

HINDOO BASKET TRICK.

PROF. HERMANN SAYS THERE ARE TWO BOYS.

One is in the Basket and the Other is Not—Thomas Stevens Thought it Supernatural—Another Remarkable Trick Explained by the Famous Magician.

Thomas Stevens, who first won fame by making a bicycle tour around the world, wrote about the Indian basket trick some time ago, and was inclined to believe that there was something supernatural in it. Prof. Hermann, who should be at least as good an authority on magic as Mr. Stevens, gives the following explanation of it and other Indian tricks:

Where, if not in India, should we turn for the weird and mysterious, for the wonderful, for that which may not be understood by any one, even those who profess to understand everything? India, with a civilization that was older than Europe's when civilization began. What is developed is naturally more fully developed in India than in any younger country. What has been made a study for years must be surpassed by that which has been made a study of for centuries. Although the magic of the Hindoos is by far the most celebrated, it is not the most scientific magic in the world. While they were undoubtedly causing flowers to grow and blossom at the word of command, rearing trees and plucking ripe mangoes from them, from the seed, in a few minute's time; doing decapitation tricks, aerial suspension and others equally as marvellous, centuries before any part of the Caucasian race ever attempted to entertain an audience with anything of the kind, they, the yogis and magicians that appear before the general public, continue to do exactly the same things in exactly the same way that they did centuries ago, if the tales of old travellers may be relied on to any extent.

Since Marco Polo's account of the miracles performed by the jugglers of the East, daily journals, periodicals, books of travel, and, I am sorry to say, standard works, too often considered authorities, bristle with long, elaborately written accounts of the performance of impossibilities by the jugglers of India. But, while all India is now open to Europeans and Americans, and has been carefully canvassed by the agents of the greatest showmen in all countries, not any one of these has thus far succeeded in obtaining a single novelty; in other words, it has never been possible for a European or American manager to import any sort of performance from Hindoos sufficiently interesting to entertain an intelligent audience. The attempts to transplant the magic of the East, as done by the magicians of the East, to European, American or Australian fields have invariably proved decided failures, in many cases wrecking their managers.

There is no doubt but what there is performed by certain members of certain societies of India, and in India alone, experiments so truly wonderful as to astonish modern scientists, and performed as to prevent reasonable solution. With this I have nothing to do at present other than to frankly admit that I do not understand the workings of the theosophists of India any more than they understand many natural effects caused by natural causes in this country. But the magic of the Hindoos is not difficult for one less schooled in the black art than I claim to be to understand and explain, provided the necessary amount of study and attention is given to it.

One of the most interesting experiments done by the natives of India is known as the Hindoo box and basket trick. This is done by a tribe of travelling fakirs with no other apparatus than a large basket having but a small mouth or top opening, over which a lid or cover fits tightly. The opening in the top is so much smaller than the basket itself as to leave plenty of room around the sides when anything just fitting the top is placed in the basket. In going through the Suez Canal shortly before the uprising of Arabi Pacha our steamer halted at Ishmilia, I, in company with the other passengers, went ashore and saw a troupe of Hindoo fakirs do the basket trick. There must have been at least a dozen natives of India in the troupe. One old fellow seemed to be the principal performer. He was dressed in the costume usually worn by the high caste natives of the Bombay Presidency, which consists of many yards of white cotton cloth gracefully draped around the figure in such a manner as to leave nothing but the arms, from the elbows to the hands, and the legs, from the knees down, exposed; his feet were thrust into great red slippers, the toes of which turned up like the point of an old fashioned skate, while on his head was an enormous turban, tied in such a manner that two long, flowing, scarf-like ends hung below the middle of his back. He wore an enormous snow white beard, which set off his swarthy countenance and gave his small beady black eyes a truly diabolical glitter.

At the beginning of the entertainment the principal members of the troupe seated themselves in a circle on the bare ground, when different members of the group entertained the audience with vanishing cups and balls and exhibitions of their proficiency in palming and disappearing small articles, all of which they did fairly well. After this a small boy, nearly naked, came into the centre of the circle and addressed a few words to the

chief performer, when this dignitary flew into a rage, summoned two attendants, who brought the above described basket and placed it before him. He removed the lid, seized the lad and thrust him into the basket, after which the lid was firmly replaced and tied with leather thongs. The shaking of the basket proved to a close observer that the boy, instead of remaining quiet after being thrust into it, was carefully placing himself in such a position as to insure his safety during what was to follow.

