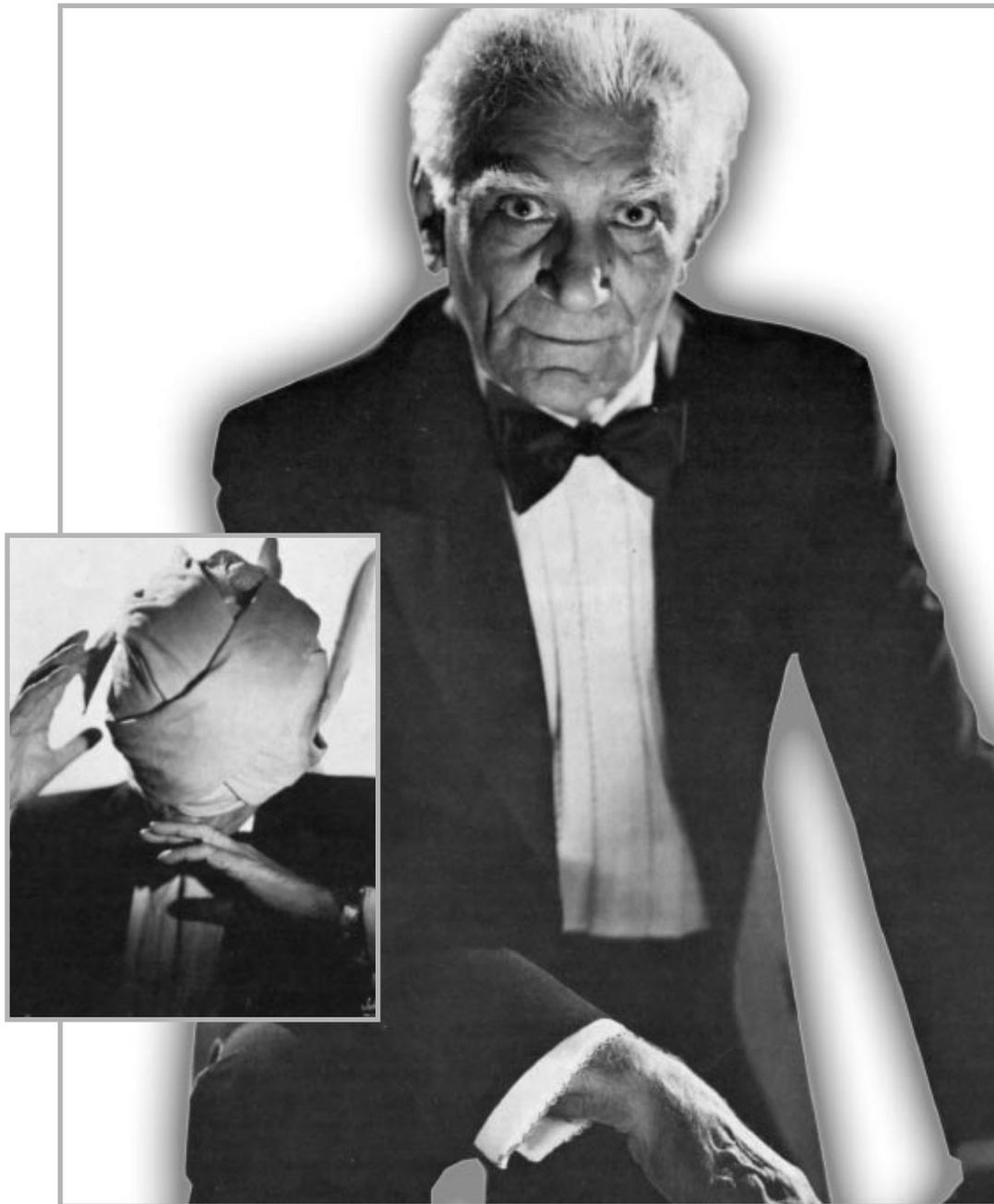


SEALED VISION



The X-Ray Eye Act

Written by Will Dexter eBook Version

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About the cover: The gentleman pictured is Kuda Bux. During his lifetime, Kuda's outstanding technique and showmanship helped him earn international acclaim with the X-Ray Eye Act. The following brief bio is from an article by Bill Larsen, Jr. in Genii Magazine.

The Man With the X-Ray Eyes

Kuda has just returned to the Magic Castle from a tour of Canada with Peter Reveen. He was a sensation and will again join the Reveen Company, if plans work out, to tour Australia later in the year.

As near as I can make out from the clippings (and I don't want to ask Kuda as this is to be a surprise) Kuda must be either 69 or 70 years old having been born in Aknmur, Kashmir, Pakistan in either 1905 or 1906. Early in his life he realized he had an ability not shared by many. This was concentration. We are all aware of the five senses but Kuda was to develop within himself a sixth sense or inner sense.

Through his successful years of performing he has been headlined in papers around the world as: "The Wonder of the Century;" "One of the most famous 'Makers of Magic' who ever came out of the East;" and the "8th Wonder of the World."

In the thirties he made headlines in England (which were to be repeated in the U.S. in the forties) with his fire walking. A fire trench 25 feet long and six feet across was filled with seven tons of logs and a ton of charcoal. At the time the coals were hottest, Kuda Bux walked from end to end barefooted, not once but twice. Others tried but were badly burned. The temperature of Kuda's feet was taken before and after the walk and found to be the same. The event was written up in English medical journals.

Kuda Bux has been X-Rayed after causing his heart to stop beating. He is able to stop his pulse at will. In the forties he played vaudeville and theaters with an illusion show. What has made him famous and kept him famous through the years, however, is the act that earned him the name, "The Man With The X-Ray Eyes."

He shows two pads of bread dough and has them pushed into his eye sockets. Over these go two thick layers of cotton. Then 12 yards of bandages are wrapped around his head and eyes. Finally three table napkins are tied over everything.

In this condition Kuda Bux can read, ride a bicycle, drive a car and trace on a blackboard anything written by a member of the audience including foreign words and phrases.

I suppose I must be a skeptic because I feel there must be an answer as to how he does it but I have watched him time and time again performing at the Magic Castle and I swear what he does is impossible. You have to see it to believe it. When all the bandages and dough are removed at the end of the act you have to believe that Kuda Bux has a power that we do not.

For the past few years, Kuda has made his home in Hollywood and when not working, is in the Magic Castle almost every night playing cards with his friends Dai Vernon, Joe Cossari, Hy Berg, Bruce Cervon, and whoever else he can con into a game. He frequently wins but claims he could win every time if they would only let him blindfold himself. This I believe.



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Written by Will Dexter

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FOREWORD

By Peter Warlock

DURING the early years of the Pentagram, and whilst I was living in Nottingham, I began to correspond with a magician in London who talked the same language as myself. When in 1948 I decided to return to London I anticipated very many pleasant sessions on Mental Magic. Alas it was not to be, for the magician in question, Will Dexter, took up an appointment in the City I had left behind. This was my loss and although we have kept up a correspondence, it has not the speed of the spoken word.

And now this magician has written a book and I feel privileged to write this brief introduction. Within it you will find not only worthwhile ideas (ideas which can so easily be tested) but also suggestions for presentation, and, in fact, almost everything that an intelligent conjurer could require in making use of a fake blindfold for the purpose of one effect or a series of effects.

In one chapter, Will makes mention of a genuine blindfold, at the same time giving a range of effects that can be accomplished whilst the performer is completely sightless. My own view in the matter of genuine blindfolds is that unless the effect to be presented is greater than one that can be accomplished with a fake blindfold of even the simplest quality, no purpose is served. The performer, unless he emblazons his patter with words to the effect that there are such things as fake blindfolds, simply places an unnecessary handicap upon himself. To the general public the ordinary folded handkerchief is non-suspect. On the few occasions when the average person suffers blindfolding, as at party games, he or she invariably close their eyes as well, and thus the downward glimpse is beyond their awareness.

You the reader however have a book, a book which you will enjoy, for the author is a good journalist as well as being a good conjurer, and I should hate to defer your reading. Go to it!

