

MYSTIFYING THE PEOPLE.

Tricks of Conjurers and Others
in the Show Business.

ALL EASY WHEN YOU KNOW HOW.

How Some of them are Done, and Some that Cannot be Given Away—The Tattooed Man and How He got that Way—The Wonderful Trick of an East Indian Juggler—A Famous Conjurer's new Sensation—Other Tricks of the Show Business.

"What do you consider to be the chief essential in the making of a good conjurer?" I asked the accomplished "jongleur," M. Servais le Roy, as we sat together behind the stage of the Royal Aquarium, London.

He replied at once, "Dexterity, finish, originality, presence of mind. A conjurer must never be nonplussed, or, at all events he must never show it. You noticed just now the trick in which I shake 2,000 flowers out of a small paper cone? Well, I will tell you how that is done, and how I nearly came to grief over it a few days ago. Those 2,000 flowers, though they are come out so large and real looking, are collapsible, and are really tied up in a small bundle, which I easily conceal about my person. The other day, to my horror, I found they were loose and therefore impossible to be placed inside the cone. Quite coolly, however, I turned to the stage manager, and called to him in an undertone to lower the curtain. This he proceeded to do. I pretended to think it was coming down too soon. I grew loudly angry. No good; down came the curtain. Like lightning I snatched the second bundle of flowers which was lying ready for the evening performance, and by the time the curtain ascended, I was there as cool as ever, and the trick was performed, amidst yells of applause. No one guessed anything had gone wrong."

I had been much puzzled by the way in which M. Servais le Roy had performed the rabbit and watch trick. A rabbit sat on a table at one end of the stage; M. le Roy at the other threw up a borrowed watch, apparently into visible space. The rabbit had disappeared. In the same minute as this happened a man brought in a large box. M. le Roy unpacked out of this box four or five boxes, each contained within each, from the last one of which he produced the rabbit with the watch round its neck.

"Ah," said the clever little Belgian, with a laugh, "it is very simple, but I cannot tell you how it is done. There are many conjurers would give their ears to be able to do that trick. But I will tell you how I performed the trick of the Vanishing Lady."

"You remember that I place first a sheet of paper on the part of the stage on which she stands. That is to give the idea that there is no communication with below. The chair on which she sits has a series of concealed wires at its back, which, as soon as the lady is covered with a shawl, spring up in her shape: the lady is still on the chair, but the shawl is half an inch from contact with her body. A trap door opens beneath, the paper is cut with a sharp knife, the lady sinks through, the hole is glued up again, the cloth is lifted, whilst the wires collapse as before, the paper is displayed to view apparently uncut, but the lady has gone! *Vola tout!*"

"What is your favorite trick?"

"Well, I think the one in which I throw up an ordinary billiard ball, which appears to change its size and color and to multiply itself over and over again. And I am rather fond of a trick in which I make ninety passes with the card in one minute. It has been said you can't do more than sixty. But what I always lay great stress on is the finish that is essential in a good conjurer. It is my chief point. I stand perfectly still on the stage and throw up the rabbit, or the watch, into the air, and it vanishes. No, the unfinished conjurer walks about the stage, talks, laughs, puts his hands in his pockets. The public tire of watching his many movements, and so don't notice what he does: he covers his manipulations under much talk and movement. My point is to do everything without movement, as far as possible, without leaving the stage, and without turning my back on the audience."

"Have you performed much abroad?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, "and I have had some curious experiences. I was once sent for by the Emperor of Morocco to give an entertainment before the assembled Arab chiefs. Now, of course, they are accustomed by tradition of great antiquity to conjurers. But after they had seen a few of my tricks, and especially the Vanishing Lady, they rose in a body and fled from the hall, declaring that I had communicated with the Evil One, and that, therefore, it would be wicked and dangerous for them to stay! They were never persuaded to see me again!"

