—if I make a bridge between these two glasses with this piece of paper and then place the other glass on the bridge. . . ."

"With the water still in the glass," says one of your victims.

"Of course—with the water still in the glass."

Some members of your audience will be sure to say that it cannot be done; others will beg to be allowed to think it out. You will probably hear whispering:

"The water in the glasses has something to do with it. Why was he so jolly careful to get the same quantity of water in each glass? Now, wait a minute. . . ."

This is where you chuckle secretly. You invite anyone to come and try the experiment. Your audience will suggest putting something under the paper—a strip of cardboard or something of that kind. You work up the excitement as you say: "No cardboard is used in the trick."

Your audience will jump to the conclusion that something besides the articles they see is used, but they are wrong. The trick can be done when you know how to do it.

When everyone has "given it up" fold the paper in pleats lengthwise, open out the pleats a little, and rest the paper on the

tops of two of the glasses. The paper is then in corrugated form and it will bear the weight of the third glass, half full of water, upon it. You have achieved the "impossible."

Of course you could do the trick in about half the time by merely asking: "Can you do this?" and then proceeding to do it, but by working up the trick in the way I have suggested you make it more effective.

You will now see the necessity of a little private rehearsal with the glasses and the paper that you are going to use. You have to make sure that the paper is sufficiently thick, that the pleats are folded properly (they must not be too wide) and that the glass is not too heavy. The trick is quite simple with a "pony" glass, but as the base of the glass is small the pleats of the paper must also be small; otherwise you will have difficulty in balancing the glass on the paper.

"AN OLD ONE"

If you have a small boy in your audience when you start to do your next trick you will be sure to hear him say that he has seen it before and that it is an old trick, but you need not let a little thing like that worry you. The trick is old, but I have given it a little "twist" which, I think, will leave the small boy guessing as to how it is done.

You have a glass of water. You borrow a penny, throw a handkerchief over it and ask someone to hold it over the glass; the penny is held by the edges. You instruct the person helping you to drop the penny into the glass of water when you say "Go!" They obey your instructions and the penny is heard to drop into the water. (You will understand, of course, that the handkerchief is draped round the glass, and so the penny is not seen to fall.) You pull the handkerchief away and hold the glass up to the light. The penny has vanished.

The old way of doing this trick was with an eyeglass, which was concealed in your hand. In throwing the handkerchief over the penny you brought the eyeglass up and under the handkerchief while you kept the penny concealed in your hand. The eyeglass was therefore dropped into the glass and it sank to the bottom. By using a glass of the right size it is possible to pour out the water without giving the trick away; the eyeglass adheres to the bottom of the little tumbler.

In all probability, therefore, at the conclusion of the trick the small boy in your audience will say:

"Now let's look at the tumbler."

You pass it to him at once; he thinks he has "got you," but he hasn't. The glass is empty.

The little "twist" I have mentioned consists in using an eyeglass with a hole in it. The hole enables you to attach the eyeglass by a short piece of cotton to one corner of the handkerchief. The trick is doubly effective when done in this way because at the beginning you can show that you have only the penny in your hand. Arrange the handkerchief in your pocket before commencing the trick; you will find it convenient to have it either in your right trousers pocket or the left-hand inside pocket of your coat; then you will be able to get at it easily. The prepared corner, with the eyeglass resting on it, should be at the top. When you take the handkerchief by the prepared corner from your pocket the eyeglass will hang down behind the handkerchief and be hidden there. Then take the handkerchief by the prepared corner in your left hand and apparently place the penny under the handkerchief, but of course you conceal the penny in your hand and bring up the eyeglass. Someone grasps the eyeglass by the edge (through the handkerchief) and lets it fall into the tumbler. You then take the handkerchief by the prepared corner and pull it upwards quickly and then away from the glass. Put the handkerchief into your pocket as you pour the water out of the glass to show that the penny has vanished. The small boy may ask to see the handkerchief again, and so you have taken the precaution to have another handkerchief, bunched up in your pocket, in readiness. And this is the handkerchief that you produce for inspection—if someone insists on seeing "the handkerchief" but not otherwise.

A QUAIN MIXTURE

A soda-water tumbler, a jug containing from a quarter to half a pint of water, and a cup of coffee with a little milk in it are needed for this experiment.

The trick is to pour both the coffee and the water into the big tumbler and then separate them again. Possibly somebody will attempt this feat by first placing a small tumbler in the large one, pouring the coffee into the small tumbler and the water around it. But can it be said that you pour both the coffee and the water into the tumbler when you really pour the

coffee into another glass placed inside the tumbler? No, that solution does not work.

Here is the way in which you carry out your intentions.

Pour the coffee into the big tumbler and place on it a disc of thin cardboard; the disc should reach nearly to the edge of the tumbler. Then pour the water very slowly, a few drops at a time, on to the top of the cardboard, which breaks the fall of the water. The water runs off to the edge, and as the coffee is heavier than the water the latter remains on the top. The cardboard disc floats upwards with the water, and so the first half of the trick is accomplished.

The separation of the liquids can be brought about in two or three ways. For example, you can offer to drink the coffee without drinking the water, and you achieve this apparent miracle by merely putting in a straw and sucking up the coffee; in that way you have separated the two liquids.

With the help of a scent spray you can pump the water into the jug again, taking great care, of course, not to disturb the surface of the coffee. You can also take out nearly all the water with a small sponge and the remainder with a piece of blotting paper.

THE SHOWER BATH

This is not really the title of the next trick, but it is sometimes suitable for it when the trick is performed by a man who has never had a rehearsal. It is quite a good trick to play on to somebody at a Christmas party. Just tell your audience that instead of doing the next trick yourself you will show somebody else how to do it. Then pour out a glass of water, put a small plate on the top of it and, pressing the plate with the left hand on to the glass and holding the glass with the right hand, turn the lot over. Thus you have a glass of water inverted on a plate.

The trick is to drink the water, but in order to get the glass to your mouth you must use only one hand.

To do it—lift the plate with the glass upon it and place it on your head. Balance it there for a second. Then, pressing the glass against the plate with the right hand, bend down to the table until you can put the glass on the table and leave the plate on the top of it. Then all you have to do is to lift the plate and drink the water.

There is another way of doing this trick, and if the first does not result in a shower bath for the man who is trying it for the first time the second way is almost sure to have that effect.

After the glass of water is inverted on the plate, bend down until the top of the head touches the bottom of the glass. Then, pressing the plate against the glass slowly raise the head and stand erect. Stand quite still, remove the plate, and then remove the glass and drink the contents—if you like.

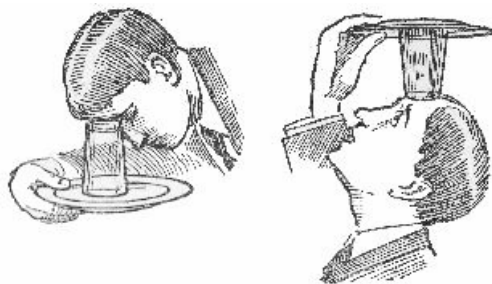


FIG. 2

There is a kind of first cousin to this trick. Take two claret glasses. Half fill one of them with water and place the empty glass on the top of it. The trick is to pour the water into the empty glass and drink it, but you must use only one hand and you are not to touch the top glass with it.

Pick up the two glasses together by taking the bottom one by the stem (it is just as well to practise this with your own glasses and to stand over a bed during the rehearsal) and then pull off the top one with your mouth and hold it firmly between the teeth. Then you can pour the water into it. Still holding the other glass in your hand place the glass with the water on the top of it, and then, holding the two together, you can drink the water.

A STEADY HAND

You can use one of the glasses for this trick. Half fill it with water and then, tilting the glass, try to balance it on the edge of the foot. With care and a little practice you can accomplish this feat by sheer skill, but you simplify it considerably if you take the precaution to slip a match under the table-cloth before you begin. If you are doing the trick at a dinner table it is just possible that some evil-disposed person may notice the little bump in the tablecloth caused by the match, and so you prepare for that charge by tying a piece of cotton to the match. The end of the cotton hangs down below the tablecloth close to your hand, and directly you have done the trick you quietly pull the match away, and then you can challenge Mr. Know-all to do the trick himself.

IN THE SOUP

The soup in this case is represented with water, and you can use the same glass; it should be about half full of water. Lay a piece of nice shiny cardboard on the top of it—a piece about eight inches square is large enough—and on the cardboard and exactly over the glass stand a cork. On the top of the cork balance a tangerine orange. Now, if you give a sharp knock to the cardboard with your right hand the cardboard should go skimming away, taking the cork "off the premises" with it, and the tangerine should drop into the water.

This feat appears to be very difficult, but it is not; the weight of the tangerine helps you. When you can do the trick every time with one glass you can try it with two glasses—using a larger piece of cardboard, of course—and then three glasses, and, finally, four. It is not so easy then.

This feat is often performed on the stage, but eggs—or, rather, imitation eggs—are used in place of the tangerines, and the trick in that form is difficult because the eggs are light. Don't follow up your stroke when you are hitting the cardboard away. Just give it a sharp knock and bring the hand to a standstill with a jerk. Look around you before you do the trick; otherwise, you may hurt somebody with the flying piece of cardboard. To avoid any accident of this kind get a friend to stand a little to the side of your table so that he may catch the cardboard.

When the trick is performed on the stage a tea-tray is generally used, and the raised edge of the tray adds considerably to the difficulty of the trick.

ON THE EDGE

Hold a card by the sides between the fingers and thumb of the right hand, the face of the card being towards the audience. Now, can you balance a glass half full of water on the top of the card?

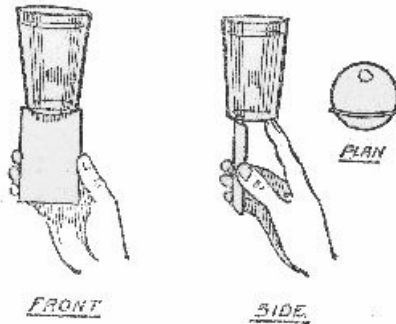


FIG. 3

I know of four ways of doing this trick, but we need not take any notice of the first because you are not likely to trouble to learn it; it consists in actually doing what you profess to do—balance the glass. It can be done, but you need a very steady hand and long practice.

The second way is by the aid of a specially prepared card. This is made of two cards, fastened together.

Fold a card lengthways in half. Stick one-half to the back of another card and then fold back the half which is not stuck

so that the back of the prepared card may appear to be the back of an ordinary card.

Now, if you hold up this card by the sides you can easily fold the loose half back a little when you are putting the glass on the edge of the card, and thus you get a firm standing place for the glass. If you wish to be able to throw this card down on the table without giving away the secret (because there will naturally be a little curve in the part which you folded back) you must make a little spring hinge by means of a strip of india-rubber down the card. A card prepared in this way can be bought at a conjuring shop. The trick is quite a good one when done in this way, but, of course, it has this drawback. If you are performing at a friend's house and you are using borrowed cards it is more than probable that the backs of the borrowed cards will not match the back of the trick card. Well, you can do the trick without the use of a specially prepared card, and this brings us to the third method.

Take any card and fold it in halves lengthways. Then fold it back again and put it on the top of the pack. Of course, if you are performing with a borrowed pack of cards you will have to seize your opportunity to do this when the attention of the audience is directed to another trick, or you can do it before your performance begins.

Now, pick up the two top cards together and hold them in the right hand in the way described, with the face of the lower card towards the audience. You will understand, of course, that to the audience these two cards must appear to be one card. When you take the glass with your left hand and try to balance it on the top of the card the back of the left hand is towards the audience and the hand nearly covers the whole of the card. This gives you the chance of bending back the top card to make a firm resting-place for the glass. The bending is done with the right first finger. To assist you in keeping the cards nicely squared up while you are bending back the top one place the right little finger under the lower edge of the cards and the left middle finger and thumb at the sides, the left thumb being just above the right thumb. Of course, the left hand is held in this position for only a few moments while you are balancing the glass.

After you have done the trick in this way casually return the two cards to the pack and shuffle the cards, thus getting the bent card out of sight.

The fourth method is, to my mind, the best of the lot, because you use only one card. Hold it in the way described and bend it slightly, the convex side being towards the audience. Now, in the act of balancing the glass on the edge with your left hand just stick your right first finger straight up behind the card and rest the glass partly on the edge of the card and partly on the tip of your finger which, of course, is hidden by the card. It will be necessary to hold the card up fairly high so that no one can get a glimpse over the top of it. The trick is over so quickly that no one notices that the first finger is concealed behind the card.

CHAPTER II

LITTLE TRICKS—(*continued*)

I have often thought that many conjurers—amateur and professional—take themselves and their conjuring far too seriously. It is just as well to unbend occasionally, and as a little change from tricks to spring a simple catch on your audience. Here is one.

Pour some water into a glass and cover it with an opera hat. Throw a large cloth over the hat.

"Now then," you say to your audience, "do you think that I can drink the water without lifting the hat?" The answer is in the negative, as they say in the House of Commons when they mean "No."

Hold up the cloth so that it hides your face. The audience see both hands on the top edge of the cloth and therefore are convinced that you are not removing the hat. Make the sound of a man drinking from a glass. (I confess that this part of the experiment is not all it ought to be!) Then announce that you have performed the feat and drop the cloth. Somebody will be sure to pick up the hat to see if the water is in the glass; then you drink the water. You have performed the feat of drinking the water without lifting the hat.

TOPSY TURVY

A more difficult experiment—until you know the secret. Ask someone to put water into a glass when the glass is held upside down. Naturally, they give it up. Then:

Pour some water on a plate. Crumple up a small piece of paper, light it and drop it into a tumbler; let it burn for a second or two and then invert the glass over the plate. You will see the water rush into the glass. You have kept your word and have put water into the glass when the glass has been upside down.

A SPORTING OFFER

Bend a wooden match into the form of a capital V, taking care not to break the match. Lay the match on the top of a bottle and just at the angle of the "V" place a threepenny bit. Tell someone that they may have the coin if they can get it into the bottle, but they must not touch the match, or the coin, or the bottle, or the table on which the bottle is standing, and they must not blow the coin into the bottle.

You have probably guessed—since this book has to do with water tricks—that water must be used in this trick in some way. In that case you are right. Drop a little water on the angle of the match; the wood will expand, the "V" will open and the threepenny bit will drop into the bottle.

A FEAT OF DEXTERITY

Pour some water into a tumbler and balance two pennies on the edge of the tumbler; the coins should be opposite to each other.

