

The Evening World's TRICKS AND PUZZLES

How It Is Done — THE ESCAPE FROM A MILK CAN

Third in a series of articles explaining familiar stage tricks.

IN this sensational illusion a large metal can, called a milk-can and just about large enough to hold a man, is examined by a committee from the audience. The performer directs his assistants to pour water into it until it is nearly full. While they are doing this he retires, appearing a few moments later wearing a bathing suit.

The performer then steps into the milk-can. He tells the committee that, when he gets far enough into the milk-can to permit them to do it, they are to put the cover on and fasten it with padlocks. He impresses upon them the need of haste because of his natural inability to breathe when his head is under water. He usually asks the folks in the audience to try holding their breath, beginning when his head sinks below the water and the cover is locked on.

When he lowers himself into the can, the water displaced flows over the top. Obviously he is unable to breathe and just as obviously he is unable to move about much in the can. The padlocks are quickly snapped on and the assistants lower curtains about the can.

The music plays nervously and one by one the members of the audience give up the task of holding breath. Just as the most powerful set of lungs in the audience expels the imprisoned air, there is a shout. The curtain is thrown back. There, dripping wet, stands the performer. Beside him is the milk can, unopened. The committee examines the locks, opens the can and examines it again. Then they leave the stage, completely mystified.

This is how it is done:

In spite of the thorough examination, the can is tricked. When you examine the drawings you will see a line of rivets around the shoulder of the can. Apparently they go right through both pieces of metal. Actually they are merely ornamental. The upper part of the can fits on the lower so tightly that it requires considerable strength and applied in the right way to separate them.

As soon as the curtain is lowered (he knows this because of a tap his assistant gives the can just before) the magician places the palms of his hands against the top of the can and pushes up with all his might. The whole top comes off and he gets out. Then he puts the top on again, forcing it into place with the weight of his body. Then he waits a minute so that the folks who can't hold their breath much longer than the normal period, will begin to worry about him. Then comes the shout.



The Mystic Touch.

ANOTHER excellent trick with playing cards and one in which a piece of apparatus proves an excellent substitution for the sleight of hand a real magician would use.

Here is what the magician would do:

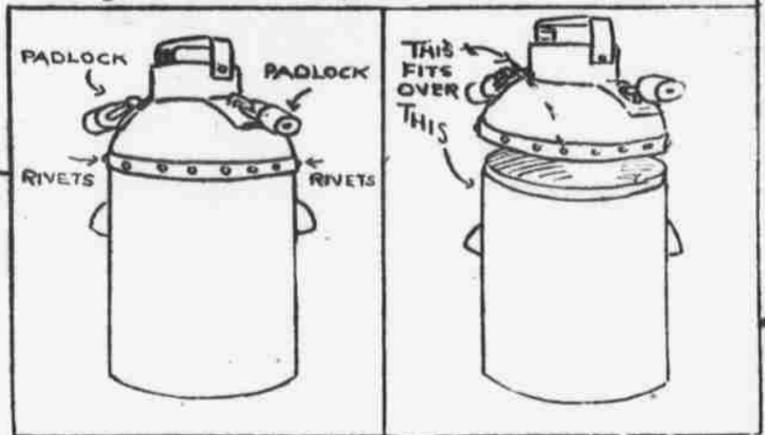
He would borrow a derby hat. Then he would shuffle a pack of cards and toss the pack into the hat. He would ask a spectator to hold the hat over his head and shake it vigorously until the cards were thoroughly mixed. Then he would ask a spectator to name any one of the four aces.

"The ace of spades?" he would say. "That's right here!"

He would reach into the hat and take out a card. It would be the ace of spades. In the same manner he would find the other three aces.

Just before presenting the trick, clip the four aces together with an ordinary paper fastener. Remember the order. Remember (by means of the position of the paper fastener) which is the back of the little pack. When you shuffle the cards take care that the paper fastener is not seen. During the shuffling, the paper fastener holds the aces together.

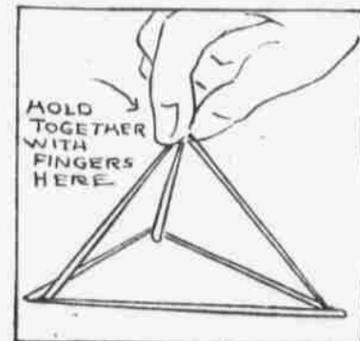
When you reach for the ace called for, feel for the paper fastener. When you find it, the trick is done. Select either the first, second, third or fourth card—and there you are!