"Another curious incident happened to me in Spain, where, as you know, the people are very superstitious. One night a lady came to me and told me she had lost a valuable ring. Would I recover it for her? I said I would do my best, never really believing I could do anything. The next day, when I went on to the stage, I told the people of this incident, and then said: 'You will find it round the neck of the little dove which will be brought in.' Sure enough it was there. This caused a tumult of applause and wonderment. The lady herself regarded me as absolutely possessed. The explanation, as usual, is very simple. It chanced that when I was leaving the hall the previous night, after my talk with the lady, who indeed I regarded as very silly and superstitious, I happened to tread on something. I stooped down and picked it up. Lo and behold! it was the very ring she had lost! Here was my opportunity to make a great name. And indeed it is talked of there to this very day as the most wonderful thing that ever happened."

"A conjurer often has strange incidents in his life. A few weeks ago a very painful thing occurred. I was requested by the members of a well-known London club to come and try to detect a card. I went. But the first night nothing happened, nor the second, and yet I felt sure he was the guilty man."

"On the third night I discovered him

tricking by ordinary sleight of hand. At a given signal from me they caught hold of him, and he was discovered red-handed, and at once dismissed the club. It was a very painful incident. I think the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to me occurred on the stage here in the Aquarium a few nights ago. During that illusionary scene when I produce the three girls apparently from nowhere, one of them fainted, and I had to drag her right across the stage and place her in the arms of the first girl, who stood there under cover. The third girl I dragged to the other two, and placed her on the other side, so that when the sheet was removed there stood the three women in the attitudes of that well-known group, 'The Three Graces.' The audience had not the least suspicion anything was wrong, though one of the girls, the one in the centre, was absolutely unconscious, and was only supported by her companions. She recovered almost immediately after the curtain went down."

"Ordinarily, you know, the girls are discovered, when I remove the sheet, standing far apart. The conjurer who cannot preserve his presence of mind is a lost man! He will never succeed as a conjurer."—*London Tit Bits.*

A JUGGLER'S TRICK.

He Pretends to Kill a Man and Deceives All His Beholders.

The wonderful feats of East Indian jugglers have formed the theme of many a letter from travellers in the Orient, but none are more surprising than that for which an old sea dog, now lying at the water front, vouches, says a San Francisco paper. While he was an officer on board the P. and O. steamers, two natives came aboard at Madras, he says. They were a juggler and his assistant. After they had performed a number of minor feats and gathered quite a crowd around them, they called for a sack and a piece of sail cloth.

These having been provided, the chief juggler made a small, tent-like structure with the canvas and some stools. He then



AN EAST INDIAN JUGGLER.

placed his assistant in the sack and allowed a sailor to tie the knot which bound him a fast prisoner. This done, the chief carried the sack into an open space, warning the people to stand back some distance, and then carried on an animated conversation with his assistant, whose replies could be distinctly heard coming from the sack. Suddenly the chief rushed forward, picked up the sack and dumped it overboard, where, to the horror of the passengers and crew, it sank out of sight.

Immediately the captain rushed forward and seized the man, under the full belief that he had murdered his companion, but the juggler only smiled, and, pointing to the canvas, asked that it be raised. This was done and the supposed drowned man was discovered squatting on the deck. So realistic had been the throwing overboard, however, that it was some time before the surprised passengers could realize that a murder had not been committed.

A TALK WITH A TATOOED MAN.

How the Designs are Made and What They Cost the Wearer.

"Professor" Williams and his wife present a curious spectacle to the eyes of their many visitors, as they hold their daily recitations. Both of them are most exquisitely tattooed about the arms and body. Devices of every description, dragons, ships in full sail, the crucifixion of our Lord, sailors' love-knots, the flags of all nations, swords and spears—these and many other things are depicted in rich profusion upon the bodies both of the man and his wife.

The dragon upon Mr. Williams' side is the work, as indeed is the whole of the design upon his body, of his late partner, O'Reilly, a professor of the art in New York; and this dragon, measuring three feet in length, is most exquisitely drawn as also is the ship in full sail upon his breast.