The trick is to remove the coins together, using only a thumb and one finger.

To do this place the thumb on one coin and the first finger on the other. Quickly slide the coins down the sides of the glass and bring the first finger and thumb together, taking the coins with them.

This is a feat of dexterity; it is not difficult, but you will not do it at the first attempt. The water helps to steady the glass.

MORE THAN FULL

If a glass is full of water it will not hold anything else; that is obvious. But——

Fill a glass with water. Stand it on a level surface. Wipe the edge of the glass very carefully, because for the purpose of this experiment it must be quite dry. Then, with a steady hand bring the edge of a sixpence to the surface of the water and let the coin go. If you are careful you can put a dozen sixpences into the glass without causing the water to run over the

brim.

THE OBEDIENT CORKS

For this little experiment you want a nice large rose bowl, full of water, and seven corks. The trick is to put the corks into the water and to cause them to float in a perpendicular position.

This is how you do it. Grasp all the corks in one hand, and hold them under the water until they are thoroughly soaked. Then hold them in the position you wish them to assume and let them go; they will remain close together and in an upright position.

A PECULIAR EGG

The peculiarity of the egg used in this experiment is that it neither floats on the top of a large glass of water nor sinks to the bottom, but merely remains an inch or two under water all the time.

Make a saturated solution of salt and half fill a big tumbler with it. Then, with a spoon fill up the tumbler with ordinary water, putting it in very steadily so that it does not mingle with the brine at the bottom of the glass. Now if you drop an egg gently into the liquid—which looks like ordinary water—the egg will sink down through the water, but will come to a standstill on to the top of the brine.

THE SUSPENDED MUG

This is an easy catch—more suitable for the garden than for the drawing-room.

Tie a piece of string to the handle of a mug. Hold the other end of the string, so that the mug is suspended, and pour in all the water it will hold in that position.

Stand on a chair and ask for the services of an assistant. You tell your assistant that you are going to cut the string, and it is his job to catch the mug without spilling a drop of the water. The first assistant naturally fails because you cut the string when he is not expecting the mug to fall. Another assistant tries his luck; he probably holds his hands just under the mug. You protest that that is not fair, but you will try the trick, nevertheless. While talking you quietly move the string until the mug is just over your victim's head, and then you cut the string quickly. (Note. Don't try this trick with a bad-tempered person, or you may spoil the party, and, obviously, the man must be wearing a hard hat or the mug will hurt him badly.)

You can keep the game going for quite a little time if you can induce enough brave spirits to take a hand, but sooner or later someone is sure to suggest that you try the trick yourself. You at once consent, and you tell your audience that if they will cut the string you will most certainly catch the mug directly it falls. While making this apparently rash promise you quietly tie a little loop in the string and keep it hidden with your hand for a moment. When your assistant is holding one end of the string and everyone is prepared to see you get a ducking you take your hand away from the loop, tell your assistant to cut the string "just there" pointing to the loop, and you will catch the mug directly it falls; of course, it will not fall.

All this is only a catch, something to amuse people at a juvenile garden party. To go to the opposite extreme, here is a little trick which will "want doing" if it is to be done well.

THE STICKY GLASS

Pick up a wineglass and fill it with water; while doing so say something about the state of the glass; you can say that the stem feels a little sticky, but perhaps it will do for the trick. Dip a small square piece of paper into the glass of water and take it out again. This action naturally spills a little of the water, so you fill up the glass once more. Then you place the piece of wet paper on the top of the glass and turn the glass over, and take the hand away. The paper remains over the glass, and the water does not run out.

If there is a schoolboy present he will be sure to tell you that there is nothing in that; anybody can do it. It is even

probable that the boy will explain to you that the pressure of the air on the under surface of the paper is greater than the pressure of the water in the glass. Hence the apparent miracle. Let the dear boy prattle on. Then tell him that you have not done the trick yet.

Slowly take the paper away from the glass. The water remains. Put the paper back again; turn the glass right end uppermost, remove the paper, and show that you have nothing in your hands except the paper and the wineglass of water.

This is a capital little trick, but it needs practice. The edge of the top of the glass should be ground perfectly flat, and the base should be rather larger than the top. You also need a disc of celluloid with the edge slightly sunk so that when the disc is placed on the glass it fits there and cannot easily slip off sideways.

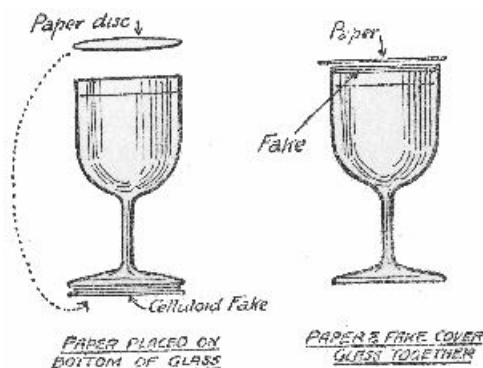


FIG. 4

Before commencing the trick dip this celluloid disc into some water and place it under the base of the glass, the sunk edge being against the glass. The water will cause the disc to adhere to the glass, and therefore when you show the glass you have nothing concealed in your hands. Fill the glass with the water and dip in the piece of paper. This causes some of the water to overflow and you naturally want to pick up the jug to fill it up again, but you are holding the glass in the left hand and the wet paper in your right. To get the right hand free you place the paper under the base of the glass and therefore under the celluloid disc while you fill up the glass with water. Then, in putting on the paper again you take the disc away with it and the disc goes quietly on the top of the glass. It is advisable to make the water overflow in the first place because you want to get the edge of the glass wet.

Press down on the paper and shape the paper round the glass and you need not worry about the rest; the celluloid disc will adhere tightly and you can wave the glass about after you have taken the paper away. You have said something in the first part of the trick about the glass being sticky, and you now mention that it must be very sticky, since all the water has stuck to it.

In replacing the paper on the top of your glass get your thumb nail under the disc and lift it up. Then remove the paper with the disc under it, place both under the glass, take away the paper, leaving the disc stuck to the base of the glass and the trick is over.

A similar trick is done with a tumbler, but as the base of an ordinary tumbler is smaller than the top the disc of celluloid cannot be hidden under the tumbler; it is usual to have it on a tray, and after wetting the paper to place the paper over the disc and pick up both together.

The tumbler used for this trick usually has a small hole made in one side (if there can be any side to a round tumbler). At the beginning of the trick the hole is closed with wax, and to conclude the trick the conjurer holds the inverted glass with the paper on it over a glass bowl, scrapes away the wax, thus admitting air, and the water rushes out, carrying the paper and disc with it into the bowl.

For a very much finer trick of this kind the reader is referred to Chapter III, "The Hydrostatic Tube."

We now return, for a moment, to our wineglass which was left at the conclusion of the trick, with a celluloid disc adhering to its base. The conjurer will naturally want to get rid of this disc at the earliest opportunity, and so he provides his own opportunity by performing this

FEAT OF DEXTERITY

First of all, the conjurer says that the base of the glass is wet. He takes out a clean handkerchief to dry it and in so doing wipes away the celluloid disc and puts it into his pocket. He pours a little of the water out of the glass, which should not be more than about half full, especially during the first rehearsals!

The feat consists in looping the loop with the glass, by swinging it right round with the hand, without spilling the water. It is as well to rehearse the feat in the garden!

Pick up the glass by holding the back of the hand towards the table and getting the stem of the glass between the second and third fingers. Extend the arm and then, with a quick semicircular sweep of the arm, which should be held stiffly, bring the glass right round and deposit it on the other side of the table. You want a little nerve, and the feat is not difficult, but it appears to be.

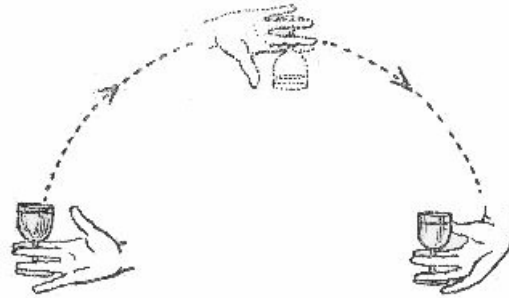


FIG. 5

Japanese performers present a very spectacular feat of this kind in which they use two large buckets tied to the ends of a rope. The buckets are swung about at an alarming pace and in "impossible" positions without a drop of water being spilled; centrifugal force explains the mystery.

THE FLOATING PIN

This is a "quieter" trick. Give someone a bowl of water and ask them to lay a pin on the surface of the water and leave it there. The pin naturally sinks to the bottom of the bowl, whereupon you complain that your directions have not been carried out properly; they are not likely to be unless the person to whom you hand the pin happens to know the secret of the trick.

Lay a cigarette paper gently on the top of the water and put the pin on the paper. In a few moments the paper will sink, leaving the pin floating on the surface of the water.

WASHING A CARD

You can begin this trick by asking someone if they have ever tried to wash a playing card with water; if so, have they noticed the effect. You ask for a pack of cards and begin the experiment by holding the pack in the left hand, with the fingers on the lower side and the thumb on the other.

There is no harm in saying that the experiment is most successful with a five-spot card, and you put, say, the five of clubs on the bottom of the pack and therefore hold the pack with that card facing the audience. Then, this is what you apparently do.

Dip a finger into some water and rub on the pip at the lower corner nearest to you. To dry the card you take your handkerchief from your pocket and dab the corner. The audience see that you have apparently washed away one of the pips.

Turn the cards over in your hand, so that the blank corner is now at the top and repeat the experiment with the pip which is now in the position occupied by the first. This action reduces the number of pips on the card to three, arranged diagonally across the face of the card.

Repeat the experiment, but this time wash away the two corner pips at once, leaving only one pip in the centre of the card. Then wash away this pip and you have a blank card, which you hand out for examination.

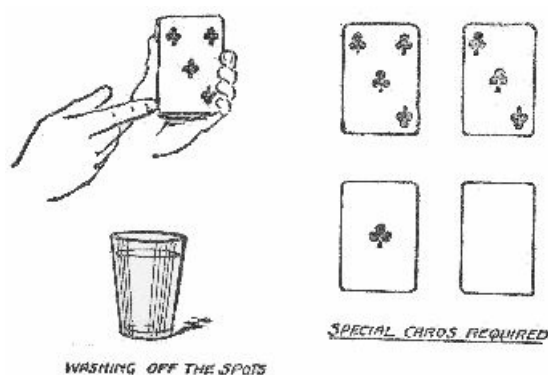


FIG. 6

To begin with, the request for the loan of a pack of cards is not quite what it seems. You arrange with a kind friend in the audience to "find" a pack of cards when you ask for one, and that person has no difficulty in "finding" the pack which you have prepared for the trick and placed in some convenient hiding-place in the house.

The disappearance of the first pip is easily managed: You dip a finger into the water, shake it, and rub the corner with a dry finger. Then shake the pack as though you were trying to dry the card; this action enables you to turn the pack, in a natural way, with its face towards the floor and thus the audience do not see that the pip is still on the card. Then you take your handkerchief from your pocket, and in so doing secretly take out a five of clubs with one spot missing behind the handkerchief. It is not a difficult matter, under cover of the handkerchief and while pretending to dab the corner of the card, to slip the prepared card on the face of the pack. Having done that, show your hands and the handkerchief to your audience, to let them see that you have not merely slipped the pip off the card, but have apparently dissolved it in water and removed all trace of it.

Directly after you have shown this card on the bottom of the pack turn the pack over in the hand, so that the blank corner is now at the top. Now if you bend the third and little fingers of the left hand slightly they will conceal the pip at that corner, but before you bend the fingers let the audience see the card. Now you have to exchange that card for another with only three pips on it, the pips being diagonally across the card.

This prepared card is at the back of the pack. While you are talking bring the right hand to the front of the pack, push up the back card with the first finger of the left hand, extend the fingers of the right hand and push the card to the tips of the fingers of the right hand, at the same time slide the card down on to the face of the pack.

This movement takes a long time to explain in print, but it is done in the fraction of a second. All you apparently do is to bring the right hand up to the pack to square up the cards.

Directly you have the "three card" at the face of the pack, bend the third and little fingers slightly and thus hide the place where the missing pip ought to be. The card is now apparently the same card which the audience saw before—a five spot with one spot missing.

This time, when you dip a finger into the water and pretend to wash away a spot you must work rather quickly, and as you take away the tips of the third and little fingers to enable you to wash away the pip which is supposed to be there, you must bring the right hand over the spot at once, otherwise the audience will see that the spot is not there! This time you have the advantage of being able to show the blank corner directly you take away your right hand. Take out your handkerchief, dab the corner with it and return it to your pocket.

Now tell your audience that if you wish to rub away two spots at once you have to use both hands. Take the cards in the right hand for a moment while you dip a finger of the left hand into the water. In the act of passing the cards from one hand to the other you slide the next card from the back to the front; this card has one pip in the centre. (If your cards have no index corners you can use the ace for this card.)

While you dip the finger of the left hand into the water you must hold the pack with the face card downwards; take it, in

the same position, in the left hand, while you dip a finger of the right hand into the water. Then rub first one corner with the left hand and then the other corner with the right hand and bring up the pack with the card facing the audience, but hold the pack in both hands with the hands at the corners (top and bottom) as though you were merely hiding the pips there. Someone is sure to tell you to "take away your hands," and, apparently reluctantly, you do so, disclosing the card with the single pip in the centre. The laugh will then be in your favour, and you take advantage of this temporary diversion to slip the next card from the back to the front of the pack. Then hold the pack by the sides in the right hand with the fingers right over the centre, and the audience will think that the single pip is still there, being hidden by the fingers.

To conclude the trick you can say that your fingers are damp enough to manage one pip and you pretend to rub it off the face of the card, which is thus blank.

Take this card away in your right hand, and offer it to someone on your left hand for examination, taking care to turn the pack down with its face to the floor as you remove the blank card, otherwise the audience will see the next card, which is the one-pip card.

The object of handing the blank card to someone on your left is to enable you to turn in that direction in a natural way, because directly you have turned you drop the pack you are holding in the left-hand pocket of your coat (or dinner jacket) and take from it another pack, from which the five of clubs has been abstracted. This is important because a juvenile audience is merciless to an amateur conjurer as a rule and someone is sure to say: "Let us have a look at the cards." Don't be in too great a hurry to hand them out for examination; always "play" with the younger members of your audience when you get the chance to do so. Of course, if the children are so exceedingly well behaved that they do not ask to see the cards you must suggest that "perhaps you would like to have a look at the cards," but I hope for your sake that the children are not of that kind. An audience of very prim and proper children may be easy to a conjurer, because they do not attempt to catch him out, but in another sense they are very difficult because it is by no means easy to engage and hold their attention. I much prefer an audience of children who are quite natural and who are therefore always eager to pounce upon any little weak point—or point which they think is weak—in a trick.