The old magician continued to rave in his native language, and finally drawing a sharp tulwar, or native sword, thrust it through and through the basket at different places, causing the boy to shriek in a fiendish manner and the blade of his sword to fairly drip with blood. I, intent on observing his manner of doing the trick, rather than the effect it produced on the spectators, noted that the sword was carefully inserted in certain little apertures in the basket, intended to receive it. The cries and moans of the boy grew fainter and fainter, and finally ceased altogether, when the magician, wiping the blade of his sword, returned it to its scabbard and seated himself on the ground.

His attendants all assumed a horror stricken look and sat as motionless as stone statues for a moment, when a boy's voice was heard calling, at a distance, and growing stronger and stronger as apparently the same lad that had been so ruthlessly slaughtered in the basket came running right into the centre of the group and embraced the magician. At this juncture every one of the performers arose, two of them seized the basket and carried it away to where all their belongings were deposited.

Now, no attempt was made to open the basket after the performance and allow it to be examined, and the explanation of the trick is undoubtedly this:—There were two boys, almost exactly the same in appearance, as no one appreciates the value of doubles so much as does your Indian magician. The first boy lay in the basket in such a manner as to escape the thrust of the sword, which was made through openings and which he had been instructed to keep clear of. While concealed in the basket he undoubtedly applied a sponge or cloth dipped in goat's blood or some chemical preparation resembling it to the sword, and he acted his part so well as to almost prove to the spectators that he was really being murdered. Instead of the same boy escaping from the basket and coming in, the double put in his first appearance, and the thing was done.

Now, in order to find out exactly what impression had been made on the non-professional portion of the audience, I conversed with several of them, and in every case was informed that it was the most wonderful thing they had ever witnessed. Without exception they marvelled as to how the boy could have been gotten out of the basket and placed at such a distance from the performers without being seen. Not one of them suggested the possibility of the double, and I am satisfied that there was not one person present, excepting myself, that did not firmly believe that the boy who entered the circle was the same one that was placed in the basket, and I am certain that none of them suggested having the basket brought back and examined.

European and American magicians, a few years since, introduced an illusion called the Hindoo box trick, for no other reason than that Hindoo is a very good word to tack on any illusion, as it is to a certain extent mystifying. This trick was performed in the following manner:—A large box capable of holding a human being was brought in and examined by a committee invited on the stage for the purpose of making this inspection. It was found to be a strongly built iron bound box, with great hasp hinges fastening one side of the lid to the box, the other side of which was held down with a hasp and staple, firmly riveted through the wood, and any one in the audience was called upon to secure it with a padlock. This was done. Then the box was placed on two trestles sufficiently high to sustain it about eighteen inches from the stage floor; a coil of rope, usually about a hundred feet in length, was handed to the committee and they were requested to tie the box, which was invariably tied by lashing it so securely as to render it impossible to open the lid in any way without destroying the rope. The knots of this rope were often sealed with sealing wax, marked with rings and charms worn by members of the committee in such a manner as to prevent the seals being tampered with without a discovery.

After this was done to the satisfaction of the committee the assistant, generally a young woman dressed in a page's costume, was called in. This assistant was placed in a strong linen bag drawn up over her head and securely tied with a stout string, the knots of which were sealed in the same manner as those on the box. The page was then taken and seated on the box, a screen drawn around both the box and the performer, when in an incredibly short space of time, never exceeding thirty seconds, a smart tap on the box announced that all was ready; the screen was hastily drawn aside, and the empty bag, still sealed exactly as left by the committee, with every seam intact, would be found lying on top of the box, the page having disappeared entirely.

A rapping on the inside of the box proclaimed the fact that the performer was inside of it, and after the seals and knots were inspected and untied and the network of rope wound around it removed the key was produced and the box unlocked. The performer would step out as cool and unruffled as though she had been lying on a sofa during the whole affair.

Now, unexplained, this appears truly wonderful, but the explanation is so simple as to be ridiculous. The box, carefully corded and locked, of course could not have been opened at the top, the bottom was resting on the trestles, and we naturally turn to the sides for an opening. The front side of the box, just below the hasp,

was so arranged that an invisible hinge or rod running through the bottom of the lower half of the box front allowed this to drop down inside the box, leaving no obstacle in the way of the performer's entering it but the ropes, which, of course, were pushed aside to allow the small body of the page to pass through.