The Toothpick Triangles.

THIS is a splendid sequel to the square trick explained last week. That was a fair puzzle but there is a catch in this one. You will find that your puzzles make a better impression if you prepare the way for a catch with a puzzle that contains no trickery.

Hand to a spectator six matches or toothpicks and tell him that it is his task to form four triangles with



them. He will try and try and will at last tell you that it can't be done.

If you had told him that the triangles need not be in the same plane, his native wit might have led him to the solution. But of course you didn't tell him that!

The illustration shows how the four triangles are formed. If your hand is very steady you may be able to make the matches or toothpicks hold their form. There is, however, nothing about the puzzle that will keep you from holding the toothpicks in place with your fingers.

Hand of a Ghost.

THE effectiveness of this little trick cannot be realized until it is put to test.

Announce to the party that you are going to demonstrate the existence of unseen forces. In order that the test may be scientific it is necessary that it be performed, you explain, to one person at a time and without witnesses.

Take the first victim into an adjoining room and close the door. Let him make a thorough search of the room to convince himself that no confederate is hidden there.

Tell him that you will place your two forefingers on his eyes. While your fingers are pressing on his eyes ask him if he feels anything. Just at that moment he feels the touch of a spirit hand on the back of his neck. It cannot be your finger because the pressure of your forefingers on his eyes accounts for your hands.

The spirit touch is very uncanny—until you know the secret.

As your extended forefingers near his eyes his eyes will close. They will close even if he tries to keep them open. When they do that, extend the middle finger of the right hand and put the middle finger against his left eye and the forefinger against his right eye. Do not press hard—just let the fingers rest on the eye so that he can feel them. Of course he will imagine that what he feels are the two forefingers. Your left hand is free, however, and that is what provides the spirit touch at the right time.

When the first spectator is satisfied of the existence of the "spits" bring on the next one, letting the first victim see how he was fooled.

The Minute Puzzle.

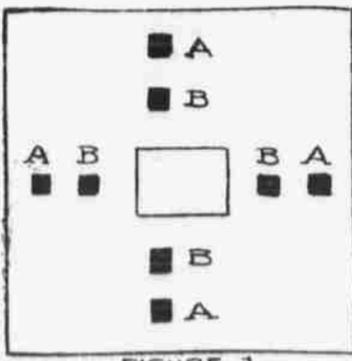


FIGURE 1

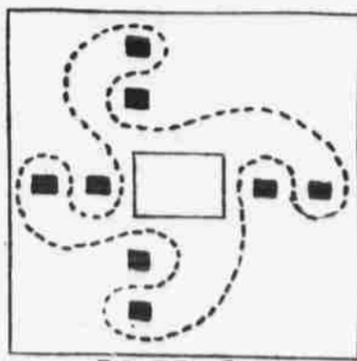


FIGURE 2

THIS is so called because it shouldn't take you no longer than a minute to solve it. You may be able to solve it more quickly, but if you need more than the time mentioned, you are not apt to have much success in solving puzzles of this character.

You see in the illustration (Figure 1) a square with eight little black squares surrounding it. The problem is to draw a line so that lines drawn from the little squares marked A can reach the big square without crossing it, but so that a line cannot be drawn from any of the squares marked B without crossing it. Consider the line you draw a wall, keeping the B squares from the big squares, but permitting the A squares to reach it.

If you don't solve it in a minute, look at Figure 2. That explains all.

The 100 Problem.

HERE is a mathematical problem which will help you entertain a whole room full of company.

On several sheets of paper write the nine digits, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. Pass a sheet to each person and then instruct them to make a total of 100 with the nine digits by any process of addition, multiplication or subtraction they may wish to employ, as long as they use each of the digits only once.

The simplest solution is to multiply 9 by 9, which is 81, then add the remaining digits, 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1, which total 28, and with the 81 make 109.

The Merry-Go-Round.

IN this trick you balance a coin, a cork and two forks on the point of a needle. Not only do you balance them but you cause them to spin around like a little merry-go-round.

The illustration tells just about what is to be done. The needle is a long one and held upright by being stuck in a cork which stops a bottle. Cut a slot in one end of another cork just big enough to hold a half dollar snugly. Put the forks in the cork as illustrated. Try to balance the coin on your finger, adjusting the forks until they are just right and keep the coin from falling. Then if you have a steady hand you can balance the coin on its edge on the point of the needle.

The trick requires a little patience, but it can be done if you possess the right amount of steady-hand-iveness.