The preparation of the trick cards required for this trick is not a difficult matter. If expense is no object the best plan is to buy several packs of cards, with the backs all alike. A blank card usually goes with each pack. If the cards have no index corners you need prepare only two trick cards—one with four spots on it and one with three. To get the spots, put a ten-spot card in cold water and let it soak until you can peel away the face of it. Dry it on clean blotting paper. Then cut out the spots very neatly and paste them on two of the blank cards, taking care to get the pips at the corners in the right positions.

The other method of preparing the cards (presuming that you do not wish to invest in several packs) is to float off the backs of a couple of cards, dry them, paste white paper on them and then stick pips on the paper. The drawback to this method is that the paper will probably not match the paper on the faces of the other cards in the pack.

CHAPTER III

THE HYDROSTATIC TUBE

This trick is one of the many masterpieces of Mr. David Devant, and I am greatly indebted to him for his permission to include a full description of it in this book and to give his method of working the trick.

It was Mr. Devant's custom to follow this trick with the "Wine and Water," and he had an object in doing so, for the preparations for the second trick assisted him in performing the first.

On a tray on the table were four tumblers, the second and fourth of which (counting from the performer's left hand) were inverted. Behind the glasses there was a large glass lamp chimney with a piece of paper tucked into one end, and a finger bowl, with two spouts, filled with water, and a long hat pin.

The effect of the trick—to the audience—was as follows. The performer, having shown that the tube was not prepared in any way, closed one end with a piece of paper (half the piece which had been tucked into the tube at the commencement of the trick). He then filled the tube with water and placed the other piece of paper on the top. He then removed his hand from the lower piece and the water remained in the tube. He explained that there was no trick about that, the pressure of the air kept the paper in its place and so prevented the water from rushing out.

He then removed the paper from the lower end of the tube and still the water remained inside it. Then he took the paper from the top of the tube, and still the water remained in the tube. Having replaced the papers he picked up the large hat pin and held the tube over the bowl. He pierced the upper paper with the pin and held it there for a moment. Directly he withdrew the pin with the paper impaled on it the water fell out of the tube into the bowl, carrying the lower paper with it. The performer then showed once more that the tube was free from preparation by rattling the pin inside it, and he at once went on with the "Wine and Water" trick, using the water in the finger-bowl for that trick.

And now for the explanation. Two small discs of glass which fitted over the ends of the tube were required. The ends of the tube were ground perfectly level and the glass discs were made with a "shoulder" (or sunk edge), so that when once they were placed on the ends of the tube they could not be moved laterally. The edges of these glass discs were also ground perfectly flat and were made to fit exactly on the ends of the tube.

One of the glass discs had a hole in the centre, and this hole was filled up, just before the commencement of the trick, with a little piece of moistened soap. If the soap were prepared too long beforehand it would become crumbly and dry; it has to be soft and damp.

The other glass disc was not prepared in any way. Before the commencement of the trick the disc with the hole in it was placed on the top of the fourth tumbler—and therefore to the performer's right. The other disc was laid on the top of the second tumbler in the row of four.

The piece of paper tucked into the glass chimney was half of a double sheet of note-paper. (Tear a double sheet from side to side.)

And now for the actual performance.

Begin by taking up the glass chimney, removing the paper, picking up the hat pin and rattling it inside the chimney—thus showing that it is not prepared in any way for the trick.

Put the chimney down, pick up the paper and tear it in halves. (The object of having half a double sheet is to enable the conjurer to tear it easily; the crease is ready for him.) The action of tearing the paper is proof that there is no trickery in the paper.

Place one piece of paper on the top of the fourth tumbler (and therefore over the disc with the hole in it). Dip the other piece of paper into the glass bowl, shake it a little, and lay it on the top of the second tumbler. Take the piece from the fourth tumbler, wet it in the same way, and replace it on the top of the fourth tumbler.

Thus both pieces of paper are now wet and are over the two glass discs. Pick up the piece of paper on the second tumbler, secretly taking with it the glass disc (which, of course, is under the paper) and place it on the top of the tube, taking great care not to let the glass disc "talk" against the top of the chimney; the audience must not hear the slightest "chink" of glass knocking against glass.

Now turn the tube over, holding the disc and paper in place, with the second, third and little fingers underneath the paper, which should be moulded round the end of the chimney. Fill the chimney with water, and see that it is really full. Put the bowl down and pick up the other paper, secretly getting the disc under it, and place the disc with the paper over it on the top of the chimney.

Mould the paper round the top of the chimney and turn the chimney over, thus bringing the glass disc with the hole in it at the bottom of the chimney. Press on the disc and then slightly relax the pressure; if it is firmly in place you will feel that it is "sucking" and you can go on to the first part of the mystery.

Take your hand away from the lower end and the paper will naturally remain in position. Then, holding the tube by the middle with the right hand, peel the paper away slowly from the bottom of the tube and put the paper between the lips for a moment while you take the top paper away. In doing this you make use of an excellent little piece of showmanship; you pretend to be very nervous.

The tube is now held perfectly still for a second or two, and as the audience know that it is full of water and cannot see that there is anything either at the top or bottom of the tube, the effect is very mysterious.

Put the paper which was on the top under the lower end, pressing it well round that end, and take the other piece from the lips and mould it firmly round the top. Then invert the chimney, thus bringing the disc with the hole in it to the top again. Again press the papers well round both ends of the chimney.

Remove the lower paper once more, and still the water remains in the chimney. At this point in the trick Mr. Devant had an excellent line of patter which I hope he will forgive me for giving away; it always brought a round of laughter. "Supported entirely by voluntary contributions."

Replace the paper on the lower end of the chimney, and pick up the hat pin. Place the pin in the top paper; of course, the pin passes through the little plug of soap in the glass disc. As you take the pin out again the air naturally gets in and the water begins to fall. (It will be understood, of course, that at this stage of the trick you hold the chimney over the bowl.) Directly you feel the water is moving put the pin back into its place; this is a very important "move."

The water rushes out, naturally taking the disc and paper at the lower end with it. The pin is sticking through the top paper and therefore through the top disc. Remove the pin, taking the disc and paper impaled on it, and push the paper off into the bowl; while you do this you can lift the first paper slightly out of the bowl, so that the top disc sinks to the bottom on the top of the one already there. Then remove both papers and hold up the bowl of water. All trace of the method you employed for bringing about this very mysterious effect is now concealed, for the glass discs cannot be seen at the bottom of the bowl. You pick up the pin and once more rattle it in the glass chimney to show that you have nothing inside it, and then you go on to the next trick.

I have heard conjurers say that if they get one good trick out of a book they have received excellent value for their money. If that be true—and I, for one, certainly think it is—then, thanks to Mr. Devant, purchasers of this book have no cause for complaint, for I know of no finer trick with water than "The Hydrostatic Tube."

One little helpful hint. When the conjurer is about to put the pin through the top paper he may have a slight difficulty in finding the exact place for it. A little stain on the plug of soap will help him to find the right place at once.

The trick needs a steady hand, and the conjurer must not know the meaning of "nerves," but if he will see that the discs fit the ends of the glass chimney perfectly and will carry out these directions he need have no fear of any mishap.

CHAPTER IV

THE PASSE-PASSE TRICK

This is a very old trick, but one which is seldom performed in its original and proper form. After being out of fashion for a number of years the trick has been recently revived, and there are now several versions of the trick. To the best of my knowledge, however, all the modern versions of the passe-passe trick omit one important detail—some water or other liquid.

In the original version of the trick the performer comes forward with a bottle and a glass—if these things are not already on the table. (As a matter of fact, it is a good plan to have two small tables on either side of the stage for the presentation of this trick.) Two cardboard cylinders, one fitting inside the other, are also required, together with a small tin funnel. The bottle may be of the champagne kind, or a wine bottle, or a beer bottle; the latter is generally the most convenient; a Bass's label on the bottle serves as a kind of guarantee that the bottle is "genuine."

The performer pours water from the bottle into the glass; in fact, he fills the glass with water. Finding that he has a little too much water for his purpose he pours a little back into the bottle, using the funnel to aid him in the task of getting the water into the bottle. He then places the bottle on the table on his right and the glass on the table on his left.

The next thing to do is to show the cardboard covers to the audience, and in doing this some little amusement may be caused by pretending that you have something concealed in one of the covers. Thus, you lead off by nursing the smaller cover carefully under one arm and showing the larger cover. When this is returned to you slip it over the smaller cover, withdraw the smaller, and hand that out for examination. The audience will at once jump to the conclusion that you have concealed something in the larger cover and will demand to be allowed to "look at the other." Then the argument begins.

"But you have already seen that one," you say.

"Ah," comes the quick reply, "but you've slipped something from the other one into that since we saw it."

Take back the smaller cover, pass it through the larger one, and hand that out for examination. The audience, being now convinced that there is "some trick" in the covers, will demand to see both of them at once, and with a show of reluctance you hand out both covers at once and the audience laugh at themselves for being "had." Possibly, however, some of the more knowing ones will still think that the covers "have something to do with the trick"; if so, all the better for you, because in that case those persons are on the wrong scent altogether.

Having received the covers again you can assure your audience that the covers are made in that way to save space in packing—a remark that is sure not to be believed—and you go on to demonstrate the real use of the covers. One covers the glass, the other the bottle.

The trick is, of course, to make the glass of water and the bottle change places. You pronounce the magical word, lift the covers, and show that your command has been obeyed. Having done that it is as well to raise the glass to let the audience see that there is water in it. Then you cover the glass and the bottle again and cause them to return to their original places, and once more you show that the two covers are empty.

Unknown to the audience the conjurer uses two bottles for this trick and two glasses. The bottles are made of tin and are painted black to resemble dark glass bottles. Neither bottle is quite "ordinary." One of them has no bottom to it, and is therefore a mere shell. The other has the bottom fixed in about half-way down, leaving room for a small glass to be hidden in the bottle under the bottom. Close up against the neck of this bottle there is fixed a tiny tin tube which passes down the neck and then through the centre of the bottom. Therefore, if you merely pour water into the neck of the bottle it remains in the bottle, but if you insert a funnel into the top of the little tube and pour water into the funnel you are really pouring the water into the glass hidden under the bottom of the bottle.

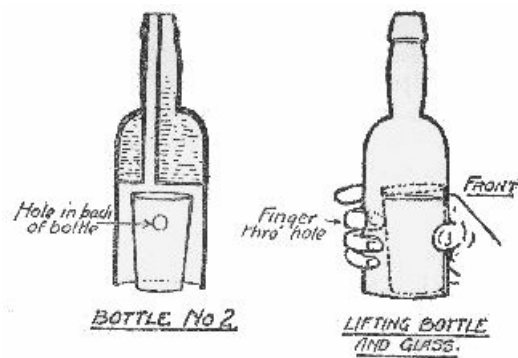


FIG. 7

Of course, both bottles must be exactly alike and the label on one must match the label on the other; it is a good plan to have a little piece "accidentally" torn off the label. At the outset of the trick a glass, similar to the "visible" one, is placed in the small bottle (the one holding the water); the shell bottle is placed over that bottle. To enable the conjurer to pick up the bottles and glass together two small holes are made in the backs of the bottles; the tip of the middle finger passes through both holes and holds the glass against the interior of the bottle. In order to prevent the glass from "talking" (making any sound by knocking against the inside of the bottle) it is a good plan to line the lower half of the bottle with cloth.

The working of the trick will now be clear. Hold the bottle in the right hand and the glass in the left. Pour out the water and stand the bottle down, taking care to keep the side with the hole away from the audience. Then apparently pour some of the water back into the bottle, but by using the funnel you pour it into the glass below. When you are practising the trick you can find out by experiment just how much water to pour back in this way, and if you make a little scratch on the glass you will guard against the fatal mistake of pouring in too much (because you cannot get it back again) or pouring too little. Obviously, the water you pour into the bottle (really into the glass below) should be equal in quantity to that which you leave in the glass.

Having settled this matter to your satisfaction place the glass on the other table or, if you are performing with only one table, keep the bottle and glass as far apart as possible; if they are close together some members of your audience may be confused and forget on which side is the bottle and which the glass.

Now comes the business of handing round the cardboard covers for examination. When you get them back again take care to hold the larger one in the right hand. While pattering to your audience you quietly pass the larger cover over the bottle, raise it, and then put the smaller one over the bottle. In raising the larger cover you should nip it slightly and so get the shell bottle inside it.

A word of caution is here necessary. Do not forget that there is a hole in the back of the bottle; when you place the cover containing the shell bottle over the glass—which you do immediately after you have covered the bottle with the smaller cover—you want to make sure that the hole in the shell bottle is still at the back. Therefore, note carefully the position of the hand when you raise the cover with the shell bottle inside it, and when you place the cover over the glass see that your hand assumes the same position. You will probably find it convenient to stand behind the table and to keep your thumb at the back of the cover.

Now the bottle and the glass are covered, and all you have to do to cause them to change places is to raise both covers; you grip the one on the right rather tightly, thus raising the bottle inside it and disclosing the glass, and you hold the other loosely, thus leaving the bottle in view. Cover the glass and bottle again and to cause them to go back to their original positions first pick up the one on your left—gripping tightly to hold the shell bottle inside it; then walk over to the other and raise it, showing the bottle.

This leaves you with the shell bottle inside the larger cover, and you naturally have to get rid of it. Drop the cover over the bottle quickly and then apparently attempt to put the other cover over it. It is impossible to do this, of course, because the cover which held the shell bottle is the larger of the two; therefore you raise the larger cover again, leaving the shell bottle in its original position over the other bottle. Then put the smaller cover inside the larger one, pick up the bottle, taking care to hide the glass inside it, and place it behind your screen or on a side table. Then take away the glass and

you are ready for the next trick.

As to the appearance of the bottles and the covers. These can be bought at a conjuring shop and you will find that, as the Scotsman said of various brands of whiskey, "Some are better than others." You want a bottle which looks exactly like the real thing, and the only way of making quite sure of getting it is to take an empty bottle with you when you are buying the trick. Note the slope of the "shoulder" of the bottle. The labelling you can do yourself.