Once inside the box she simply rolled to the back of it, raised the front lid and with a small flat, knife-like instrument shot two tiny bolts into place, resting on the box, concealed her instruments to open it and was ready for the inspection of the committee. The bolts were hid by the other half of the box lid, they being set into the upper edges of the board and the smallness of the cracks prevented their discovery.

But how about the bag? you ask. That was managed in this way:—There were two bags, one inside the other. The performer was placed in the outer bag, leaving an empty one exactly like the outer one flat against the back of the bag. When the magician was pulled in the bag over the young lady's head, ready to be tied and sealed, he simply brought the tops of the two bags to be sealed up, that of the empty one above that of the one containing the page, and held it in his hand to be tied and sealed, the hands clasped around the top of the outer bag concealing its mouth so that the committee working above his hands really tied and sealed the top of the empty bag. When this was done he would pick up the slight figure of the page and seather on the box, quickly draw the screen around her, and she would slip the outer bag down from her shoulders, draw up and shake out the inner or empty one and lay it on top of the box. The inner bag would, then be wound around her body inside a blouse waist or outer garment; she would then open the box, crawl into it, fasten the front and call for "light."

CALLER FOR MR. DE MEDICI.
This American Art Lover Proposes to see him in Person.

There is a lady tuit-hunter in an uptown boarding house who has the foreign title fever of the most pronounced type.

She paralyzes the other roomers by the easy, matter-of-fact way in which she tells the names and titles of her distinguished callers.

One night it was the Prince Bombastes Deadbeati. The night before it was the "Dood" Indebto and the next night it will be the Count Freakivitch.

She has been across our great salt water privilege several times, and has contracted the broad-gauge style of murdering the English language. There is no reason to believe that she bewails her fate at having been born in plebeian America.

The other evening, while her parlor was filled with princes, potentates, "dooks," counts and half-heads in the absence of crowned heads, she incidentally remarked that on her next visit to civilization she would get more works of art, and among them a work of "Venus de Medici."

"You must be vore particulare and not let the clever Paris vandels sell you ze imitation!" said a "dook by way of precaution.

"O, I shall guard that," she replied, gaily. "I shall call upon Mr. De Medici himself. I can get letters of introduction to the greatest artists in Europe."

And then there was a silence like that before a storm, and the tilted admirers of the tuit-hunter could scarcely conceal their laughter.

Street-Cleaning in New York.

New York street-cleaning reformers are enthusiastic over the snow-melting machines and they say when the idea is fully developed the snow on the streets will be converted into water, not at three or four central points in the city, but at literally hundreds of places. There is no jobbery in the snow melting problem. There are so many inventions that the department engineers have practically decided to construct their own melters. Though innumerable patents have been taken out for melting snow, the principle adopted in all of them is such that simple machines can be constructed without infringing in any way upon existing claims. The most important item of expense in getting rid of a large fall of snow in New York is the long distance which the carts have to travel from the big central avenues of the city to the dumping piers on the river front. The short trips to the ice-melting machines, which it is the purpose of the street cleaning reformers to locate a few blocks apart, will require the assistance of a comparatively small number of carts. Street-cleaning is a subject very near to the hearts of an astonishingly large number of New Yorkers. The ordinary business man who ploughs through the mud and slush as a matter of course, and who devotes very little attention to the streets aside from an occasional muttered exclamation, will be surprised at the number of societies, vigilance leagues, associations, and reformatory agencies, with intensely earnest presidents, enthusiastic and industrious secretaries, elaborate headquarters, and big stationery bills, all used in the effort to make the streets cleaner.

Old Families.

The most ancient family in France, in so far as the tracing back of the ancestry in an unbroken line is concerned, is the royal house of Bourbon, which goes back to Robert le Fort, in the year 861. Next in point of antiquity comes the Rohan family, which for the last century, however, has been settled in Austria, the so called Rohans in France being not really Rohans but merely Chabots, their only connection with the house of Rohan being by marriage. Then comes the house of Narbonne-Pel-t, the head of which is the Duc de Narbonne who can trace his lineage back without interruption to the year 910. Of course in making this incertion I do not take into consideration the some what mythical claim of the Duke of Levis-Mirepoix to be descended in a direct and unbroken line from Jacob's son, Levi. He has among his family pictures the old painting in which the Holy Virgin is represented as requesting the former Duke of Levis-Mirepoix to put on his hat, which he had doffed in salutation, she being depicted as uttering the words: "Couvrez vous, mon cousin." Another picture represents an ancestor of the Dukes of Levis-Mirepoix navigating a

small boat on the waters of the deluge, he being too exclusive and high-toned to share the ark with the Noah family and its belongings.