INTRODUCTION

THIS is not a book of tricks, but a collection of methods for performing effects -mainly mental effects - while blindfolded, with some suggestions as to the way to go about it convincingly.

There must be many other methods of blindfolding, but I have omitted them because (a) some of them are commercial methods sold by the conjuring depots; (b) some are being used more or less exclusively by various performers; (c) I don't know the rest.

There is one aspect of the blindfold act on which I have not touched - the two-person routine. It will be obvious that the methods used can be adapted from those I have written about, and the personal ingenuity of the performers will be responsible for the rest of the act.

Where I have described methods other than those of my own devising, I have tried to acknowledge the source. In no case have I used a method and described it as my own when I have known it to be somebody else's creation. If any method or effect has been included without credit to the originator, I apologise for the omission now.

—Will Dexter

Section One TRANSPARENT BLINDFOLDS

THIS section deals with blindfolds that can be seen through, with one eye or both. This type of blindfold will be found to be the most practicable for stage work and for outdoor tests, such as the Blindfold Drive. Its advantages are that more or less clear vision (according to the particular method used) covers a wide field straight ahead, and in most methods a downward glimpse is also possible. It has the disadvantage that in some cases the secret might be revealed by careless handling or by a too inquisitive spectator. These, however, are problems that are to be faced in many other branches of magic, and should not present any danger to even a moderately skilled performer. Another important point to be considered is the lighting of the stage; the strongest lighting should be behind the performer, shining on the audience. Too strong a light in front of the performer, when not countered by an even stronger light from behind, makes vision difficult.

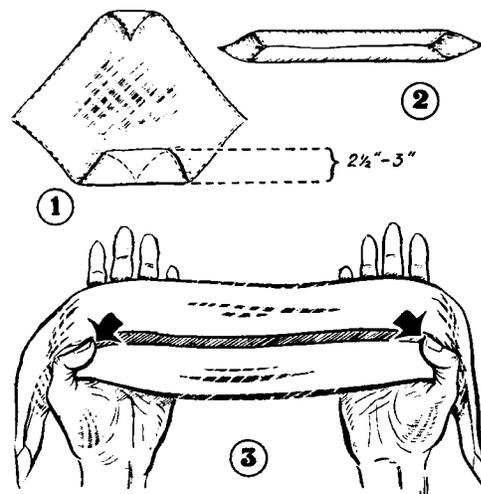
UNPREPARED SILK FOULARD

The simplest form of blindfold, and the most practicable for impromptu work, is the straightforward blindfold with a silk foulard. Annemann featured this type most strongly in his "Mystery of the Blackboard." "Silk" is the operative word in this title; only very rarely will it be found that a linen or cotton fabric has a fine enough weave to see through, while yet being of convincing solidity.

Most silk fabrics will provide an excellent blindfold. When the fabric is square, the length of each edge should be at least eighteen inches.

To prepare the silk, lay it flat and start folding two diagonal corners in towards the centre, taking about 2 ½ to 3 inches in each fold. (Figure 1.) Fold in this manner until the two rolls meet across the middle of the foulard. (Figure 2.) Don't attempt to leave a gap between the folds; this should come later.

Having folded the foulard's corners to the middle, take the two ends and fold them in by



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concertina folds to about the middle, leaving one end outside. The foulard can then be carried in the pocket without disturbing the folds.

When ready to use the blindfold, shake it out by one of the ends and let it hang down. With the other hand straighten it out into a long strip, the thumb being inside and on the junction of the two rolls. As you stroke down the foulard make sure that the thumb separates the two rolls for a few inches on each side of the centre. When the thumb has passed the middle by about four inches, grip the foulard there, and allow the other end to drop. With the free hand, stroke the foulard away from the other hand in a similar manner, again parting the rolls slightly, and finish up with both hands, about seven or eight inches apart, at an equal distance from the middle. (Figure 3.)

In this position you will find that you are holding the blindfold across the palms, with the thumbs above, and it is all ready to place across the eyes. As you do so, drop the head forward so that the blindfold lies flat until the last minute, thus avoiding the separated rolls falling out of place. The hands should be just in front of the ears as the blindfold reaches the face, and at this last moment you have a final chance to make sure that the gap between the rolls is directly in front of the eyes.

A word of warning here: the hands should never under any circumstances be raised to the blindfold after it is put on, nor even while it is being tied in place. Once your hands touch the blindfold after it is on, the audience is going to suspect trickery. They won't quite know what sort of trickery, but they'll whisper: "Look - he's touching it!"

You will find that if the lighting is right you can see fairly clearly through the single thickness of silk. You may not be able to see sharply enough to read small print, or to distinguish a playing card held up at the other side of the stage, but if your routine is well planned, you will see enough to achieve your object.

The main source of light must be behind you. If you allow just one bright light in front, you'll see a dazzling light and hardly anything else. In a theatre, where the house lights are well above eye-level, you may find that you can see fairly well, even with the house lights on. But in, say, a restaurant, where the lights aren't so high, and may even be on the tables, you are up against difficulties which will have to be ironed out before the show, by arranging with the electrician which lights you want on and which must be switched off. Out of doors, vision is clear with this method, provided that you aren't looking from bright sunlight into deep shadow.

Some silks are better than others for this method, and best of all, in my opinion, is a plain black or navy blue. The dark colour is convincing, for one thing, and another advantage

is that whatever you are looking at seems to be thrown into stronger contrast, and is easier to focus with the eyes. I prefer a self-coloured material, because it is free from the suspicion that the pattern-especially if it is composed of dots-might conceal a few holes. If a patterned material is used, it should have a bold pattern, because the areas of greater transparency (the dark parts) are wider. At all costs, you should avoid a material that has a pattern made up of spots of uniform size. Nothing is going to persuade the audience that each spot isn't a hole.

A silk foulard should never be held to the light to prove its solidity, either when open or rolled. In either condition it will look just about as opaque as a sheet of glass when it has a light behind it. If it has to be shown opened out, show it against a dark background that is close up to it.

THE DIVIDED BAG, (1)

George Armstrong described a method which he called "It's In the Bag" in *The Wizard* for May, 1949, and which he amplified in *The Wizard* for January, 1950. I have an idea, too, that Will Goldston wrote up a similar method some years ago. I give here two methods of constructing a bag blindfold, and can guarantee that the second one is my own design, and has not, to my knowledge, appeared in print before.

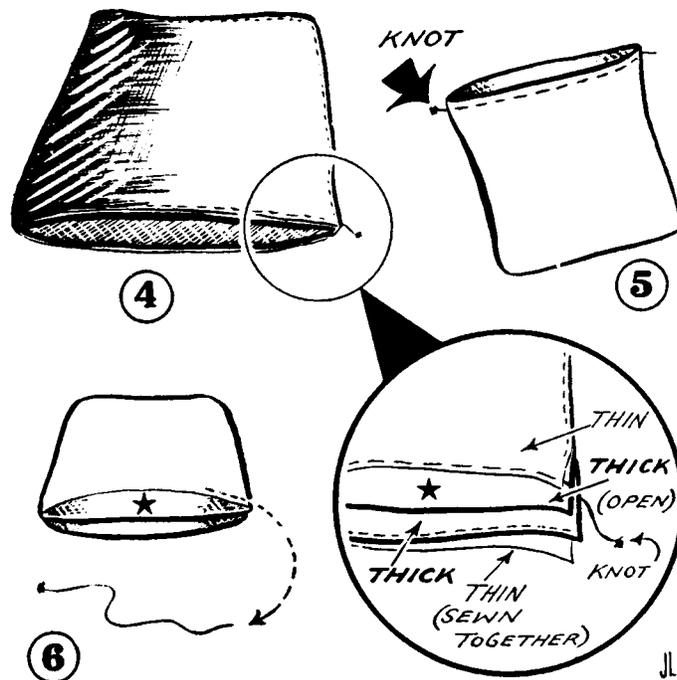
The method as described by George Armstrong uses a bag similar to the first one I describe below, but in my version I have included the use of bandages round the eyes also. For a single effect, the bag by itself is quite effective, but I think that the addition of cotton wool pads and bandages adds to the mystery where a whole routine is being presented.