As to the covers, take care that they fit properly and are not too stiff. If the larger one is really a shade too small for the shell bottle and is also too limp you will have difficulty in raising the cover quickly and leaving the shell bottle on the table; the bottle will get jammed in the cover and then—well—perhaps you had better tell the audience that the trick has not happened yet, but you hope it will in time! It is better to guard against such a catastrophe by having covers of the right size; they must not be too large or too small.

Although the trick is quite an easy one it requires more than a little practice. The most important move of all is that which enables you to get the shell bottle into the larger cover. You will find that the knack of putting the cover quickly over the bottle and then lifting it up as quickly with the shell bottle inside it is not learned in a moment; at any rate, you cannot learn to do that in a natural way in a moment. To get the move quite right put the cover over the shell bottle and lift it without the shell inside; keep to the same movement when you lift the cover with the shell bottle inside it. To guard against the dropping of the shell you can place your little finger under the cover.

I give a few suggestions for "patter."

"A trick with a bottle and a glass. All kinds of tricks are done with bottles and glasses, but this is not one of those tricks; this is a perfectly harmless trick. At the risk of disappointing the male members of my audience I may say at once that this bottle contains water. I mention that because I noticed that one or two men seemed rather anxious to come on the stage and assist in this experiment. They don't look so anxious now. (*This as you pour out the water.*) Just ordinary plain water, the stuff that farmers and gardeners always want when they haven't got it, and always grumble about when they have. If you live in a town you grumble because you have to pay for it, whether you use much or little; some people don't run any risk of using too much. I'm afraid there's a little too much there—better put some back; it will do another time. (*Pour with funnel into bottle.*) There, that's just right; now we can begin. I put the glass over there and the bottle here. There are two other things used in this experiment; you see, this trick ought to be done in the dark because it's rather dangerous, but as we cannot have all the lights put out I have to put the glass and the bottle into these little dark rooms; perhaps you would like to have a look at them. (*Then follows the business, already explained, of having the two covers examined.*)

"You will notice that both the covers fit over the bottle and, therefore, over the glass, but as we have to cover both we put one on the bottle and the other on the glass. If we were to put one on the glass and the other over the bottle we could not do the trick.

"Now I want somebody to say the magic word, because it doesn't always work if I say it. Will someone please start talking about the weather. That's easy. If you just say the word 'weather' I daresay it will do. (*Look inside one of the covers.*) It must have heard me; you see, the weather is so changeable—it always is; that's why the word is so useful to conjurers, although I once knew a conjurer who used a shorter word when his trick went wrong. I don't think this trick has gone wrong so far because you see the bottle and glass have changed places. (*Lift covers and show them.*) The worst of our magic word is that it works only once in a trick. You might keep on saying: 'weather, weather, weather, weather, weather' all day to the trick, but nothing would happen—unless, of course, a kind policeman, thinking that you were temporarily insane, took care of you. No, if we want the rest of the trick to happen we have to whistle to the bottle to come back. You know that beautiful song—'Whistle, and I shall hear.' Well, the bottle always hears. (*Whistles.*) Here it comes and here it is, and very possibly we shall find that the glass has returned to its original position." (*Show it.*)

CHAPTER V

THE RICE BOWLS

In presenting this trick the conjurer begins by showing two small bowls on a tray. Into one of the bowls he places a little rice and covers it with the other bowl. On lifting the uppermost bowl the conjurer shows that the quantity of rice has increased; the lower bowl is now heaped up with rice, some of which falls on to the tray.

Using the empty bowl as a kind of scoop the conjurer removes some of the surplus rice, letting it fall on the tray. Thus one bowl is now filled to the brim with rice and the other is empty.

Once more the conjurer places the empty bowl over the one containing the rice, and once more he raises the empty bowl. All the rice has now vanished, for it has been magically transformed into water, which the conjurer pours from bowl to bowl.

Thus there are two entirely different effects in this trick. A small quantity of rice placed in a bowl increases in a mysterious manner; the rice is afterwards changed into water.

There are two entirely different methods for this trick. For one of them two china bowls are required; for the other the bowls are of brass. I used the latter method when I presented this trick at St. George's Hall, and I prefer it to the other, especially if I am performing in a room. However, the other method is the more popular of the two, and I will explain that before giving away the secret of the other method.

First, let me give a rough idea of the secret of the first method, in which two china bowls are required, because this method admits of one or two variations, and, of course, it is useless to describe these until the reader knows just "how it is done."

The edge of one of the bowls is ground perfectly flat. This bowl is then filled nearly to the brim with water. A disc of thick celluloid of the same size of the top of the bowl is also required. The disc should be made with a "lip," so that when it is laid on the top of the bowl it cannot easily be pushed off it.

To prepare for the trick dip a finger into the water and run it round the edge of the bowl; dampen the "lip" of the celluloid disc in the same way. Then put the disc on the top of the bowl and press it down evenly all round the edge. If the disc fits properly it will then be possible to turn the bowl upside down without spilling the water; the disc will adhere to the bowl. It is always advisable to have a disc specially made to fit the bowl; then you may be certain that, with a reasonable amount of care, accidents will not happen. If the disc fits properly you can throw the bowl into the air and catch it without any fear of the disc coming away from the bowl.

After the disc has been properly fitted to the bowl wipe it thoroughly dry and place it, upside down, on the tray on which a couple of wooden matches have previously been placed; there is then no risk of the disc adhering to the tray. The empty bowl is placed, upside down, over the faked bowl, and with a bag of rice on the tray, you are ready to do the trick.

Pick up the empty bowl and show it to the audience. Fill it about half full with rice and stand it on the table. Place the faked bowl on the top of it and, holding the hands round the bowls, get them exactly "together"—an easy thing to do because the bowls are the same size.

Keeping the hands in the same position round the bowls pick up both bowls together and reverse them, so that the faked bowl is now underneath. Obviously, there must be some excuse for doing this; that will be provided for in the "patter." The rice naturally falls on to the top of the celluloid disc, and when the top bowl is lifted the rice seems to have increased in quantity.

Hold the empty bowl in both hands and scoop off some of the rice, letting it fall on to the tray. Repeat the operation, taking a little more rice away. In taking still a little more rice away get a finger nail under the edge of the disc, and in apparently scooping off a little more rice lift the disc under the bowl and place it on the tray; as the disc with the rice on it is placed over the loose rice which fell on the tray in the first instance it is not noticed. The latter part of this "move" must be done fairly quickly, especially if one is performing at close quarters, and the empty bowl is at once placed on the top of the other bowl which now contains only water. To show the final effect is, therefore, an easy matter. The top bowl is lifted with the right hand, the other with the left hand, and the water is poured from bowl to bowl.

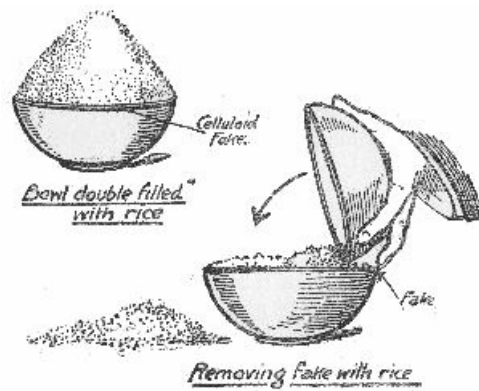


FIG. 8

Now for the "variations" of the trick. The weak point of the trick is at the beginning; only one bowl is shown to be empty. Is it not possible that some of the very attentive members of your audience will notice this fact and will say to themselves: "He showed us only one empty bowl—wonder what's in the other?" Of course, people ought not to think in this way, and some conjurers believe that they do not, but my experience tells me that there are always some persons in every audience who do not miss much when it comes to judging a trick and trying to find out the method of the conjurer.

Theoretically, when the conjurer picks up the faked bowl and holds it upside down he convinces the audience that the bowl is empty. How can there be anything in a bowl which is held upside down? Still, I think you will admit that if you can show the interiors of both bowls at the beginning of the performance you make it a much "stronger" trick than if you show only one bowl and let the state of the other be taken for granted. Besides, being an enthusiastic magician you will naturally want to make your performance as nearly perfect as possible, and therefore you will want to begin this trick by showing "two empty bowls." How are you to do it?

Obviously, one bowl has to be exchanged for the faked bowl, and that means that the faked bowl has to be hidden at the beginning of the trick. Here is a simple way of getting over that difficulty.

Have a fairly large bag of rice. Place the faked bowl near the back of the tray and the bag of rice in front of it; the bag can be shaped round the bowl. You will also need a "servante" at the back of your table; this can be either a small shelf or, better still, a bag with the mouth slightly stiffened with a strip of whalebone. The "servante" is hidden from the audience by the tablecloth, which hangs down in front of the table.

Proceed in this way. At the beginning of the trick stand on the left-hand side of your table. Pick up a bowl in each hand, show the bowls to the audience, put the one in the left hand on the table and apparently put the other on the table behind the bag of rice; of course, you really drop it into the bag or place it on the shelf at the back of the table. Continue the movement of the arm until your right hand is resting against the faked bowl which is hidden behind the bag of rice. At the same moment pick up the bag of rice with the left hand. The audience see two bowls on the table and naturally think that they are the two bowls which you have just shown to them. One of the bowls has not left their sight, and if you make the "change" skilfully no one will suspect you of having made it.

If you use this method of exchanging one ordinary bowl for the faked bowl you should have a very small tray and a very small table; otherwise, you have no excuse for apparently putting one bowl behind the bag of rice. Why should you not put it at the side of the bag if there is room for it there? Inquisitive people ask themselves these questions sometimes. If you have a very small tray you naturally have to put the second bowl down on the only vacant spot on it—behind the bag of rice—but at the same moment you lift the bag.

Directly you have picked up the bag of rice with the left hand you pass it to the right, pick up the empty bowl with the left hand and pour some rice into it. Take care to let the audience see that rice, and nothing but rice, goes into the bowl. Then put the bag down, pick up the faked bowl, and present the rest of the trick in the way described.

This method is perfectly safe if you are performing on a small platform or stage, so that your table is raised, but it is not practical in a small room with the audience close to the table. If you wish to do the trick under those difficult conditions I suggest that you use very small bowls and have a box of rice in place of the bag. The exact size of the box will depend

on the size of the bowls.

Dip both bowls (having first shown them to be empty) into the box and scoop up as much rice as you can get into them. Pour the rice back into the box. Do this two or three times, and while you are apparently doing the same thing for the third time bury the bowl which you have been holding in your right hand in the box of rice and bring up in its place the faked bowl, which was hidden in the box before the commencement of the trick. You must take care to remember the position of the faked bowl in the box.

In exchanging one bowl for another in this way your hand must not pause in its movement down into the box and up again. To make quite sure of getting the movement right practise in front of a looking-glass. First, dip the two bowls into the box of rice and scoop up the rice into both bowls. Remember just how your hands moved when you did that. Now start again, but this time exchange the bowl in your right hand for the faked bowl.

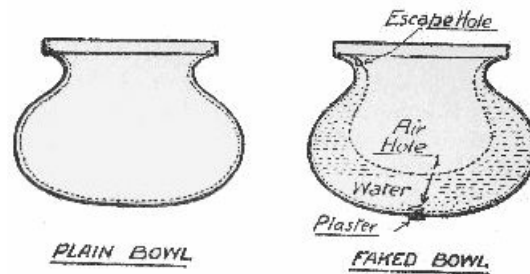


FIG. 9

Now tilt the rice back into the box, and the audience should be convinced that you have two empty bowls in your hands because both bowls are now upside down. Put the faked bowl, upside down, on the table. Take a little rice from the box with the right hand and let it fall into the empty bowl; continue doing this until you have filled the bowl. Then pick up the faked bowl and continue the trick in the way already described. You will find it convenient to close the lid of the box and to use the top of it as your table.

If brass bowls are used no celluloid disc is required, and it is not necessary to exchange one bowl for another; the secret of the trick lies in the preparation of one of the bowls, and yet, at the beginning of the trick, both bowls can be held with their interiors facing the audience. Thus, the second method is altogether different from the first.

The shape of the two brass bowls is shown in the illustration. The faked bowl has an inner lining fitted to it, with sufficient space between the lining and the bowl itself to hold a considerable quantity of water. The lining is of highly polished brass, like the rest of the bowl, and if it is kept "on the move" it can safely be shown to the audience. People think that the lining is really the interior of the bowl, and the fact that they can see inside both bowls helps to convince them that the bowls are unprepared.

It will be obvious that the interior of the faked bowl is really much smaller than that of the "plain" bowl; if, therefore, the latter bowl is filled with rice and the faked bowl placed on the top and both bowls are turned over together the quantity of rice appears to have increased because it overflows. (The edge of the faked bowl is made to fit into the edge of the other bowl, and thus the task of inverting the bowls is simplified; they cannot slide apart.)

Near the brim of the faked bowl there is a small air hole, and there is another hole in the centre of the bottom of the bowl. To fill the space between the inner lining and the bowl itself with water and to prevent the water from falling out until you wish it to appear, proceed in this way.

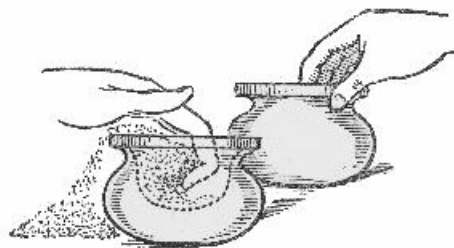
Place the bowl in water and let it remain there until no more air bubbles rise to the surface. Move the bowl once or twice in the water to make sure that the space is properly filled. Lift the bowl out of the water by the brim, but just before you get the brim clear of the water put a finger on the air hole there; then the water will not run out of the air hole at the bottom of the bowl.

Keep the finger jammed down tightly on the air hole in the brim of the bowl, wipe the outside of the bowl thoroughly dry and place a small piece of adhesive rubber plaster over the air hole in the bottom of the bowl. You can then turn the bowl upside down without any fear that the water will escape through the air hole in the brim. Wipe the inside of the

bowl thoroughly dry and you are ready to start the trick.

Place the faked bowl, upside down, on the table and the other bowl over it. (You will understand, of course, that the bowls should be in this position on the table when you are about to present the trick.)

Pick up the plain bowl with the left hand and the faked bowl with the right, and show the interiors of both bowls to the audience. Pour rice into the plain bowl until it is nearly full, and put the faked bowl on the top of it. Invert the two bowls together; when you separate them the quantity of rice will have apparently increased, because the interior of the faked bowl is really much smaller than that of the plain bowl.



