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The Trick of It

An Illustrated, Incurable Humoresque

CONCERNING all and sundry in modern times, who perform the near-miraculous by some species of touching the button. Including all such masters of magic as those who sign checks for \$1,000's each; who on skimpy salaries eke out fat programmes of living; measly specimens of manhood who marry magnificent women; millionaires who make their own money; the man who is put under a magnifying glass by a big position; the shrewd manipulator who performs the mysterious trick of pulling wires; the popular author who from a prize package of passionate words and lurid sentiments is able to concoct a "best seller"; and many other such prestidigitateurs who on honest jobs, at fair wages, might have great difficulty in performing the mechanical job known as "making ends meet."

By H. A. CODY

Sleight-of-Hand Sketches by Arthur Lismer



"A Rabbit from His Hat."

I HAVE always admired the conjurer or sleight-of-hand man. He appears before you and does all sorts of wonderful things. If eggs are needed he will turn to a man and produce several from his hair. If you wish a rabbit, one will come from an innocent-looking hat. Yes,

"The conjurer's life is so easy and grand;
He makes such superior jokes—
O it's splendid to stand with a wand in your hand,
And puzzle relations and folks."

We gaze in awe upon such a man as the marvellous Paul Cinquevalli, as he balances two billiard balls on the top of each other on the point of a cue. It is astounding to us, as are many other such performances.

And yet how many conjurers we meet in daily life, people who can do all sorts of things with so little apparent effort. How I wish that I could do the same. One man, for instance, will pick up a pen, and sign his name to a cheque, and that name will make that little piece of paper worth thousands of dollars. If I signed my name it would not increase the value of the paper so much as a postage stamp. There must be something in the way the letters are formed which does the trick.

I have noted many wonderful sleight-of-hand performances which have often puzzled me. I know a man who is getting a small salary as clerk in a retail store. Well, with that six hundred dollars he can do great things. He can keep up a comfortable house, feed and clothe his family in a proper manner. He has a summer cottage out of town, and owns a motor boat. At Christmas he is most liberal. He buys expensive presents for his wife, children, relatives and friends. He smokes good cigars, belongs to numerous societies and clubs, and dresses well. Why, the ordinary professional conjurer is nowhere by the side of this man. How he does it is beyond my comprehension.

I SOMETIMES wonder how certain men ever got married. It must have been through some sleight-of-hand performance. You will often see a beautiful, bright, and intelligent woman hitched to a man who would make a good scare-crow in a farmer's corn-field. But this could be accounted for if the man had brains. But often we find that he is sadly lacking in mental machinery, as well as being almost a diminutive in size. And yet I stand in awe of such a man. He certainly must be a conjurer or else he never could have induced such a splendid specimen of womanhood to become his wife. This trick was even hard for wise old Solomon to fathom. He was forced to acknowledge that among the three or four things he could not understand one was "The way of a man with a maid." There must have been such conjurers in his day as there are now.

A thing which used to appeal to me as most re-

markable was the way some people, such as millionaires, made their money. I knew there was a trick about it somewhere, but could never learn the secret. They were all like the sleight-of-hand man you see upon the platform. They had nothing to start with, but it wasn't long before they had an abundance of things around them. These men generally reached some city without a cent, their shoes out at the toes, and their clothes the worse for wear. But they always did the trick, and presto, they became railway magnates, or some other kind of a magnet, and drew all things toward them. Now, I could never do that trick, no matter how hard I tried. I have gone to cities something like those men, but always came away poorer than I went, if such a thing were possible. I have endeavoured to study the secrets of the success of those great men, but so far have failed. There is one thing, though, which appeals to me. It is said that mighty financiers often unite and put their money into a pool. Just what comes of it I don't know. But it must be a way of making money or such great men would not do it. Now, I am just waiting to get several men who are as hard up as I am. Then we shall hunt for the biggest pool in the whole country, and throw in all the money we can scrape together. If this doesn't bring us riches then I shall give up the effort. I shall know by that time that the millionaires had a trick of which I know nothing. Anyway, they keep it a deep secret, for most people so far have never found it out.

THERE is something fascinating about a man with a big position. He awes you like a conjurer. He looks big, and he feels big, not only in body, but in importance as well. He has great influence. He says to one man, go, and he goes, and to another, come, and he comes. You hardly dare approach him, he is so big. And yet you once went to school with him, scrapped with him, called him "Bill," "liar," and other euphemistic terms. But now you must address him as Mr. Higher-rung, and take off your hat when you come into his presence. What is the cause of this difference in positions? Why is it that he commands thousands of people, and you—why you dare not even command your wife? Is it because he had more brains than you? That idea is ridiculous. It is comforting to know that others have been puzzled in the same manner. It was the lean and hungry-looking Cassius who many years ago had similar thoughts concerning Cæsar. He could not understand why Cæsar should be so much greater than his friend Brutus.

"Why," he asked, with poetic emphasis, "should that name be sounded more than yours?"



"Married to a Scarecrow."

Write them together, yours is as fair a name; Sound them, it doth become the mouth as well; Weigh them, it is as heavy; conjure with 'em, Brutus will start a spirit as soon as Cæsar. Now, in the names of all the gods at once, Upon what meat doth this our Cæsar feed, That he is grown so great?"

AH, Cassius, you thought perhaps it was the meat which Cæsar devoured which made him so great. But you were wrong. Cæsar was a conjurer and knew the trick of reaching that high position which you didn't. And so, believe me, when you look upon the Honourable William Higherrung, Minister of Brooks and Ponds, do not think for a moment that it was his name, the weight of it, the sound of it, or the meat he ate which put him where he is. Not a bit of it. He was an adept at sleight-of-hand work, take my word for it. He knew the trick, and did it.

Now, what was the trick? you ask. I am not altogether sure, but some have told me that if you get a pull, or pull a lot of wires, the thing can be accomplished. Now, this idea has interested me immensely, and I intend to try the scheme. Regarding the first I am somewhat at sea, as no one has told me what a man is to be pulled with. The whole thing is indefinite. But the second is as clear as day. I shall get a whole bunch of wires, and if I don't pull them for all I'm worth it won't be my fault. If only poor old Cassius had known this trick he might have been in Cæsar's place. All I've got to do is to get those wires, give them a good pull, and who knows, I may be Premier of Baffin Land, or Archbishop of Black-lead Island.

To me it has always been a puzzle why some authors have such tremendous success. Mrs. Lightweight, for instance, writes a book. The publisher accepts it, and then begins at once to advertise it, declaring that "The Twisted Hair-Pin" is the most remarkable book that has been published for years. Soon it becomes a "best seller," and heads the list for several months. Newspapers and magazines speak about it, some favourable, and some otherwise. All kinds of reasons are given for its popularity, such as delineation of

character, the subject it deals with, and many more. Now, it is quite evident that the cause of its success is not in any of these, for a more foolish, insipid, sentimental medley of gushing jargon it has never been my miserable lot to read.

"Lady Bernice burst into tears, she falls upon the neck of her adoring young lover, Lord Length-wise, and beseeches him to help her. He kisses her fondly, madly, and then, rising to his feet, he



"Looks Big and Feels Big."