This method consists of the performer's being blindfolded thoroughly, preferably with cotton wool pads and bandages. A bag, sufficiently thick to ensure that a member of the audience on whose head the bag is placed as "proof" cannot see the faintest glimmer of light through it, is then placed over the performer's head and tied with tapes round the neck. Despite this, the performer has almost one hundred per cent~ vision with both eyes straight ahead.

The first preparation to explain is that of the bag (Figure 4). It is made of thick, heavy material, over which is sewn, by the edges, another bag, this time of very thin material with a fairly open weave which can be seen through. At the top edge, where the opening comes, the bag is sewn to the cover along one side and left open along the other. All sewing should be done on a machine, with fine stitches. The open edge of the bag is prepared by having both cover and bag sewn separately, so that a line of stitching shows inside and outside. This should be done before assembling bag and cover.

You will now have a large bag of the changing-bag type, having one side thick and opaque and the other thin and transparent, with an opaque flap in the middle. A single thread should be run through the edges of the thin side and the thick intermediate flap, joining them together with large running stitches. A knot should be left on one end of the thread, large enough to be found easily with the fingers. (Figure 5). The other end of the thread should have no knot thereon, so that it can be pulled out smoothly from the knotted end when the time comes (Figure 6).

So much for the bag. Now for the bandages. These should be long enough to encircle the head three or four times and allow for enough for them to be pinned in place at the back. They should be applied over cotton wool pads, which are to be placed on the eyelids, slightly overlapping the eyebrows. The reason for this overlap lies in the fact that the circumference



of the head at the eyebrows is greater than elsewhere, so your bandages are thus wound round at the widest part of the head. The bandages should not exceed about four inches in depth and should not come lower than the tip of the nose.

When the bag is placed over the head of the volunteer assistant it should be turned round so that he gets the chance of trying to see through both sides.

Turn him round a couple of times and then invite him to walk towards you. Without telling him what you are doing, shine a bright torch on his face and ask him if he can see anything. If you feel like putting in a rather overdone comedy touch you can wave a pound note in front of him, again asking him if he can see anything.

Having been assured that he can see nothing, take the bag off his head and invite him to blindfold you with the cotton wool and bandages.

By holding the cotton wool pads over your eyes yourself and having your assistant wrap a couple of turns of bandage round them, you will gain a little slack in your bandage, which will be useful later. The end of the bandage should be pinned at the back of the head with a safety pin.

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Now the bag is to be placed on, and by this time it is all ready for your use, because while your assistant has been fixing the bandage round your eyes you have been standing with your back to the audience and drawing out the thread that joins the thin outer cover to the thick inner flap. The head goes between this thin cover and the flap (the space starred in Figure 6), with the thin portion in front.

You must raise the bag to your head yourself, drawing it down with the fingers outside and the thumbs inside. The bag should be of such size that it will slip readily over the head without the bandages on, but should be a moderately tight fit when drawn down over the bandages.

As the bag is drawn down over the bandages, when the thumbs reach the lower edge of the bandages they slip underneath the lower edge, and as the hands manipulate the bag further down, the thumbs grip the bandages, and continuing the drawing down movement steadily pull them down over the nose and mouth, leaving the eyes clear. The thumbs then release their hold of the bandages and draw the bag right down to its limit so that the opening can be tied round the neck with the tapes, which can either be attached to the bag or separate.

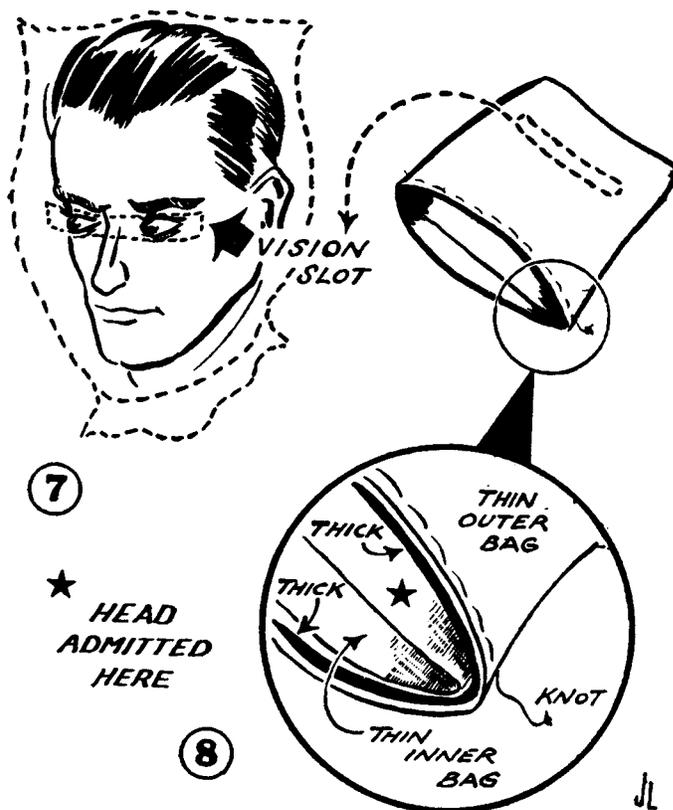
As the outer cover, which is almost transparent, is made of thin material, it might be thought that this would show the contours of the face too clearly. This is far from being the case, though, as the bandages, now covering nose and mouth, muffle the outline of the face completely.

When the routine is concluded, the performer should then draw the bag off his head himself, pulling cotton wool and bandages back into place as the bag passes over them. The best way to accomplish this smoothly is to lay the hands against the sides of the head and ease both bag and bandages upwards. When the cotton wool pads reach their place over the eyes they will slide no further, owing to the bony ridges of the eyebrows arresting their progress. The bag should then be gripped above the head and drawn off. The bandages will then be drawn firmly into place again, and can be inspected. They should appear to be as tightly wrapped as when they were first put on.

THE DIVIDED BAG, (2)

As a subtle variation to the ordinary type of divided bag, I suggest one made after this fashion: this time there are three bags, two made of the thinnest, most transparent material you can find, and the third of heavy opaque material. The opaque bag has a slot, half an inch wide and about five inches long, cut so that when the bag is placed over the head the eyes are directly behind the slot. The bags are assembled together, and one thin bag fits outside the thick, perforated bag, with the other thin one inside the thick bag. The two outer bags are stitched together round the edges and all round the opening. The thin inner bag is stitched to this composite bag by one of the top edges (at the opening) only. The other top edge is secured by a running stitch with a knot on the end (Figure 8) as in the former method.

When the bag is placed over the head, the head goes between the inner thin bag and the composite outer bag, with the slot for the eyes falling into position as the bag is drawn down. (Figures 7 and 8.)



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I think this type of bag is much the better of the two, as the edge, which is tied round the neck by the assistant, is of equal thickness all round. The bag is quite opaque everywhere except where the slit falls over the eyes.

There is one point over which care should be taken: the inner thin bag-which is only thin to avoid the bag being too bulky-should be opaque where it covers the vision slot in the outer bag. If it is not, the bag cannot be placed over the head of a member of the audience for testing. A strip of black rubberised cloth, known as "Lancaster cloth" in the drapery trade, could be attached to the inner surface of the bag at this spot without adding to the bulk of the completed set-up.

The best material for making these items is felt for the thick bags and coarse cotton lint for the thinner bags. They should be black or navy blue in colour. Silk should not be used for the thin bags: if the complete set-up is as thick as it should be, a silk surface would not be natural, so a rough surface should be achieved using coarse material, which is also quite easy to see through.

In fact, once, during the war, I did a blindfold act using a sandbag over bandages, and was surprised that nobody tumbled to the fact that sandbag canvas is just about as transparent as cellophane.