Extracting rice from faked bowl.

FIG. 10

As there is no celluloid disc to get rid of there is no need to use the empty bowl as a scoop with which to level the rice; in fact, it will be inadvisable to use it. By using the bowl as a scoop one would merely level the rice, whereas it is really necessary to get nearly all the rice out of the faked bowl. Begin by levelling the rice with the left hand while you hold the other bowl in front of it; just before you replace the empty bowl bend the left fingers slightly and thus scoop out as much of the rice as you can possibly get out in this way. You must not let the audience see that you are really trying to empty the bowl, and no harm is done if you leave a little rice in it.

Replace the empty bowl on the top of the faked bowl, and invert both bowls together; just before putting them on the table remove with the left thumbnail the piece of rubber plaster which has covered the air hole in the bottom of the faked bowl. (If you are performing in a hall with part of the audience in a gallery, so that they can look down on to the top of the bowls, it is as well to disguise the little piece of rubber plaster with a touch of gold paint.)

Directly the rubber plaster is removed the water will start to run out into the bottom bowl, and here we come to one of the disadvantages of this method. To my mind it is only a very trifling disadvantage, but I know that some conjurers regard it almost as a serious defect. The water runs out of the air hole slowly, and therefore it is necessary to "patter" for about a minute while the water is dropping into the lower bowl. (The exact time will depend on the size of the bowl.)

Some conjurers do not talk at all during their performance; therefore this method of doing the trick does not appeal to them. Some conjurers who do talk during their performances are chary of pattering for a whole minute without doing anything; they think that to do this looks as though they were "holding up" the trick. Until you have pattered for a whole minute without doing anything you do not realise what a very long time one minute can seem to be; you must remember that, to some members of the audience, at any rate, you appear to be talking for no reason whatever.

Well, I have presented this trick at St. George's Hall and at private performances and, as I have said, I prefer this method to the one with the china bowls. I admit, however, that a drawing-room conjurer may find the preparation of the trick a little tiresome. I have known a conjurer to prepare the faked bowl—fill it with water and seal it—before setting out on his journey to give his performance, but I should not care to risk doing that myself. If the air hole should get uncovered there would be a tragedy! The question therefore arises—How are you to prepare for the trick in a drawing-room?

The simplest plan is to take a small pail—about as large as a child's seaside pail—with you. Remember, the bowl has to be placed in the water. Carry your own pail in your bag, and then all you have to ask for is a large jug of water. Now, to continue with the presentation of the trick.

When the water has trickled through into the lower bowl pick up the top one—the faked bowl—with the left hand, take the other bowl with the right hand and pour some of the water into the faked bowl. There will be more than enough water to fill this bowl, and so if you wish you can pour some into a glass bowl on table. You will notice that in this form of the

trick both the rice and the water increase.

I give some suggestions for "patter" which, of course, can be shortened considerably if the conjurer is using china bowls. Some "silent" conjurers dash through the trick in about half a minute, but it is as well to let your audience see what you are doing. If you are going to use brass bowls you should rehearse the trick very carefully, so that you may be able to fill in the time while the water is running from one bowl to another.

"I will try and show you how to make a rice pudding—a new kind of rice pudding. You cook it in two bowls, so as to give the rice room to swell. Even then it isn't swell rice. Swell rice is the kind which is used at weddings. A man doesn't mind how much of this (*pouring rice into bowl*) he has thrown in his face on his wedding day, but he does object to cold rice pudding more than five times a week after his wedding day. And he often gets it! Believe me, he does. You will notice that by this method of cooking (*lift the bowls, wave them in the air and finally invert them*), the rice is cooked entirely by friction. No fire needed; therefore no coal bill; therefore, the coal merchant goes broke. You see what new methods lead to. I don't know if the rice is done yet; excuse me for a moment while I listen to it. There is no sadder sight in this world than an underdone rice pudding. Yes, I think it is done; anyhow we'll chance it. (*Lift bowl, showing quantity of rice increased.*) You see, by this method your rice does not swell in the cooking; the more you cook the more rice you get; there's far too much here. (*Level rice off and replace bowl; if brass bowls are used invert them.*)

"Perhaps I ought to have explained at the beginning that this method of cooking rice is rather slow; if the rice is at all aged and tough it may take hours and hours—or even longer—to cook itself in a proper manner; of course, this rice is strictly proper—highly refined. It can be used for puddings, cakes, poultices, dog-biscuits and bill-stickers' paste; it can also be used for waterproofing boots, and it is invaluable for invalids. I once induced an invalid friend of mine to try some of my patent rice pudding. The invalid got better at once—afraid of having to face a second dose. It's dangerous stuff—rice pudding. Many a happy home has been nearly wrecked—all through a cold, heavy, stodgy, underdone, beastly rice pudding. Ladies, let it be a warning to you. . . . I beg your pardon—I've been talking so much that I've been forgetting my own cooking. (*Lift bowl and pour water from one bowl to the other.*) I'm very sorry. Really I must apologise. All the rice has been cooked away—perhaps it's as well, because nobody really likes rice pudding."

CHAPTER VI

THE INDIAN SANDS

In its simplest form this trick consists in putting some silver sand into a bowl of water and taking it out—perfectly dry. But the trick in that form is hardly worth doing and certainly not worth the trouble involved in its preparation.

An important additional effect is produced by using sands of three colours—red, white, and blue. The white sand is not really white, but the natural colour of the sand. In this case, not only does the conjurer take out the sand perfectly dry, but he takes out the sand of the colour named by the audience.

This is a trick which depends largely for its effect upon the showmanship of the performer, for unless the audience are thoroughly convinced that the bowl of water is what the conjurer says it is and nothing more—an ordinary bowl nearly filled with ordinary water—and unless the audience are further convinced of the fact that the sands of different colours are poured into the bowl and are thoroughly stirred up into the water they will not be properly surprised when the conjurer comes to the climax of the trick.

Therefore, the conjurer should lead off by giving the bowl out for examination. The bowl can be either of glass, metal, or china. The trick is most effective, I think, when a glass bowl is used; it should be a large flat bowl.

The different sands should be placed in bags, the red sand being in a red bag, and so on.

If the conjurer uses a glass bowl he should have the water in a large glass jug. He leads off by holding up the bowl for inspection; then he gives it out for examination. If he is performing in a room he should have a box or some kind of stand on the table, so that everyone can see the bowl during the whole of the performance.

Having received the bowl back again the conjurer pours in the water, and he should take note beforehand of the actual quantity required. If there is too much water some of it may get splashed over the brim during the performance of the trick, and if there is too little the trick is not sufficiently effective; besides, with a little water the trick is more difficult.

The conjurer then picks up the red bag and pours out the sand, a little at a time, on to his other hand; he should take care to let the audience see that he has nothing concealed in his hand at the beginning of the trick, and in pouring out the sand he should work slowly so that the audience see that he pours out nothing else but sand. While he is doing this he should hold his hand over the bowl, because some of the sand will drop off his hand into the water. There will naturally be quite a little mound of sand on his hand when the bag is empty. He then tips the sand into the bowl and stirs it slightly. The dye will colour the water.

He proceeds to empty the other two bags in the same way, taking great care to let the audience see that the bags contain nothing but sand and that he places nothing else in the water. At the end of these proceedings the water will be thoroughly coloured.

The conjurer, having turned up his sleeves, dips his right hand into the water, and stirs it up. Then, displaying his empty hand to the audience, he dips it into the water and takes out a handful of the wet sands and holds it up so that the audience can see it. He returns the "mud" to the bowl and washes off any sand from his hands.

Once more he dips his hand into the bowl and takes it out closed. Picking up a glass goblet with his other hand, he holds it under his right hand from which dry red sand slowly trickles. When the hand is empty he opens it, shows it to the audience, and puts the goblet down. Then he washes his hands in the bowl, and repeats the performance with the white sand and the blue, so that at the end of the trick the audience can see the sands in the three goblets. At the conclusion of the trick he can pour all the water with the sand "mud" into another vessel and thus show once more that the bowl is not prepared in any way for the trick.

This splendid effect is brought about by very simple means. Most conjurers hold the opinion that the best tricks are simple; this one is both simple and easy.

The principal secret consists in the preparation of small quantities of the different sands. First of all a quantity of sand is dyed red and a similar quantity is dyed blue, and both are left to dry. While they are drying the conjurer can prepare the white sand.

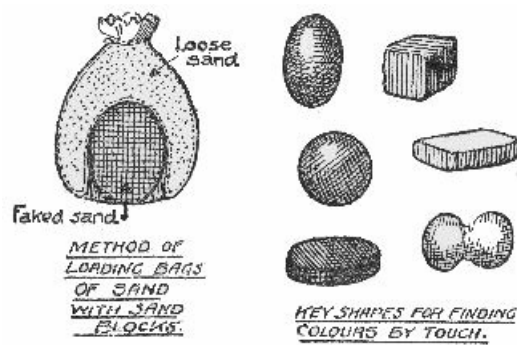


FIG. 11

Place a small quantity in an old frying-pan and put it over the fire until it is thoroughly hot. Then drop in a small piece of tallow candle. When the grease melts stir it well into the sand, so that every grain is covered. Then take the sand off the fire and press it down into little moulds.

As sands of three different colours are to be used in the trick it follows that the prepared sands must be put in moulds of three different shapes, because the conjurer merely has to feel in the water for the particular blocks of sand that he requires at each dip. The white sand can be put into little round, flat moulds, about as large as four halfpennies stuck together. When these little round blocks of prepared sand are cool they will be perfectly hard and waterproof.

The red sand can be placed in small square moulds and the blue sand in oval or round moulds; the shapes are immaterial so long as the conjurer remembers them.

The bags can be of paper. To prepare for the trick, turn one of the bags upside down and push the bottom of it inwards. Then place two or three of the blocks of sand of the right colour in the cavity at the bottom of the bag. Then turn the bag over and fill it with ordinary sand of the same colour.

Prepare the other two bags in the same way. In picking up each bag from the table, when you are going to do the trick, begin by lifting it about an inch from the table with the left hand; then grasp it round the middle with the right hand and hold the little finger under the bottom of the bag to prevent the blocks of sand from falling away. The paper of which the bags are made should be fairly stiff.

When all the sand from one of the bags has been poured out on to the hand—naturally a good deal of it will fall into the bowl—the conjurer turns his hand over and lets the sand drop into the bowl; at the same time he merely has to take his right little finger away from the bottom of the bag and the blocks fall into the water. They drop behind the falling sand, and being of the same colour they are not noticed by the audience.

If the conjurer does not care for this method of getting the prepared blocks into the water he can have larger bags and have the prepared blocks in them with the sand. In that case he dips his hand into a bag, takes out a handful of sand, and lets it trickle back into the bag. He does this once or twice; then he takes out a handful of sand and lets it fall into the water, taking care to let the audience see that he puts in nothing but sand. He repeats the action. Then, in taking another handful of sand, he gets two or three of the blocks with it, lets some of the sand fall into the water, brings his hand down close to the water, releases the "blocks," brings his hand up again and releases the rest of the sand from it. He can continue in this way until the bag is empty.

If the performer is on a stage there is very little likelihood of the audience seeing the blocks even if they are dropped from a height with the sand, but in a room, with the audience close to the table, it is as well to take every precaution against the discovery of the secret.

As for the rest of the trick, the effect is produced entirely by showmanship. In the hands of a capable performer the trick will cause a sensation, but if it is presented in a slipshod careless way, so that the audience are not thoroughly convinced at each stage of the trick that there has been "no deception," then the trick will go for nothing. For example, if the conjurer neglects to take out a handful of the wet sand and show it to the audience, he misses a point. Of course, all that the conjurer really has to do is to feel in the bowl for the particular blocks of sand he requires. It is as well to have one or two more blocks than are actually necessary. When the conjurer has taken out a handful of the blocks he requires he

merely has to crush them in his hand and they fall in a shower of dry sand.

A hint to the drawing-room performer. After the performance see that the water is poured away at once; otherwise, if some of the younger and more inquisitive members of your audience come round behind your screen at the close of the performance they will be sure to want to know how this trick was done, and if they get a glimpse of the water they may possibly notice grease floating on the surface!

Various other methods have been invented for keeping certain portions of sand dry when other sand of similar colour is placed in water. Some conjurers have done the sand up in little packets of grease-proof paper. I have also heard of tiny air balloons being filled with sand. The great drawback of any of these other methods is that when the conjurer is letting the dry sand trickle away from his hand into the goblet he cannot immediately let the audience see that he has nothing concealed in his hand. He has to go at once to the bowl for the next handful and leave the "fake," whatever it may be, in the bottom of the bowl. By using the method I have described the conjurer gets the most convincing effect, and if he prepares a large quantity of the different blocks of sand at the same time the trick is really not troublesome. The exact quantity of tallow required must be determined by experiment; it will depend, of course, on the amount of sand which is being prepared.

The object of using goblets for the display of the dry sands is to enable the members of the audience in the front rows of seats to see the sands. When one is performing to an audience composed chiefly of children the first two or three rows of seats are usually occupied by very small children, and from their positions they cannot see the top of the table. Raise the object which you are going to place on the table and you bring it within the view of everyone.

CHAPTER VII

THE DISSOLVED CARD

Every good trick has a clear, logical conclusion. Although the conjurer is apparently reversing one of Nature's laws he must also be more or less reasonable in his performance. For example, if he tears up a piece of paper into little pieces and then causes these pieces to form together into four strips equal in length when laid end to end, to the original piece, the conjurer is not behaving in a reasonable manner; he should cause the little pieces to join together into one strip and the audience must be led to believe that that strip is the original piece of paper and that in some mysterious manner the conjurer has joined the pieces together. The conjurer who does that brings his trick to what may be called a "logical conclusion."

I mention this matter here because it bears upon the trick which I am about to explain. In its simplest—and crudest—form this trick consists in causing a playing card placed into a jug of water to disappear; the water is supposed to dissolve the card. I imagine, however, that no intelligent audience would be satisfied with the trick in that form; there is obviously something wanting, and that something is the magical reappearance of the card.

There are dozens of ways in which the trick could be completed—that is to say, in which the card could be caused to reappear—but it must be remembered that the card has apparently been dissolved in water, and that therefore to bring the trick to the "logical conclusion" which is the attribute of all good tricks, the water in which the card has apparently been dissolved should be used in some way to bring about the reappearance of the card.