"O'Reilly," exclaimed the "Professor" to me, "taught me all I know. He is one of the finest tattooers in the world. He took upwards of two years in doing these designs upon me, and I value his work at not less than \$1200. I tattooed my wife myself, while we were travelling on exhibition with Bostock's menagerie. She is the first woman who was ever publicly tattooed," added Mr. Williams with a good deal of innocent pride.

"Do you get any of your ideas from the

South Sea Islanders, or the Maoris, or the Red Indians of North America?" I asked.

"Oh, dear me, no," replied Mr. Williams. "I don't know that I ever saw a South Sea Islander's work, and from the picture I have seen of it I don't think much of it. And as for the North American Indians, they are getting too civilized for that kind of thing altogether."

We fell then into a discussion regarding the respective merits of savage tattooing and the tattooing of the artistic white man; my own impression being that the savage's was the more artistic work, inasmuch as it generally follows the lines of the body, whereas the white man, who depicts a ship in full sail across a person's back, is as wholly inartistic as the painter would be who, in ecclesiastical decoration, would wholly neglect the line of architecture and the perspectives and distances in a great church. The "Professor" naturally differed from me.

And who are your chief patrons here in England, I asked, "and what are the most popular designs?"

"I have people of all classes," was the reply, "from the highest to the lowest; gentlemen from the best West End clubs, especially the military clubs, come here a great deal. They generally have their crest and monogram, or the monogram of their regiment, designed upon their arms. They are thus easily identified in case of accident. Freemasons often have their lodge marks tattooed on their arms or under their signet rings. This, of course, would pass them all over the world."

Just as Mr. Williams finished speaking, a good looking young fellow, obviously a gentleman, entered the little room, and taking the operation chair he explained to the "Professor" that, being a yachting man, he wanted his initials tattooed upon his arms in the ordinary signalling code in use in the Royal Yacht Squadron. Mr. Williams having carefully shaved the hairy, well-bronzed arm, took up a small stick in which were inserted, pen-wise, five very tiny needles, and began to puncture the delicate skin. In an incredibly short space of time the design was fully worked out and most beautifully completed.

"Did you feel any pain?" I asked the gentleman.

"Not the slightest," he replied. "I hardly knew it was being done."

Mrs. Williams and I fell into a chat then, and she told me that a good many ladies are tattooed under the shoulder-strap of their dresses—whatever that may mean—and under their finger-rings. She also told me of the curious adventures her husband had experienced in America when he was learning this strange art.

"He used to practise on little coloured boys, as a rule. Sometimes the work failed, or, at first especially, their arms would be inflamed, and my husband had to jump on a passing train to get away from the villages, the parents of the children flying down the street after him."

"Aye, I used to have some warm times over there, I can tell you," chimed in the "Professor" as he re-entered the room, which he had quitted a few moments.

"Nowadays of course it is different. I never make any mistakes, and I know how to do it without causing pain or inflammation. For one thing, I only pierce two skins. But once a man is tattooed, he can never get the mark out again. More than once I have known criminals to be identified by means of some design which it is known they have marked upon them. I have tattooed animals—pigs, white rats, a Japanese dog, and once I tattooed a goose; that was the funniest commission I ever undertook," and the "Professor" and his wife went off into fits of laughter at the mere thought of that evidently droll experience.

"But they are bad sitters," explained the "Professor" as soon as he had recovered his gravity. "I had to bribe the pigs with great basins of bread and milk; they were quiet enough then."

It is quite difficult on first seeing Mr. and Mrs. Williams to realize that they have not dressed themselves in a very tight-fitting silk clothing. The designs are so close, so numerous, so smoothly executed, and so completely cover the skin that, in the "Professor's" case especially, it is almost impossible to believe that you are looking upon the naked body pure and simple. The "Professor's" charges appeared to me to be very moderate, but they naturally vary very much—according to design and quantity, chiefly. Initials upon a person's arm can be done for five shillings; but anyone wishing their whole body elaborately covered and tattooed would probably incur a bill of less than \$2,500.