THE FELT MASK

A blindfold that gives excellent results, but which cannot be examined too closely, is made of a single layer of thick felt, about ten or twelve inches long and five or six inches deep, covering the whole face from above the eyebrows to the mouth. It is secured by tapes at the back of the head, and should be coloured black or navy blue.

The reason for the dense colouring is that two minute holes have to be concealed, and these would show up rather prominently against a light colour.

The felt should be ironed with a very hot iron, which will singe the nap, rendering it smooth, and will harden the felt. The surface should not be so smooth as to appear shiny. When the felt has been ironed until it is smooth enough and hard enough-though not hard enough to crack-a hole is made, to correspond with each eye pupil. A red hot hatpin makes a small, clean perforation.

It may be found that the hole has to be enlarged a little on the inner side so that it is cone-shaped, with the larger opening on the inside, but the hole on the side that will be seen by the audience must be no larger than the thickness of the pin.

The main objection to this type of blindfold is that it only presents a limited field of vision. This blindfold could be useful for a single effect, but hardly seems good enough for a long routine.

THE LEATHER MASK

A blindfold akin to the felt blindfold with pinholes therein can also be made of leather. It must again be of dark colour to hide the pinholes, and should be of roughish texture. Two thicknesses of chamois leather dyed blue or black would serve the purpose quite well.

A leather blindfold of this nature has one great advantage over the felt mask: it can be faked after it has been examined.

The gimmick used need be nothing more complicated than a drawing pin either soldered to a thumb tip, or stuck to the thumb itself with a disc of sticking plaster. Or the pin could be concealed on the table, and the mask laid on top of the point and pressed down.

It is only necessary to make one hole, in the right position, for this blindfold. Indeed, it would be almost impossible to make two and get them in the correct positions without taking considerable care over the operation, and in this case the faking must be done casually, without the performer looking at his hands.

If two thicknesses of chamois leather are used, they should be cemented together so that the two layers could not shift their position after the hole was made.

THE PERFORATED COIN

A blindfold over coins placed on the eyelids is always extremely convincing, and is an effect that audiences will discuss afterwards. The fact that borrowed coins are used-and an effect with money always seems to stick in the minds of the spectators-makes it more baffling than ever.

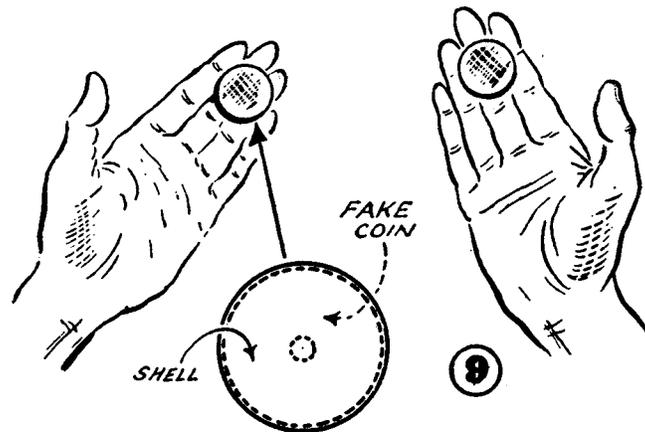
The effect, as seen by the audience, consists of two borrowed coins being secured over the performer's eyelids with surgical tape. A folded foulard is then wrapped round the head and tied securely. Despite these precautions the performer has 50% vision; in other words, he can see quite well through one eye. With a little more misdirection (which I think would detract from the success of the effect) 100% vision could be achieved and both eyes could be used.

The first consideration is that of the coins. They are borrowed, but one is switched for a duplicate coin, which has been faked. I prefer to use half-crowns for this method, as, for some reason, there is less suspicion that such coins might be faked.

The faked coin has a hole about one-eighth of an inch in diameter drilled through the centre. The size of this hole may vary from one performer to another, but it should never exceed three-sixteenths of an inch. Less than one-eighth is even better, if the performer finds that he can see through such a small hole.

The hole is covered, at the beginning of the performance by a shell half-crown, and the complete faked coin is held finger-palmed in the right hand, with the shell outward.

On receiving the first borrowed coin it is changed for the faked coin by the Nelson Downs silent pass, and the faked coin is laid on the open fingers of the left hand, with the shell upward, and still concealing the hole. The right hand goes to the pocket, leaving therein the genuine coin, and bringing out a roll of surgical tape. This is laid alongside the faked coin on the left hand. The second coin is now received in the right hand, and is held out to the person who lent the first coin, so that he shall have had the chance to examine both coins. (Figure 9.) The second coin is left with him, and the



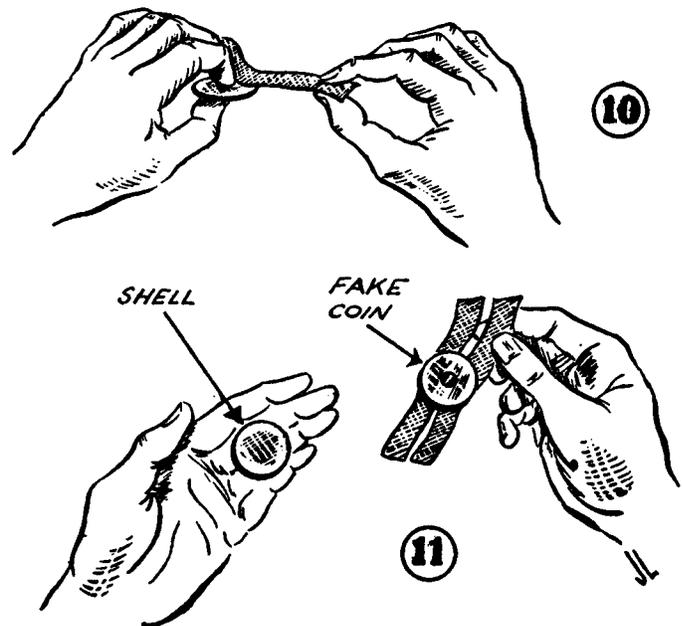
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roll of surgical tape is handed to him, with the request that he should cut off four pieces, each about three inches or four inches long.

The position now is that the performer is holding the faked coin on the fingers of his left hand, while the volunteer assistant is holding one genuine coin, a roll of surgical tape, and a pair of scissors which. I suggest, should be carried in the performer's outside breast pocket, where they can be picked out easily and handed to the assistant. All the time, the faked coin is visible to the assistant and the audience, but thanks to the shell, the hole is not seen.

When the assistant has cut off four pieces of tape, the roll of tape and the scissors are retrieved from him and laid on the table or placed in the pocket. The performer then takes two of the pieces of tape and instructs the assistant to follow his actions in applying the tape to the coin he holds.

Now comes an important, but simple, move. The performer places his left thumb over the centre of the faked coin and turns his left hand over, thus bringing the shell underneath so that the hole lies directly under the left forefinger. He applies a strip of plaster to the faked coin (Figure 10) so that the edge of the plaster almost reaches the middle of the hole. The ends of the strip of plaster are equidistant from the hole. The coin is now rotated and the second strip is applied similarly, so that a gap of something less than one-eighth of an inch is left between the two strips.



While the volunteer assistant is applying plaster to the coin he holds, the performer lifts his own coin by the plaster strips, allowing the shell to fall into the curled fingers of the left hand (Figure 11). Care must be taken that the faked coin is held close to the body, so that no light shines through the hole in the coin. There is ample misdirection to allow of the shell's being slipped into the left jacket pocket while the assistant holds up his coin for inspection.

To prepare for the coins being applied to the eyelids, the performer throws his head back and places his faked coin over one eye-the better eye if there is any difference between them. The fingers press the tape to the face while the assistant applies the second coin to the other eye (Figure 12). Owing to the angle at which the head is held, the assistant is prevented from seeing the face of the faked coin, and should only be able to see its edge.

With the head in this position, a foulard, prepared in the manner described at the beginning of this section, with the comers rolled to the centre (Figures 1-3), is tied round the eyes. The transparent middle strip of the foulard must register with the hole in the faked coin. As the head is brought to the upright position again and the ends of the foulard are secured at the back it is a simple enough matter to adjust the transparent strip so that it corresponds with the hole in the coin. (Figure 13.)