It seems to me that if we were to reproduce the card in a box, or case, or frame which had previously been shown to be empty we should not have a very convincing trick. It might be argued, of course, that if instead of suggesting that the card is dissolved in water we suggest that it is made to disappear from the water we may fairly be allowed to reproduce the card in any way we please. To regard the trick in that way is to destroy the plot of it and to substitute another plot. In the one case the conjurer is suggesting to his audience that the card remains in the water in a state of solution and in the other that the card has disappeared altogether from the water. I think you get a much better effect if you induce your audience to think that the water has dissolved the card, and it is for that reason that I have given the title "The Dissolved Card" to the trick.

I propose, therefore, that we should present the trick in this way. The conjurer brings forward a pack of cards, shuffles the cards with their faces towards the audience, and asks someone in the audience to take a card and to place it on the top of the pack. A glass jug, nearly full of water, is then held up for inspection, and, lastly, a large dark silk handkerchief—or muffler—is casually shown. If one of those very trying persons who are always anxious to discover a conjurer's secrets appears anxious to examine the handkerchief the conjurer will do well to pretend that he is in a tight corner for a moment, but, somewhat reluctantly, he allows the interrupter to examine the handkerchief; as a matter of fact, the conjurer is not at all perturbed, because there is no "trick" about the handkerchief.

While the jug of water and the handkerchief are being exhibited the pack of cards is on the table. The conjurer picks it up, removes the top card and asks the person who took it to say if it is the card which was chosen and placed on the top of the pack. The answer is sure to be, "Yes."

The conjurer holds the card in his left hand with its face towards the audience, and his thumb and fingers pointing upwards. (The position of the hand is important for the working of the trick, and therefore the reader will do well to remember it.)

The conjurer throws the silk handkerchief over the card and arranges it neatly, so that the card is about in the centre of the handkerchief. Bringing his right hand over the top of the handkerchief the conjurer takes the card in that hand and holds it over the jug of water, while with his left hand he drapes the handkerchief round the outside of the jug, practically hiding it. Someone in the audience is asked to take the card from the conjurer (holding it, of course, with the handkerchief over it) and to drop it into the water at the word "Go!" When this is done the handkerchief naturally drops down and covers the jug. The conjurer picks up the jug with the left hand and whisking away the handkerchief with the right hand shows that the water has dissolved the card.

The conjurer then brings forward two slates, and in order to get them thoroughly clean wipes them with a small sponge which he dips into the jug of water. The slates are dried, placed together, wrapped in a sheet of newspaper and given into the possession of a member of the audience. The audience are led to believe that the name of the card is to be

written magically on the slates, but when the person holding them takes off the paper he finds to his surprise that the card is between the slates and, as a matter of fact, the card is the identical card that was chosen in the first place.

This effect is brought about by means of a few subtle—but quite easy—"moves" and the use of one little "fake." The jug of water is standing on the conjurer's table; placed just behind it is the large silk handkerchief folded in four, and behind the handkerchief is a piece of transparent celluloid of the exact size of the cards which are to be used; beside the piece of celluloid is the pack of cards.

Picking up the cards, the conjurer shuffles them with their faces towards the audience, thus showing—without directly calling attention to the fact—that the pack is an ordinary one. The conjurer advances to someone with the request that a card may be chosen.

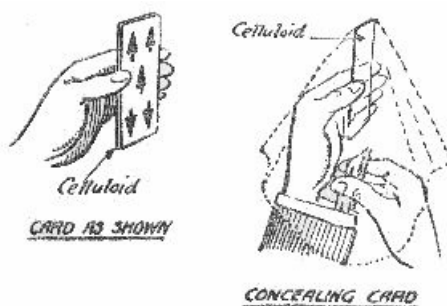


FIG. 12

"Please take any card you like," says the conjurer. "Perhaps you would like to take the pack in your hand and select a card at your leisure. When you have made up your mind will you please put the card on the top of the pack. . . . Have you done that? You'll know the card again when you see it? Thank you. In order that everyone may remember the card I will show it to the audience; there is no harm in my knowing what it is."

The conjurer receives the pack back again, lifts off the top card, shows it to the audience, returns it to the pack and then, turning the pack over, drops it face upwards on the table so that it falls on the top of the piece of celluloid. If the cards spread a little when they fall, so much the better. The conjurer then exhibits the jug of water.

"A jug of water," he says. "If there were any trickery about this it would be a transparent fraud, wouldn't it? But there is no trickery about it; it's just the ordinary water that comes down from the clouds and is charged for at the ordinary rates." (He puts the jug on the table and picks up the handkerchief.) "A large silk handkerchief. Three hundred silkworms had to work overtime for a fortnight to make the silk for this handkerchief; it isn't one of those tiny little handkerchiefs." (The conjurer shows both sides of the handkerchief and puts it down again.) "And now I am going to see if you all have a good memory. Do you remember what card was chosen and placed on the top of the pack? You do? Well; let us see if you are right."

It will be remembered that the cards are face upwards on the table. The conjurer picks up the pack with his right hand (including with it the piece of celluloid), turns it over, and places it in his left hand; directly it is there the right hand is brought over the pack to square it up. The left thumb then pushes the piece of celluloid over the edge of the pack for about half an inch—the right little finger preventing it from going too far—and the left thumb then pushes the top card forward in the same way. Thus the piece of celluloid is now directly over the top card, and the two can be lifted off the pack together and exhibited as one card. The conjurer shows the card to the audience on his right and then places it in his left hand and shows it to the audience on his left. Great care must be taken to nip the piece of celluloid and the card closely together, and when the card is in the left hand the thumb should be behind it, the fingers in front and the tips of the thumb and fingers should point upwards.

The conjurer picks up the handkerchief with his right hand and throws it over the card, at the same time saying:

"I cover the card with the handkerchief. I do this because it is so much easier than covering the handkerchief with the card. I want to get the centre of the handkerchief just over the card."

Directly the card is hidden by the handkerchief the conjurer pushes up the piece of celluloid with his thumb, while with

his fingers he slides the card down a little way towards his wrist. In order to arrange the handkerchief properly over the card the conjurer puts his right hand under the handkerchief and lifts it into position, so that the centre is over the card. While his right hand is under the handkerchief the conjurer takes the card from the left hand and slips it for a moment into the left sleeve, taking care to push it down, so that when his hand is afterwards removed the card is hidden. The conjurer then brings his right hand over the top of the handkerchief and, gripping the piece of celluloid through the handkerchief, asks someone to hold it over the jug of water; of course, that person naturally thinks that he is holding the card, and the fact that the conjurer's hands are empty is proof that the card must be under the handkerchief.

The next step in the trick is very simple. Having draped the handkerchief round the jug and asked the person holding what he believes to be the card to release "the card" at the word "Go!" the conjurer merely has to take the handkerchief away and hold up the jug; the celluloid sinks to the bottom and is therefore invisible. The assistant is thanked and he returns to his seat.

The conjurer continues his patter:

"For a time the card is dissolved in that water, but if you would care to wait a few hours you will see the water gradually evaporate, leaving a kind of impression of the card stamped upon the jug. If you want the trick done quickly you have to send a special message to the good fairy who arranges these things. You would like the trick done quickly? Very well, then I must write the message to the fairy on one of these slates and ask for an immediate reply."

The conjurer picks up two ordinary slates and holds them in his left hand. The palm of the hand should be facing the audience and the fingers slightly bent. The ends of the two slates are rested on the fingers and against the arm.

"When writing to fairies," says the conjurer, "you must always have a clean slate." He dips a little sponge into the jug of water and sponges over the slate which is facing the audience; the slate is turned over and the other side is washed.

The conjurer now shifts the position of the slates. With his right hand he grasps them near the ends which are resting on the left hand, and as he does this he inserts the first and second fingers of his right hand into his left sleeve and draws out the card, keeping it hidden behind the slates. Directly he has done this the conjurer takes hold of the slates with the left hand, holding them by their sides; his fingers keep the card behind the slates. He should turn to his right when taking the slates in the left hand. The next step is to slide out the under slate by taking it with the right hand, while the left fingers keep the card pressed against the slate which has been at the top. The slate which has been taken away with the right hand is now placed on the top of the other, both sides are cleaned, and the conjurer, taking a piece of chalk, writes on the slate facing the audience:

"Please hurry up."

This slate is now drawn away with the right hand and placed under the other, thus getting the card in between the two slates, which are then wrapped in a sheet of paper and given to a member of the audience. The conjurer picks up the jug of water for a moment and pretends to discover suddenly that he has spoiled the experiment.

"I quite forgot," he says, "when I was cleaning the slates that I was using some of this water. There's no telling what may happen now; you may find little bits of the card all over the slates when they are dry. Would you mind having a look at them?"

The person holding the slates unwraps them and finds the card in between the two slates, and the conjurer finishes by suggesting that the fairy has saved the situation.

The only "move" in the trick which is not quite easy is that which the conjurer makes to get the card out of his sleeve and hidden behind the slates. A very little practice, for preference in front of a looking-glass, will enable the conjurer to get over this difficulty; he should bear in mind that what he is apparently doing is to lift the slates with the right hand and take them by the sides with the left hand. If those movements are practised until the conjurer can make them without having to stop to think about them he can then go on to practise making the same movements while, at the same time, he gets the card out of his sleeve and hides it behind the slates, keeping it there with the fingers of his left hand. This is quite easy, but for the benefit of beginners who may wish for a still more simple method of doing the trick I suggest the following.

The card is "forced"; that is to say, the conjurer apparently allows the person who is taking the card to have a free

choice, but he really makes sure that the person takes one particular card. An expert card conjurer can "force" one particular card from an ordinary pack, but to do this is not easy, and even an expert cannot be absolutely certain of forcing the card which he wishes to use in a trick. Therefore, since the beginner is out to make the trick as simple and sure as possible he should use a "forcing pack," which consists of one card repeated, say, forty times; a few other indifferent cards are placed on the top and below the forty. The conjurer who is going to use a "forcing pack" should do some other card trick with an ordinary pack and then exchange it for the "forcing pack"; of course, the backs of the two packs must match. The conjurer must also take care to hold the cards down when he is having one selected, so that no one may get a glimpse under the cards.

The card is taken and placed on the top of the pack as in the first method, and the card is got rid of by being pushed down the left sleeve, but the procedure afterwards is greatly simplified.

One of the two slates used is a "flap" slate; that is to say, a loose piece of cardboard painted to resemble a slate is laid inside it. The cardboard is painted on both sides, and, therefore, when the ordinary slate is placed on the top of the flap slate and both are turned over together the "flap" falls into the ordinary slate.

The working of this part of the trick will now be obvious. A card similar to the one which has been forced is placed under the flap of one of the slates. When the conjurer picks up this slate he must be careful to hold the flap firmly with his thumb to prevent it from falling away. He lightly sponges both sides of the slate (in reality one side of the flap and one side of the slate); he then cleans the ordinary slate in the same way and places it on the top of the flap. He cannot give the slates to a member of the audience to hold, and, therefore, after he has turned them over, to get the flap to fall, the conjurer merely places a broad elastic band on them and stands them up for a moment against a candlestick or some piece of apparatus on the table after he has written the message to the fairy.

By using a flap slate in this way the conjurer can produce a message on one of the slates in addition to producing the card. The message is written on one of the slates and is then covered with the flap; when the flap falls the message and the card are both disclosed. Since the conjurer apparently cleans all four sides of the two slates and leaves them slightly damp he ought really to dampen the underside of the flap and the side of the slate concealed by the flap before he begins the trick; otherwise, someone with a very alert mind may point out at the conclusion of the trick that although the conjurer wiped all four sides of the slates with a damp sponge, two of them (really the underside of the flap and the side of the slate which was concealed by the flap in the first instance) are not quite dry. It is always as well to be prepared for interruptions of that kind.

CHAPTER VIII

MISCELLANEOUS WATER TRICKS

The average beginner usually despises a very easy trick, simply because it is easy. Maybe it is for that reason that one seldom hears of a young amateur including the "Wine and Water" trick in his repertoire. I once heard a young amateur state his objection to the trick.

"Oh, it's so obviously just a chemical experiment," he said.

He was wrong. If the trick is presented properly it will not be "just a chemical experiment" but a very entertaining little bit of magic—simple in its effect, and very short. The trick used to be in the repertoire of Mr. David Devant, and other notable magicians have performed it in public.

There are many ways of presenting the trick, but I do not think that anyone has ever beaten Mr. Devant's method, which I give now with his permission. The effect is so clear that the youngest child in the audience can follow it.

Standing in a row on a tray on the table are four tumblers and a small glass jug, with water in it. The conjurer picks up the jug in one hand, a glass in another, pours out a little water and returns it to the jug. Then he puts the glass down and pours a little water into each glass; the glasses should be about half full. The audience are—or should be—surprised to see that although the liquid in the first and third glasses is undoubtedly water, the second and fourth glasses contain wine, or ink, or stout, or whatever the conjurer is pleased to call it; it is a black fluid.

The conjurer puts the jug down and, taking up the first and second glasses, mixes the contents together, with the result that he gets one glass full of "wine"; he pours this into the jug and all the water in the jug is immediately turned into wine. The conjurer then mixes the contents of the third and fourth glasses together, and he gets a glass of clear water. Pouring this into the jug he causes all the "wine" in it to change at once into clear water. Thus, at the finish of the trick the conjurer returns to the point at which he started—with a jug of water and four empty glasses.

The whole secret is in the "doctoring" of the four glasses. The preparations must be made carefully, and when presenting it in a strange place it is always necessary to try it out beforehand, because the quantities of the chemicals used which are sufficient to work the trick in one district may be quite wrong for the water of another district.

The glasses are prepared in this way. The first contains a teaspoonful of a saturated solution of tannin; the second and fourth glasses contain a few drops of a saturated solution of perchloride of iron, known to some chemists as "steel drops"; the third glass contains a few drops of a saturated solution of oxalic acid.

The object of pouring water into the first glass and tipping it back into the jug is to mix the tannin with the water in the jug. Directly he has done this the conjurer must be brisk in his movements, because after the tannin has been put in the water soon becomes slightly cloudy.

The exact quantities of the chemicals required can only be determined by experiment. Having settled that matter the conjurer has only to carry out the instructions already given. The second and fourth glasses will then have "wine" in them, and the first and third water. The contents of the first and second mixed together will be "wine," and when poured into the jug will cause the water left in the jug to change into "wine." The oxalic acid in the third glass does the trick of taking all the colour out of the contents of the fourth glass, and when he has poured that into the jug the conjurer finishes, as he began, with a "jug of water."