Utility of Compressed Air.

In the West Shore shops, at New Durham, N. Y., compressed air is utilized in various ways. Oil is emptied from barrels into tanks by its means, and cars are rapidly and effectively cleaned. It is the most thorough duster, reaching every crack and crevice and rooting out dust, dirt and shreds with lightning rapidity. It even penetrates to the depths of upholstery and tuffing. There is talk of introducing it into the hotels, where, instead of the maid with broom and dust pan, we may soon see a stalwart man with a hose blowing the dust out of the rooms and cleaning them as beater and whisk broom have never been able to do.

Clever Detectives.

A short time ago a man who had committed a serious offence was "wanted" by the police, and it being suspected he was in hiding in one of the busy towns in the English Midlands, photographs were sent to the various provincial police centres. It so happened that the man in question was very vain, and when a detective secured each of the six photographs to the country stations. The result—in one instance, at all events—was totally unexpected. Imagine the feelings of the chief of the Criminal Investigation Department on receiving the following message from a certain town:—

"We have already in custody four of the persons whose photographs you sent us, and we believe we have a certain clue as to the whereabouts of the other two."

The New French President.

The father of M. Faure, the new French president, was an upholsterer in Paris, and he himself was born in the Faubourg St. Denis. He was educated at a private commercial school, and was then sent to England for two years to learn the language and get a knowledge of English methods of business. On his return he went to Amboise to master the business of a currier, and there married the daughter of the mayor, M. Guinot, who afterwards became a senator. After his marriage M. Faure settled at Havre as a fellmonger and commission agent, and soon became a leading merchant and shipowner. He first acquired the gift of public speaking by lecturing on history to an evening class for adults.

Fought With Ropes' Ends.

An extraordinary duel has taken place in Brussels between two young men. They were enamoured of the same young lady, who, after considerable hesitation, made her choice. The unsuccessful suitor challenged his rival to a duel and proposed that each should be armed with a piece of rope, and that they should thrash each other as long as they could hold out. The challenge was accepted. The fight, however, had not been long in progress when the police came up and stopped it. Both "duellists" were considerably bruised, but the challenger is said to have got the worst of the encounter.

The Baby in the Bath.

Try some way of amusing your child if he cries during his bath—a cork which will bob about with every movement of the water, or an egg with the contents blown out. In fact, any little thing which will amuse a child will attract his attention and prevent his crying during the process of bathing. Once the child is broken of the habit of crying, this trifling amusement will be unnecessary.

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NOTICE is hereby given that application will be made at the next session of the New Brunswick Legislature for an Act to incorporate a Company to be called "The Colonial Iron and Coal Company, Limited", with a capital stock amounting to one million of dollars, having power to increase to two millions, one-half the shares to be preferred and the remainder common stock, and having authority to issue bonds to the amount of the capital paid up. The objects of the Company are to acquire coal, mineral and other lands in any of the Counties of this Province or elsewhere; work mines and deal in minerals; build and operate coke and smelting works of all kinds; manufacture and deal in all the by-products of coal; sell and supply gas produced therefrom for heating power and lighting purposes; laying down pipes and mains wherever necessary therefor and generally to carry on the trades of mine and coal owners, chemical and gas manufacturers, iron-masters, founders and smelters of metal and ore and metal dealers, and in connection with their business to lay down and operate railways and establish lines of steamers, barges and vessels of all kinds for the transport of freight and passengers; and for the purposes aforesaid to acquire compulsory powers and incorporate the provisions of the New Brunswick Railway Act, the New Brunswick Joint Stock Companies' Act; to acquire patent rights and the good will of any existing business carried on for any of the above named purposes, and also the shares, stock and bonds, of any company; to construct and maintain telegraph and telephone lines and carry on the business of telegraph and telephone Company on their line of works and railways. Dated at St. John the fifteenth day of January, A. D. 1895. R. G. LECKIE.

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