It will now be found that the performer can see through coin and blindfold with one eye. If both eyes are required to be used, it will mean switching both coins, which will involve far more trouble than the added precaution is worth.

When the blindfold is taken off, the shell, which has been taken from the pocket, is held palmed, open side outwards, in the left hand, so that it may be applied to the back of the faked coin. The plaster strips are detached from the face, and the faked coin is laid in the shell. The other coin is given to the assistant, while the performer tears the plaster from the faked coin, shell upwards; As soon as the faked coin is free of plaster, it is dropped into the pocket where the first borrowed coin now rests, and the assistant is asked: "That one was your coin, wasn't it?" When he replies that both coins were his, the performer puts his hand in his pocket, takes out the genuine borrowed coin, and returns it with apologies and thanks.

JOHN CALVERT'S PERFORATED BUSINESS CARD

Illusionist John Calvert, who includes a blindfold routine in his full evening show, has adapted this idea of “perforation” to borrowed business or calling cards. The advantages both to ease of performance and taking suspicion off of the properties involved should be readily apparent. After borrowing an audience member’s business cards, a small pin hole is secretly made in the card(s), before they are taped across the eyes. One interesting optical benefit is that the pin hole actually corrects some myopia or near-sighted vision-giving the performer who normally wears glasses vastly improved vision without his or her corrective lenses. With a little showmanship, this subtlety can greatly enhance the effectiveness of the blindfold act when utilized by a magician who normally wears glasses and then removes them prior to being blindfolded.

PAINTED GOGGLES

William Larsen, in his *Genii*, published what I think is the simplest method of performing the Blindfold Drive, although I do not think it is the safest method, as regards the possibility of things going wrong. Instead of a blindfold, a large pair of goggles was worn. These, some days before the drive, were left with a committee of spectators, who were told to have the outside of the lenses painted black.

When the time came for the drive, the performer, in adjusting the goggles as they were put on, scratched a minute piece of paint off the glass, leaving a tiny area of transparent glass.

The danger of this method, to my mind, lies in the fact that the performer runs the risk of the committee's substituting other material for the glass lenses. The possibility of the inside of the lenses being painted by mistake or malice also arises, but the careful performer would order this not to be done, beforehand, giving as his reason the fact that the fumes from the paint might harm his eyes.

There are at least three ways of using goggles with safety for the Blindfold Drive.

The first, and most obvious, is to switch the examined opaque goggles for a pair with heavily tinted lenses therein. This seems to me to be too unwieldy, but may appeal to the man with lots of nerve.

A second method would be to use polarised glass in the lenses, or to make use of a principle similar to that which is peculiar to polarised glass.

The third method would be to remove the opacity of the lenses by removing an actual portion of one or both lenses.

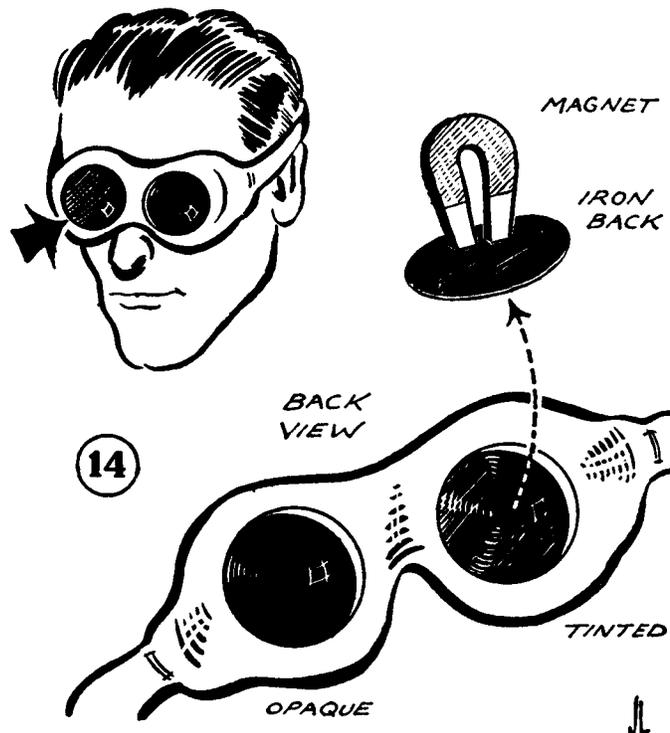
MAGNETISED GOGGLES

Let us take the third method first. These goggles have very heavily tinted glass lenses which appear almost black, but which can yet be seen through quite well. Behind each lens is fixed a disc of metal. These lenses are quite obviously opaque, and not a glimmer of light could make its way through them, unless the metal discs, or one of them, were to be removed⁷

And that is exactly what is done.

The discs, when examined while they are in place behind the lenses, are apparently immovably fixed as part of the framework of the goggles. In fact, though, one disc is detachable, and is only a push-fit in its framework.

Two ways of removing this disc would be by means of a rubber sucker or a magnet. The rubber sucker is out of the question, so far as I am concerned, because of difficulty in handling, so the magnet is used (Figure 14).



The magnet, which should be as powerful as possible for its small size, could be an Alnico bar magnet or one of those strong Eclipse magnets. It could be either palmed, attached to the finger with a small clip, or it could be part of the goggles themselves if an Alnico is used. One magician, when we discussed this, plumped for making the fixed disc magnetic so that it could draw out the loose disc when they were brought together. This carries the risk that a spectator might fold the goggles, thus bringing the two discs together and removing one.

If the magnet forms part of the strap or buckles there is another risk from the spectator, who might accidentally touch it to the detachable lens and find himself with a disc of iron hanging from the end of the strap.

The best way, I feel sure, is to carry the magnet separately and palm it.

It should be mentioned here that the goggles should not have enormous lenses which would make the disc difficult to palm. Quite large goggles can be obtained, and yet the lenses are no more than two inches across.

It is most improbable that ordinary goggles would have lenses of glass dark enough for our purpose, so an optician's help should be sought in getting the ordinary glass substituted for heavily tinted glass.

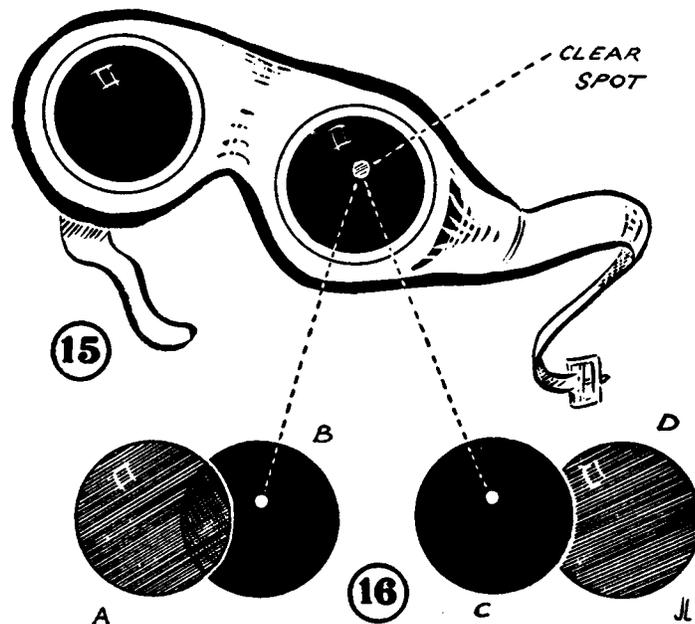
POLARISED GOGGLES

I referred to polarised lenses above, but although the theory of polarised glass is simple, to put it into practise with a pair of goggles is difficult. Polarised glass has the property that it is obscure or opaque in one position, but is comparatively clear in another. If a polarised lens is held in the fingers and rotated as it is looked through, the most transparent position is soon found. A turn of 90° from the transparent position appears to darken the glass.