The jug should be taken away at once, because the water will probably become dull and clouded in the course of a few minutes. The "water," by the way, is poisonous; to avoid any chance of an accident the conjurer should pour it away at once, and should also see that the glasses and jug are well washed.

If fairly large tumblers are used the steel drops can be "rinsed" round the two tumblers (the second and fourth) just before the performance begins, and those tumblers can then be placed upside down on a tray; this position negatives the idea that there is anything in the tumblers at the beginning of the trick.

THE VANISHING GLASS OF WATER

To cause a glass of water to vanish is hardly a complete trick, but it may well form part of many magical experiments.

Thus, if you are presenting the "Rice Bowls" (see Chapter V) you can proceed with the trick up to the point when the rice has been secretly removed and the water is in readiness for the final effect. Leave the bowls as they are, one inverted on the other, and show a silk hat to the audience, letting them see inside it.

Now pick up a jug of water with your right hand and throw a large handkerchief over your right arm. With the left hand take a tumbler from the table, pour some water into it, and take it with the disengaged fingers of the right hand, so that with your left hand you can take the handkerchief from your right arm and throw it over the glass.

Directly you have done this, hold the glass, through the handkerchief, with the left hand and put the jug down on the table. The right hand drapes the handkerchief round the glass. Pause for a second, and then flick the handkerchief into the air. The glass of water has vanished.

Go to the silk hat and take from it a glass full of rice. The glass is apparently that which has just vanished and the rice is that which the audience think is in the lower bowl. Then go to the bowls and "discover" the missing water.

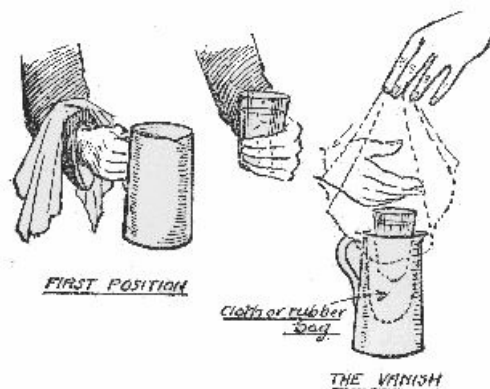


FIG. 13

The disappearance of the glass of water is managed in this way. The handkerchief is really made of two handkerchiefs sewn together; sewn between them, in the centre, is a round piece of cardboard of the size of the top of the glass. When you throw the handkerchief over the glass you get the disc of cardboard exactly over the top of the glass. Take the glass in the left hand and tap it once against the top of the jug—just to let the audience be convinced that it is there. Then, as you take it away, drop it into the jug, which has been provided with a cloth or india-rubber bag for its reception. The bag is stiffened at the top. Of course, the cardboard disc conveys the impression that the glass is still under the handkerchief. The jug must be either a china or a metal one.

If you wish to use the vanish of the glass of water in the way I have suggested—in conjunction with the rice bowls—it will be necessary to have an opera hat with a hinged flap in the centre. Cut a piece of stiff cardboard of the size of the crown of the hat. To the centre of this fasten, by means of strips of black linen, a small, semicircular piece of cardboard, which will thus be hinged to the other piece. Cover the whole of this "fake" with black silk and put it into the open hat. The top of the hinged flap should be about half-way down the hat when the flap is resting against one side of the hat. It is an easy matter to hide a glass under the flap, and that glass is nearly filled with rice, which is prevented from coming out by means of a little plug of paper. By holding the fingers against the flap and the thumb on the brim of the hat it is an easy matter to prevent the glass from falling out when you casually hold the hat up for inspection by the audience. Keep the hat moving, and the audience will not see the flap. Put the hat down, letting the flap swing over to the other side of the hat. Then, when you wish to produce the glass of rice all you have to do is to pull out the plug of paper, leave it in the hat, and take out the glass. Pour the rice out on to a tray and then produce the water from the bowl, and pour it backwards and forwards from one bowl to another.

If you are using the metal bowls this vanish of the glass of water helps to fill in the time occupied by the water running from the top bowl to the one underneath it.

THE VANISHING WATER

Pour some water into a tumbler until it is about half full. Place a short cardboard cylinder over the glass; when you lift

the cylinder the glass is empty, and the cylinder is held with one end facing the audience; there is nothing inside it.

This is a very simple "vanish." The glass has a detachable lining of transparent celluloid which will hold water. The presence of the lining in the glass is not noticed. All that the conjurer has to do is to take care not to put too much water into the "glass," because if he does he may find a difficulty in lifting the lining out in the only way in which it can be lifted out. The cover is placed over the glass. In removing the cover the conjurer holds it with his thumb outside and his middle finger, which should be moistened, inside. Two fingers pull up the celluloid lining and hold it tightly against the cover, which, of course, hides it for a moment while the conjurer picks up the glass and shows that the water has vanished. While he does this he puts the cover down on his table for a moment and lets the celluloid lining sink gently down into a "well" in the table. A "well" is the conjurer's name for a hole in the top of the table. The top of the table is covered with black velvet, and the inside of the hole is lined with the same material. If there is a pattern of gold braid on the top of the table—though even this is not necessary if one is performing on a stage—the hole cannot be seen by the audience, even if they are a few feet away from the table.

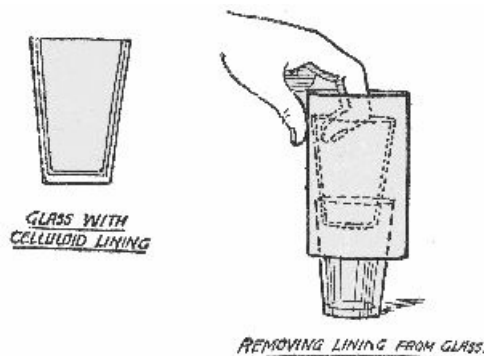


FIG. 14

The action of putting the cover down in a natural way, and not gingerly, as though the conjurer was afraid of something inside it, must be practised and, of course, the cover must be raised again at the earliest possible moment and shown to be empty.

The mere vanishing of water in this way is not a complete trick in itself; it should be combined with other tricks. The milk can, explained later on in this chapter, will serve for the purpose of the reproduction of the water, and if the conjurer will provide himself with an extra celluloid lining, load it with three or four handkerchiefs and place it behind a hat or some piece of apparatus on the table, he can easily build up a little trick.

Having shown the milk can to be empty, he fills the glass, covers it, and leaves it covered for a few moments while he shows some silk handkerchiefs similar to those in the "fake." He "vanishes" these handkerchiefs magically and shows his hands empty, or, if he prefers to do so, he can have another prepared glass similar to the first and put the handkerchiefs in that, so that he has a glass containing handkerchiefs on one side of his table and a glass containing water on the other, and the milk can in the centre. He lifts the cover from the handkerchiefs and shows that they have disappeared; of course, the "vanish" is managed in the same way, the celluloid lining of the glass containing the handkerchiefs going down another "well" in the table.

Then the conjurer vanishes the water in the way described and having got rid of the "fake," lifts the cover to show that it is empty and puts it down over a similar fake (but containing handkerchiefs similar to those which have been vanished). This fake can be standing behind an opera hat on the table, and the conjurer should take away the hat as he puts the cover down over the fake. He must not convey the impression that he is trying to hide the cover behind the hat. He then replaces the cover over the empty tumbler.

The position of things at this stage of the trick should be clear to the audience. The milk can was shown to be empty; the conjurer has caused some handkerchiefs and some water to vanish from two tumblers, one of which is left uncovered. Going to the uncovered one the conjurer lifts the cover and shows the handkerchiefs, and he can at once pour the water from the milk can.

I do not suggest for a moment that that would be a particularly good trick to do; I merely describe it in order to start you

thinking of some other article which might be added to the water and the handkerchiefs to make a still more puzzling trick. A glance through any catalogue of tricks will surely enable you to concoct a very fair trick on these lines.

THE AQUARIUS TUBE

Now, here is a trick of a different kind, one which is quite complete in itself. The inventor is unknown to me and I have not been able to discover his name. In common with some other conjurers I have always been under the impression that Mr. Claude Chandler invented this trick, but he tells me that he is not the inventor and he does not know by whom the trick was originated.

The effect is quite simple and not difficult to obtain. The conjurer comes forward with a small piece of brown paper in his left hand. He shows both sides of it, rolls it into a tube and pours water into the tube. To the surprise of the audience the water remains in the tube. The conjurer puts two fingers into the lower end of the tube and draws out a quantity of coloured paper ribbons, perfectly dry; when all the ribbons are on the table there is quite a little mound of them. The conjurer afterwards unrolls the paper and throws it on one side, showing that it is not prepared in any way for the trick.

That is the trick known as the Aquarius tube, but most conjurers would naturally wish to extend it by producing flags from the paper ribbons, and this would not be a difficult matter.

In order to do this trick a small metal tube, closed at both ends, with a hole in one end is required. The tube is about the height of a pony glass, with a slightly smaller diameter. When the trick was first invented the tube was made in the form of an "unspillable" ink-well. (See illustration A.) Thus, when the water was poured in (in a way which I will describe presently) there was no risk that the water would run out even if the tube was inverted. The tube in that form was "safe," but a little too safe, because of the difficulty of emptying it after a performance; it had to be shaken vigorously to clear it of water.

Mr. Harry Leat, therefore, improved the tube. (See illustration B.) It will be seen that in the improved tube there is a short length of a very small tube attached to the hole in the top of the tube, and in order to facilitate the task of emptying the tube there is a hole at the other end; this hole is closed during the performance of the trick by an india-rubber plug. It will be noticed that in both tubes the base is not flush with the lower edge, but is fastened about half an inch from the edge. Thus, there is space at the bottom of the tube for a small coil of paper ribbons. (The rubber plug comes in the centre of the coil.)

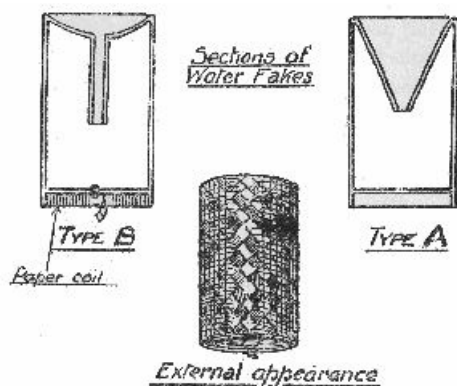


FIG. 15

If a small quantity of water is poured into this tube it can be inverted without any fear of the water running out, but, of course, if too much water is used and the tube is turned upside down a small quantity of water is bound to escape. For myself, I see no object in turning the tube upside down. After the conjurer has made a tube of paper and has poured water into it and has shown that the water does not run out from the other end, I do not see that he gains anything by turning the tube upside down. (It will be understood, of course, that the metal tube is secretly introduced into the paper tube. I am coming to that.)

Having poured the water into the tube the conjurer makes one or two mystic passes over it and then pulls out the paper ribbons; directly these have been well started they will uncoil and fall from the tube in a heap on the table.

How does the conjurer manage to get rid of the "fake" containing the water? By camouflage. The "fake" tube is painted to match the ribbons. When the ribbons have been produced the conjurer holds up a handful near the end of the tube and calls attention to their colours. He then lets the tube slide down out of the paper tube behind the ribbons and puts the lot on the table again. The "fake," being the same colour as the ribbons, is not noticed. If the conjurer has two or three handkerchiefs on the table to act as a pad he can let the tube fall down on the table, but he must bring the end of the paper tube as near to the table as possible when the metal "fake" is to fall, otherwise there will be an audible "thud."

The "fake" is introduced into the paper tube in a very simple manner. The piece of brown paper should be about fifteen inches square. The conjurer holds this in his left hand with his fingers behind the paper and thumb in front of it. Unknown to the audience the conjurer is holding the "fake" behind the paper. In order to show both sides of the paper the conjurer brings up the free end with his right hand until it reaches the left thumb, which then takes it. At the same time he releases the end which he has been holding with his left thumb and that end naturally falls down. The audience have seen both sides of the paper, but the "fake" is still behind the paper in the left hand. This "move" is quite a natural one, and is very easy; if the conjurer will try it in front of a mirror he will see that it is also deceptive.

The conjurer, using both hands, now rolls the paper round the tube and finally holds the tube near the lower end in his left hand; it is as well to extend the little finger under the paper tube to prevent the "fake" from falling.

The water should be poured into the paper tube in a thin stream. The quantity of water required must be ascertained by experiment. The conjurer then makes a few mystic passes below and over the tube with his right hand, puts two fingers into the lower end of the tube and starts the ribbons; they will fall at once into a heap on the table. I should mention that before loading the "fake" with the coil the outer ribbon on the coil should be torn; if it is not the end of the falling ribbons will be a ring of paper, which will look suspicious. The centre end of the coil should also be pulled out half an inch, so that the conjurer does not have to fumble to get hold of it.

If the conjurer wishes to produce flags at the end of the experiment he can have them in a bundle in a "well" in the table, and then all he has to do is to pick up some of the ribbons with his left hand, at the same time getting his thumb into a wire loop round the bundle. Then he breaks the thread tied round the bundle and carries on to the end of the trick.

LINKS

In this trick the conjurer fills a tumbler or goblet with water and drops in a number of links from a chain. (A small brass curtain chain which has been pulled to pieces answers well for the trick.) The conjurer "fishes" into the tumbler with a long buttonhook and gets hold of one of the links; all the others come with it, because the links are joined together.

Here we make use of what is known as a "mirror" glass. A thick cut-glass tumbler is divided in the centre by two pieces of looking-glass cemented together. The glass is held in the left hand with one side of the mirror facing the audience; hidden in the compartment behind the mirror is a short length of chain. Having filled the glass with water the conjurer puts it down on the table for a moment while he draws attention to the separate links. He picks up the mirror-glass with his left hand and drops in all the separate links into the front compartment of the glass. (The water helps to disguise the presence of the mirror in the glass.) Then the conjurer brings his right hand over to the glass, takes it in that hand and immediately brings his hand right round to his right. Thus he has turned the glass round without having apparently done anything out of the ordinary; the audience see what they believe to be the separate links in the glass. The conjurer then takes the glass with his left hand, the fingers, being in front of the glass, help to hide the mirror. Then—well, the rest is easy! Directly the chain has been taken out the conjurer should put the glass down behind some piece of apparatus on the table; the audience cannot be permitted to gaze at it for any length of time.