THE GREAT COIN TRICK.

It is a Fine Illusion, but Can Be Done Easily if One Can Palm Cleverly.

An easy trick of the magician is catching half-dollar coins with his right hand and dropping them in a hat. A silk hat is best, because the crown is deeper. It is held firmly with the left hand. These coins are pulled out of the nose, the hair or the ears of any one in the audience, and dropped with a click into the hat. Sometimes the operator stands on the stage, and pretends he is catching coins in the air. If any one in the audience will observe he will notice the magician pulling coins from the impalpable nowhere. The operator has care to keep the back of his right hand to his audience.

A reporter was told by a superannuated conjurer how the trick was done. The left hand, which holds the hat, has some ten or fifteen coins in it and whenever the right hand pretends to drop a coin the illusion is made perfect by the left hand dropping a coin instead. The coin in the right hand remains there and is cleverly "palmed." If the palm of the hand were turned to the audience the illusion would soon be dispelled. The only difficult thing about it is "palming," or holding the coin in the palm of the hand and permitting it to get to the fingers when the pretended catch is made.

It will be noticed that the operator throws his hands up as if grabbing the coin, but that movement enables him to easily transfer the coin from his palm to his fingers. Then the proud wizard holds the half dollar a second between his thumb, fore and middle fingers, and with an air, which plainly says he is the greater of Mephistos, conveys it to the hat. Instead of dropping it in the hat he quickly palms it and goes back with his right hand to catch the same half dollar again. Where he gets carried away and betrays his secret to the careful onlookers is when he holds

up the hat with his left hand toward the proscenium arch and a coin unseen falls and clicks in the bottom of the hat.

One can then see how the left hand grasps the hat, the fingers and palm being on the inside of the crown and the thumb doing yoe-man's duty holding the short rim of the silk chapeau. The coin could fall from no place save the hand holding the hat, and the noise of the clink, not being loud, would naturally lead to discovery. When the performer goes down among the audience and begins to pull coins from noses it requires quick and expert work. After a time he gets tired of pulling out coins and confidently reaches his hand into the breast of some man's coat and jerks forth a rabbit or small chicken. That is his masterpiece, but the truth is the man has been sitting there patiently waiting to be relieved of his burden and earn his dollar.

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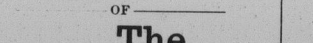
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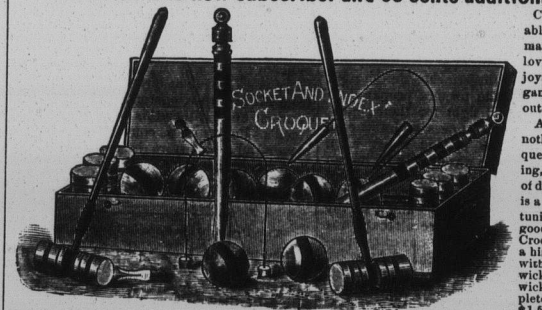
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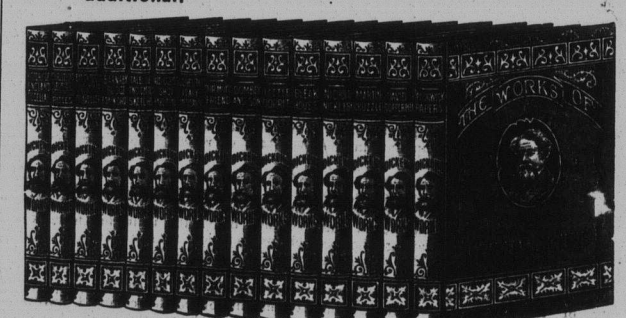
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