But there is one condition: the light falling on the polarised glass must pass through another polarised lens.

So it would be necessary to construct a double lens of polarised glass; One of the elements- say the outer one- must be made to rotate through 90° , so that a clear view or an opaque lens is obtained by a quarter turn of the rotating element.

A simple locking device, so that the spectator examining the goggles would not be able to rotate the double lens, might be a useful refinement here.



CLEAR SPOT GOGGLES

Using a rotating lens element and a principle borrowed from that of polarised glass, a much less expensive and more practical type of goggles can be made on similar lines. Each lens of this type is composed of two glasses, heavily tinted, and sandwiched between the two are two discs of exposed photographic film. Each disc of film (which, by the way, has been exposed photographically so that it is quite black and opaque) has a small clear spot scraped through the emulsion of the film (B and C in Figure 16). The spots are arranged so that they coincide exactly. The film is then cemented, emulsion side inward, to the back of a lens glass (A and D in Figure 16).

When the lenses are assembled, the front element of each is fixed in the framework of the goggles, while the rear element is left free to rotate. There must be sufficient degree of rotation to take the clear spot on the rear element out of line with the clear spot on the front element. When clear vision is required, the rear element is rotated back to position so that the clear spots coincide again. (Figure 15.)

Heavily tinted glass must be used so that from the outside, no difference is noticeable when the clear spots are opposite each other. This type of glass can, nevertheless, be seen through quite clearly when the goggles are close to the eyes.

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I prefer the use of blackened film to back each element of the lenses, as this is far more practicable than merely painting the inside of the lenses black. The rotation would soon scrape the black paint, whereas the black surface of the film is cemented up against the glass and will retain its opacity as long the celluloid is in one piece.

Some performers might query the advisability of using goggles. The audience, they might think, will be asking: "Why use a specially made pair of goggles, when we could tie a bag or something round the man's head so that he couldn't see?" The answer to this, I feel, is that an audience expects something special. If the performer can prove to their satisfaction that the goggles are indeed opaque, then the audience will accept goggles as being better than a cloth blindfold. After all, there may well be people in the audience who have discovered for themselves that one can peep down the sides of the nose when an ordinary blindfold is used. As some readers will understand well, it is impossible to hoodwink everybody completely all the time. The use of opaque goggles, however, will throw suspicion off the actual blindfold itself, I believe.

If possible, this type of goggles should be made to lock or at least grip tightly so that the lens elements will not be accidentally rotated before the appropriate time.

It should be needless to add that the lenses are left in the opaque position until the last moment, when the performer is putting them on. Care should be taken that, once the position has been adjusted, no light is allowed to shine through the goggles towards the audience. When lifting them to the eyes, however, the performer should momentarily bring them in line with a light so that he can see whether the clear spots are fully registering over each other.

I favour the treatment of only one lens with the clear spot principle. The other should be left completely black. If full vision is secured through one eye that should be enough for the performer's purpose.

THE FAKED NEWSPAPER

A newspaper, provided by the audience, is used in this method. The only other apparatus required, apart from three or four pins, is a gimmick like that shown in Figure 17. This consists of a device something like a small flat brush, measuring perhaps four inches by two inches. The back of the brush is made of thin plywood, on which is mounted a strip of thin cork, through which short pins or needles have been thrust.

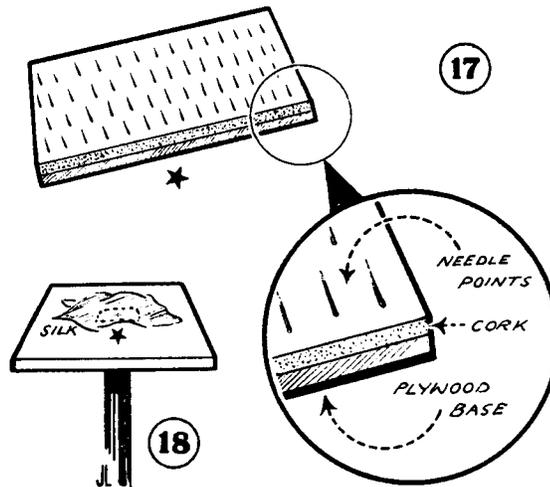
This gimmick is concealed on the table by other apparatus and lies with the needle points uppermost. It can be covered by a silk, as in Figure 18. The newspaper is laid over the gimmick and pressed down, so that a number of pinholes are punched in the paper. These are effectively concealed by the print on the paper, and even at quite close quarters are imperceptible.

The performer must find out by experiment just where to punch the holes so that they are in front of the eyes when the paper is pinned round the head. One thickness of paper only is used in this effect; two or more thicknesses would result in the holes becoming “staggered” so that only luck would provide two holes opposite to each other.

The brush gimmick should be securely anchored to the table so that it is not picked up with the paper. If it is made of suitable size it might be palmed and pressed on to the paper, but I prefer its being left on the table. It is a natural action to lay the paper on the table, whereas to fumble with the gimmick palmed invites suspicion.

An alternative method would be to use a drawing pin stuck to the thumb or to a thumb-tip, but the use of the many small needle points provides better chance of seeing through one or more of them when the paper is put over the head.

If the paper is borrowed, the performer should have by him a number of duplicate copies of current newspapers so that one can be returned to the lender after use.



PAPER BAG BLINDFOLD, (1)

Using an ordinary large paper bag to cover the head is about the most impromptu method of carrying out a blindfold test. I believe my friend Lenz, the Oriental Mystic, has a subtle routine using a paper bag as a blindfold.

The use of a paper bag lends itself to many variations, of which I give three.

Firstly, using any bag, of any colour. The bag has to be large enough to fit over the head easily, and is tied with tape round the neck. To prepare the bag, place it on the head and pinch the paper together just where the tip of the nose comes. The bag is then taken off, and a pair of scissors is offered to a member of the audience, with the request that he should cut out a hole at this point, about three-quarters of an inch in diameter.

The hole, the audience is informed, is to allow the performer to breathe. Believe me, after a few minutes with one's head in a bag, breathing becomes difficult, and the bag swells and contracts in a ridiculous manner.

When the hole has been cut, the bag is placed over the head again, and is adjusted so that the tip of the nose is through the hole. When it is tied round the neck, it will be found that by blowing through the mouth slightly, the hole is pushed away from the nose, and that a wide glimpse of the outside world is obtainable.

PAPER BAG BLINDFOLD, (2)

I think a better method is to prepare the bag beforehand by rubbing the bag with fine glass paper until a thin spot is worked at eye-level. With good lighting it is possible to see through the remaining fibres of the paper just as one can see through the thinnest tissue paper. The best paper for the purpose is strong Kraft paper, which can be rubbed very thin without actually wearing a hole in it.

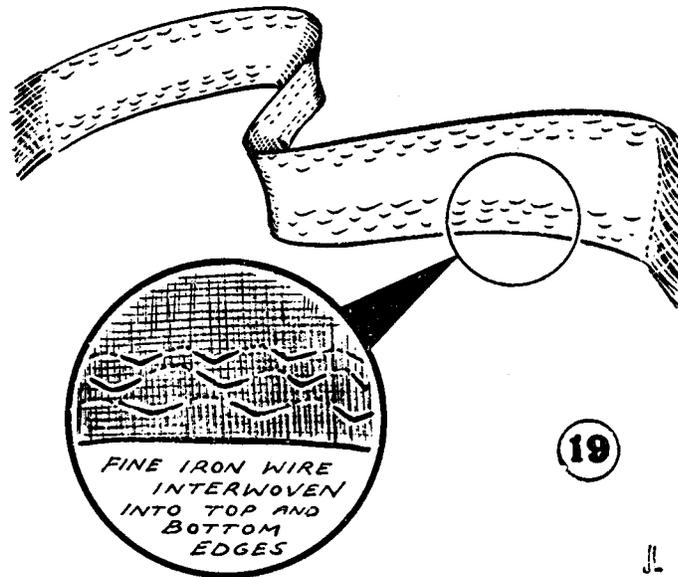
The thin patch should measure no more than a half inch circle over one or both eyes. A long strip of thinning gives the paper a limp appearance which makes it obvious that there is some preparation.