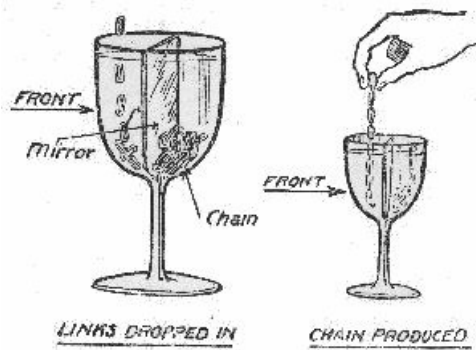


FIG. 16

THE MILK CANS

You have seen the toy milk cans in a shop? By having two of these "faked" in the way shown in the illustrations you can compose two or three little tricks. I have already explained a trick in which one of the cans can be used.

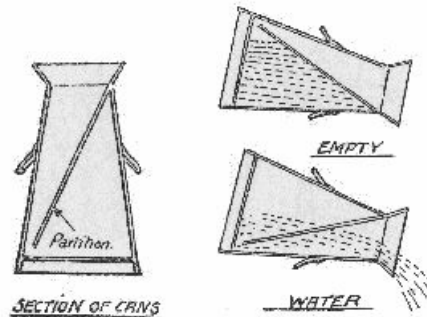


FIG. 17

It will be seen that if water is placed in one of the cans and the can is held with the faked side downwards the can can be shown to be empty, because the water will not run out, but if the can is held with the faked side uppermost the water can be poured out. Of course, the audience cannot be permitted to have a very close view of the interiors of the cans.

Here is one way of using two of these cans in a trick. Have one loaded with water and the other empty. Show the audience that both are empty and put them down on the opposite sides of your table. Pour water into the can which really is empty and command it to pass to the other can. You can then make the water travel invisibly back to the first can.

In the course of your "patter" you will probably not miss the chance of talking about the milk cans and the other liquid which is sometimes supposed to be put into milk—an old joke, but one which audiences almost seem to expect.

WATER FROM WASTE PAPER

For this trick you require two large aluminium drinking cups just alike. One of them is filled with water and is then closed with an india-rubber cap (procurable at any conjuring shop). Gummed on to this cap are little bits of newspaper. The cup is then hidden in a box of pieces of newspaper.

Come forward with the empty cup in your hands and fill it with the paper by dipping it into the box. Add a handful of paper with the left hand and then tip the lot back into the box. Repeat the movements. At the third attempt leave the empty cup hidden in the box of waste paper and get hold of the cup filled with water. Add a little more paper to the top of this cup with the left hand and then remove one or two pieces; this helps to convince the audience that the cup is really filled with loose bits of paper. Close the lid of the box and stand the cup on it. Cover the cup with a small thick silk handkerchief.

In removing the handkerchief you can easily "nip off" the rubber cover with the thumb, and you leave it hidden in the handkerchief while you pour the water out of the cup.

By having two boxes—or one larger one—the trick can be repeated, but it would not be advisable to produce water from both cups. Let the second production be a surprise. If you are performing to children you can have no better production than sweets, which, of course, you give away.

This trick is also performed with specially prepared cups with lids. The cups in the boxes are closed with other lids (flush with the top), and thus when they are brought up out of the boxes some loose paper is on the top of each of the secret lids and the cups appear to be full of paper. The "visible" lid is then put on to each cup, and when these lids are removed they bring away with them the secret lids and the little paper which was on the top of them. Then the real contents of the cups are produced.

COTTON WOOL TO WATER

For this trick I use an old piece of apparatus known to conjurers as the "coffee vase," and I mention it here because my method of using it differs from that usually employed.

The vase is a tall, straight one on a foot; it is usually made of polished tin. There is a separate metal lining to this vase; this lining is of the shape shown in the illustration. It will be seen that the bottom of the lining does not come down to the bottom of the vase, and that the outside part of the lining goes over the outside of the vase and extends to the whole length of the vase. Therefore, it is impossible to tell, from looking at the outside of the vase, whether the lining is inside or whether the vase is what you say it is—an empty vase.

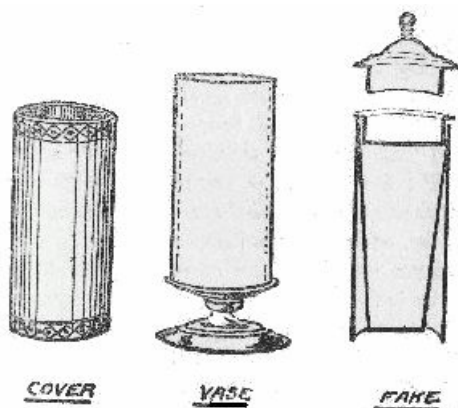


FIG. 18

There is also a cardboard cover which fits over the vase, a little metal cup, acting as a lid, which fits loosely into the top of the lining, and a lid with a knob for a handle which fits closely into this secret cup or lid. The secret lid has a little cotton wool placed on it.

This is the usual way of working the trick. The lining, with its "secret" lid on the top of it, is placed inside the cover and stood upon the table. The conjurer shows the vase, and as at the moment it is free from preparation he can rattle his wand inside it and show that it is really empty. He then fills it with cotton wool, taking care to put in the wool in little pieces and not pressing it down. He then "explains"—and I ask you to remember that this is not my way of presenting the trick—that the original way of doing the trick was by covering the vase with a cardboard cylinder. He puts on the cover and so gets the lining into the vase. The lining, of course, has been previously filled with coffee, or milk, or water, or some other liquid; the bottom of the lining presses down the cotton wool in the vase into a very small compass.

Now, when the conjurer removes the cover the audience see the pieces of cotton wool at the top of the secret lid on the lining, and apparently no change has been made. The conjurer goes on to explain that the modern method of doing the trick consists in merely putting "this little lid" on the cotton wool. (Cotton wool, is easily compressible, and there is sufficient space between the bottom of the lining and the bottom of the vase for all the cotton wool which was placed loosely in the vase.) Naturally, when the conjurer takes off the lid he brings away inside it the secret lid and the little pieces of cotton wool which were on that lid, and he can pour out any liquid which was in the "lining" to the vase.

Every trick has its weak point, and it seems to me that the weak point of that version of the trick is found by the audience

when they realise that they are not permitted to see that the cover is empty before it is placed over the vase. I admit that the appearance of the vase is not altered in any way after the cover has been removed. The exterior is just the same and the audience see the little pile of cotton wool at the top. Still, I have never liked that method.

I dispense with the secret lid or cup to the lining and, therefore, with the "visible" lid to it. At the commencement of the trick I have the inner lining, nearly filled with water, in the vase, and the cover empty. I begin by showing that the cover really is empty, and to show that it fits over the vase I drop it over the vase and lift it off again. I replace the cover and then, as a kind of afterthought, say: "I never showed you the vase; of course, there is nothing in that." This time, when taking off the cover I take off the inner lining by pinching the cover tightly and leave it for a moment hidden in the cover. Then I fill the vase with cotton wool and put on the cover. The audience have seen the cover empty and they have seen the empty vase filled with cotton wool. Of course, when I take off the cover I can at once pour out the water.

It is advisable to have the cover made of tin. When you are putting a cardboard cover with the metal lining inside it over the vase it is not an easy matter to prevent the lining from knocking against the top of the vase, and if you are performing at close quarters the audience may hear the "chink" of metal against metal. You get over that difficulty by having the cover made of tin.

If you want to raise a laugh easily at the close of this trick you can pretend to overhear someone say that the water is not real water. You at once pour some into a cup and throw it—apparently—over the heads of the audience, but instead of a shower of water they get a shower of confetti.

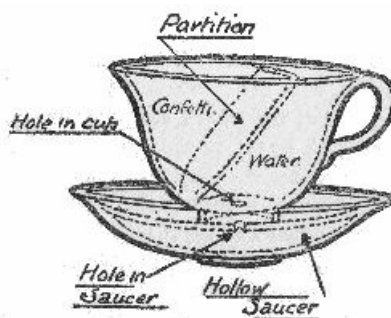
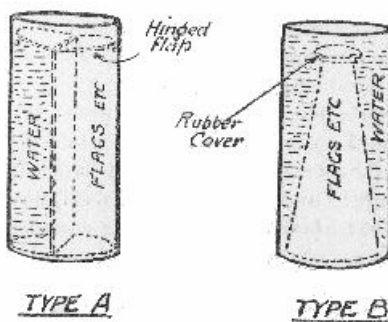


FIG. 19

This is managed by means of a "confetti cup," which is a metal teacup on a saucer. The cup is divided by a partition in the centre and the front compartment is filled with confetti. There is a hole in the bottom of the other compartment and it is there that you pour the water. Where does the water go to? Into the saucer, which is somewhat suspiciously thick. There is a hole in the centre of the saucer and the hole in the bottom of the cup goes exactly over the hole in the saucer. Thus, when the water is poured into the cup it finds its way directly into the saucer and the cup can at once be lifted up. The trick is more suitable for a stage than for a drawing-room; even a little confetti makes a big litter in a room. Still, some good-natured hostesses, if asked if they would have any objection to a litter of confetti in a room, would be sure to reply: "Not the slightest, do what you like as long as you amuse the children."

SILK FROM WATER

Most conjurers like to conclude a performance with a showy trick, one in which they can produce a quantity of ribbons and flags, finishing up with the production of a Union Jack—the bigger the better.



Here is a trick of that kind. The conjurer begins by showing a large metal cylinder closed at one end. He rattles his wand inside it and then holds it with its end facing the audience. But he does not hold it perfectly still. If he is performing in a room with the front rows of his audience close to him the utmost he can do—in the way of showing the interior of the cylinder—is to point it to the audience on his right and then bring it round with a quick sweep to the audience on his left. It is as well to have an assistant for this trick, but the assistant must be "in the know"—the conjurer's very own assistant, because he—or, better still, she—is asked to hold the cylinder with both hands while the conjurer fills it with water, and the conjurer cannot allow a member of the audience to undertake that task.

The water should be poured in from a height, so that the audience can see that real water is used, and that it really does go into the cylinder. The conjurer puts the jug down and peeps into the cylinder as though he were expecting something to happen. Of course, the trick could be brought to a conclusion at once, but you may well pause here for a moment—just to "work up the excitement."

You dip your hand into the cylinder and take it out dripping with water. "Just wet water," you say, "very wet." Dip your hand in again. "Still wet." Repeat the action, but this time you remark that here is something which is "quite dry," and you take out an American flag. The little joke may, or may not be, discovered by the audience, but probably some of the older members will see it. You then continue to produce a quantity of flags and finally finish up with the Union Jack, which, of course, must be larger than any of the other flags you have produced.

But the trick is not yet over, because as you produce the last flag your assistant, knowing what to do, pours out the water from the cylinder.

This effect is produced in a simple manner. The cylinder is divided down the centre into two compartments. The top of the partition does not come up to the top of the cylinder because one compartment, filled with flags before the commencement of the trick, is closed with a little semi-circular lid, and as this lid has to be opened before the flags can be produced it follows that if it were level with the top of the cylinder it would be seen. The whole of the interior is painted a dull black.

Care must be taken in pouring the water into the cylinder; if it is poured on to the top of the lid there will be a visible splash above the top of the cylinder, which would give the trick away.

Your assistant, having rehearsed the trick with you, knows just what you are going to do, and, therefore, when you dip your hand into the cylinder for the third time to get at the first flag she tilts the cylinder slightly towards you and holds it in such a way that you can lift the lid quickly.

Another cylinder for producing the same effect has the secret compartment in the centre. The compartment is a round tube closed at the mouth with an india-rubber cap. This cylinder usually has a foot to it, and this makes it more convenient for the assistant to hold. Besides, knowing that the secret compartment is in the centre the conjurer does not have to be over careful as to the way in which he pours in the water; as long as the spout of the jug is near the edge of the cylinder he knows that he is safe. I used one of these cylinders at St. George's Hall some years ago.

It is advisable to produce a flag in the first place, because you are then able to get away with the india-rubber cover behind it; the cover can easily be pulled away and hidden afterwards as you put the flag down.

It is a good plan, after the production of the first flag, to take out a number of compressible things. If you are performing to children they will like nothing better than two or three bundles of carrots. These imitation carrots are made with springs inside them, and they can be packed in a very small compass. Imitation flowers, sausages, balls and other things are also made in such a way that they can be packed in a very small space, but when they are produced they expand to the usual size. If you adopt this plan you apparently take out of the tube far more than could possibly be put into it. These things can be followed with a few "throw-outs," as they are called—little coils of bright tissue paper ribbons; the conjurer gets hold of the end and throws the coil away from him when the ribbons spread out, making a good display. After these can come a large number of silk handkerchiefs of bright colours, and finally the flags.

Care should be taken in displaying all these things after they are produced. You lose half the effect of the trick if you merely dump them down in an untidy heap. One flag can be hung on the assistant's arm, another over a chair, and another

in front of the table, and so on, the object being to leave the audience with some kind of a "spectacle."

The one drawback to this very easy, but very effective trick is the anti-climax produced by the water being poured out of the vase at the end of the trick. You really want the end of the trick to be the production of the big Union Jack, and yet if you do not have the water poured out you lose some of the effect of the trick.

You can get over this difficulty by producing the Union Jack in another way, and this will give you a little more room in the vase for other flags. Let the last of these be a Union Jack of the same size as the others and drape it with the others over the back of a chair. Then have the water poured out of the vase and the audience will think that you have come to the conclusion of the trick and will begin to applaud—or it is to be hoped they will! Then take several of the flags from the back of the chair and produce a large Union Jack on a flagstaff; this makes an excellent finish to the trick.

The flagstaff is a telescopic one; the flag is pleated and rolled up, and the staff is concealed in a little bag hung behind the chair over which you drape the flags. To cause the staff to open, grasp the handle tightly and "shoot" it out with its point towards the floor for a moment; this is a very important point, because if you are performing in a room you may, in the excitement of the moment, do someone a serious injury if you merely "shoot" out the flag towards the audience. The flagstaff should be of the kind known as "self-locking"; that is to say, when every joint is out the staff can immediately be raised to a vertical position without any fear that the staff will collapse; it will remain rigid until you wish to close it. Wave the flag, allowing the other flags to fall from your hands to the floor, and if you do not finish your performance to loud applause the fault will not be yours.

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