When this method is used, the bag should be placed over the head of a volunteer assistant, with the unprepared side to the front. For that reason the bag should have no marks that will distinguish one side from the other. When the man is satisfied that he cannot see through the paper, he should be told to take off the bag and prick a few holes in the side he has looked through, for ventilation. The bag is then put on the performer's head with the holes at the back, and attention is drawn to this positioning. It must be made clear that the holes for ventilation are at the back and cannot be seen through.

PAPER BAG BLINDFOLD, (3)

I think this third method of the paper bag blindfold is probably the best and safest. For this a bag bearing heavy printing on one or both sides is used. Many grocers' bags are thus printed, with advertising matter all over one side. The black or bronze-blue printing is used by the magician to conceal holes punched in the bag after it has been examined.

The gimmick for perforating the bag is the same as that used for faking a newspaper—a small brush-like gimmick with needle-points projecting, as shown at Figures 17 and 18. If possible, the printed side of the bag only should be pressed on to the needle-points. This can be done by placing the hand inside the bag as it is pressed down on the points.



FRICITION SCARF BLINDFOLD

So far, this method has been shown to only one magician, and he thought so highly of it that he wished to buy the exclusive rights for its use. I wasn't satisfied with the method at the time, but since then have improved upon it. This is a strictly "pure" method of blindfolding which is entirely self-contained.

The performer is blindfolded with his own scarf, which is apparently quite an ordinary one, and unprepared in any way. The scarf will stand close examination, but as I see it, there is little need to hand it round and invite inspection. It is simply and obviously a scarf, and when it is wrapped round the head of a member of the audience he will have to admit that it is quite opaque.

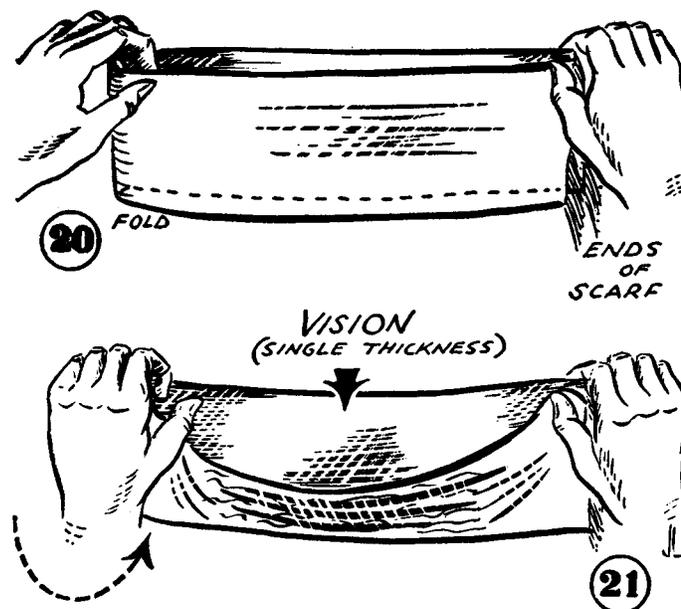
The secret lies in the preparation, which is almost imperceptible, and in the handling. The scarf must be a long one, and not a square. It must be made of silk, nylon or imitation silk do not work nearly so well and should be of sufficient thickness to be quite opaque through two thicknesses but transparent through one thickness. The colour should be black or dark blue or green. Most such scarves are made of tubular material; in such cases it should be possible to see through the scarf when held as a single thickness, but double thickness must be opaque.

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The scarf is prepared in the following manner; through the fabric of half the top edge and the corresponding half of the lower edge is threaded very fine iron wire, of the type used by florists. This wire is exceedingly soft and can be worked by a needle, like thread. Three or four runs of this are taken through the edges of the scarf (Figure 19), and the wire should show on one side a little more than on the other. This side will be on the inside when the scarf is folded in half. The loops showing on the inner side should not measure more than one-eighth of an inch, to avoid the possibility of their being seen. Each loop should be bent outwards a little, in the form of a shallow "v."

It is the loops of wire that cause the friction which gives this method its name. Any magician's wife (or any other wife, for that matter) will vouch for the fact that silk "catches" easily. Watch a woman taking on her best silk or nylon stockings (this is a hypothetical instruction, or course, but even a magician needs a little relaxation sometimes. Go ahead then, watch her!) and see how delicately she handles them. The least roughness of the skin of the hands will cause the silk to cling to the hand and will probably start a ladder (run) in the stocking.

The same principle is used with the silk scarf and its tiny threads of wire. This blindfold is handled in the following manner: The scarf is doubled, with the loops of wire on the side towards the performer. The bigger loops should be on the inside of the fold. The left hand, which holds the scarf at it's fold, does all the work. The right hand holds the ends of the scarf. As will be seen from Figure 20, in the first stage the left hand is turned with fingers



held as far inwards as possible. The top edges of the scarf are together at this stage, but when the left hand is turned with fingers outwards, it will be seen that the rear top edge of the scarf falls to a point about half-way down the front portion (Figure 21).

The lower edge of the rear half is prevented from falling below the lower edge of the front half by the tiny wire loops, which adhere to the silk in front of them like the proverbial glue to a blanket. The top edge of the rear half is prevented from rising to meet the top edge of the front half by the same means.

The scarf thus presents only one thickness to be laid over the eyes, instead of the double thickness which would normally be expected with it held in this position. The double thickness should be demonstrated as being opaque before the dropping move is made.

It is desirable that the scarf should be long enough to tie at the back of the head, as knotting makes a tighter job and brings the single thickness nearer to the eyes than does pinning.

It may be thought that wire threaded through the material would be seen easily, but this is not the case. Florists' wire is little thicker than thread, and is quite soft enough to use as thread. It is black in colour, and does not show up, either by shining or by reason of its colour, if a very dark scarf is used. The running stitches made with the wire should be as small as possible, and should be fairly loosely made. A tight stitch will pucker the material.

I recommend this method most strongly. The preparation can be carried out in a few minutes, and once done needs no manner of re-setting. There are no gimmicks, gadgets, or fakes, and the scarf is entirely self-contained and is always set ready for use. It can, of course, also be worn in the normal manner.

Section Two
METHODS USING THE
DOWNWARD GLIMPSE

THE GENERAL public, while not being initiated into the mysteries of blindfold magic, is nevertheless usually slightly aware that something might be seen by squinting down the sides of the nose underneath a blindfold. Few people, though, realise what a comparatively wide area can be seen under a blindfold. For those who do suspect that something could be seen, the magician has to enlist another principle to throw them off the scent—the use of secret reflectors. These, combined with showmanship and misdirection, help him to accomplish effects that would be plainly impossible simply by peeping down beneath the edge of his blindfold.

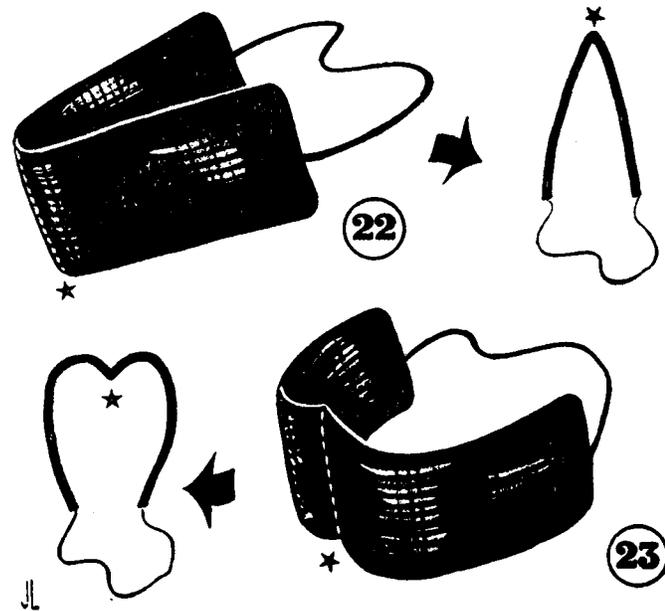
Also, cotton wool pads, powder puffs, lumps of felt or some similar obstruction to vision is used by many performers to convince the audience that he cannot see down the sides of his nose. It might be argued that the very fact of using these obstructions puts the idea of the downward glimpse into the minds of the audience, but however that may be, the magician who uses them is at least convincing his audience that he cannot see down the sides of his nose. At least, we hope he is.

REVERSED CREASE BLINDFOLD

The field of vision obtained by the downward glimpse can be extended considerably when a blindfold of felt is used. This principle may have been used before, but if so, I have never heard of its use. The idea came to me when I found an old blindfold lying at the back of a drawer. It had got pressed firmly so that there was a sharp crease across the middle. When the blindfold was put on, the area of vision seemed to be greatly restricted, owing to the crease, which caused the blindfold to be brought closer to the face. But when I turned the blindfold inside out, as it were, the sharp crease became a sort of double curve, and the area of vision was more than doubled. Figures 22 and 23 show the great difference in shape when the blindfold is turned inside out.

This blindfold could be placed on a spectator while it is folded as in Figure 22, but when worn by the performer it should be folded back to position as in Figure 23.

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I found that a blindfold made of thick felt, covered with black satin for the sake of appearance, worked best for this method. The blindfold is held in place on the head by a piece of elastic sewn to each end.

When only a downward glimpse is needed, as against vision straight ahead, this is a good method. It is surprising how far in front of the feet the performer can see. As in all blindfolds involving a downward glimpse, however, the facial construction has much to do with the area seen: high cheekbones will probably obscure much of the vision in this method.

BLINDFOLD PLUS PADS

Whatever the theoretical arguments against pads being placed over the eyes under the blindfold, this method certainly commands a high degree of mystification.

The pads used in this method can be plain wads of cotton wool, squares of several thicknesses of felt stitched together, or bulky powder puffs. I have seen Robert Harbin perform a splendid impromptu routine with wadded handkerchiefs. I favour wads of cotton wool, and I believe that when this is used, it should be ripped carelessly off a large roll of cotton wool. If the wool is produced carefully wadded ready for the performance, or if two lumps of felt are carefully unwrapped from a neat package, it is going to attract suspicion. Two handfuls of cotton wool torn from a roll are going to be a lot more convincing than two previously prepared pads of some substance; they have an impromptu air about them which allays suspicion.

Cotton wool, though, has two drawbacks that must be watched for and overcome firstly, if the performer is heavily made up he may find that strands of the cotton may adhere to his face instead of moving out of place as they should, when necessary. And the same drawback applies to the performer who perspires. It should be remembered that a brightly lit stage can be a very warm place, and even the heat from a spotlight can often be unpleasantly warm. So if the performer is subject to perspiration, the blindfold routine should be gone into before the stage gets too hot.

Now, as to method: the cotton wool wads are applied directly on the eyelids and held in position while the blindfold is tied over the top of them. The secret lies in the way the cotton wool is laid upon the eyelids. Instead of it being laid directly in the eye-sockets, as it were, the wool overlaps them on all sides, but especially so over the ridge of the eyebrows. There should be a good thickness of wool over the eyebrows, as this will give some purchase to grip upon when the wool is to be moved by the muscular movement of the eyebrows.

The moment the eyes are concealed by the cotton wool, the eyebrows are drawn down in a deep frown, and are kept there until the whole job of blindfolding is completed. Then they are raised to their utmost, when the muscular movement will be found to lift the cotton wool pads at their lower edges an appreciable distance from the cheeks. It may be found in some cases that the eyebrows must be lifted immediately the main blindfold covers the face, but I believe that in most cases the lifting should be done when the blindfold is tied tightly in place. Experiment alone will determine this, and will also show the exact quantity

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of wool to be used. The top edge of the wad should be much thicker than the lower edge, otherwise the lower edge will merely expand when the eyebrows are lifted, and will block the field of vision.

When felt pads or powder puffs or something of the sort are used, a little adjustment can be obtained by “helping” the person tying the blindfold, in other words, by placing the hands at the side of the blindfold “to hold it in place” and easing it into the right position.

As regards the blindfold itself, there is the choice of handkerchief (though this is a but on the small side), foulard, scarf, made-up blindfold, or bandages. When bandages are used, it is advisable to have some form of base on which to lay the wads of cotton wool, because bandages apply pressure closely to more points than do other types of blindfold. Here is a time when a felt pad-it need not be a thick one-can be used to advantage.

Eddie Joseph, in his book *Intuitional Sight*, makes great use of a bandage blindfold, to which are added lumps of dough and cotton wool pads.

Some caution should be used when a large foulard is being tied round over cotton wool wads, to ensure that the lower edge of the foulard does not hang too low on the face and thus obscure the vision. If the foulard is 53 large as to obscure the vision at its lower edge, a fold or two extra should be taken across the centre in order to make rue triangle a smaller one.

Whatever form of external blindfold is used, it should be tied tightly, as it is this very tightness that assists the leverage of the eyebrows. The blindfold should be knotted at the widest part of the head, and there is a useful means of obtaining even more tightness. This lies in first of all having the knot tied a little above the widest part of the head, so that it may be drawn down an inch or so after being knotted, thus tightening up the whole set-up.

A foulard has a useful, and unsuspected, property: the line of pull, when it is knotted, is round the eyebrows and forehead, and not round the level of the eye-socket. Bandages, or a made-up blindfold, exercise an equal pull over a greater portion of the face. A made-up blindfold, it may be found, does not possess enough tightness when elastic is used to secure it, so tapes should be substituted for the elastic.

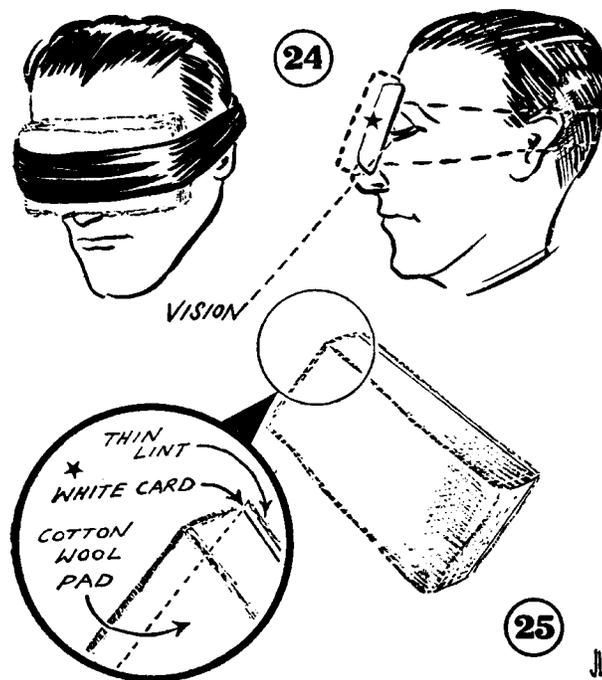
Facial construction can make all the difference to the success of a blindfold test when the downward glimpse system is used, therefore every method should be tried, and the one that gives most satisfaction should be used always. Each method should be checked off by measuring the area of floor space that can be seen underneath it, and the one offering the greatest range of vision should be adopted for regular use.

PETER WARLOCK'S PAD

In his book *Patterns for Psychics*, Peter Warlock describes one of the most efficient, yet simplest, means of faking a cotton wool pad for blindfolding. His version calls for a silk or foulard large enough to tie round the head, and a specially prepared pad of cotton wool. The pad measures about 7 inches by 3½ inches, and on one side of this is glued a piece of thin white card, about the size of a playing card. The pad is placed over the eyes so that the cardboard comes across the bridge of the nose. However tightly the silk is tied round this, the operator now has a perfect downward view. (Figure 24).

This pad may be placed over the eyes of a spectator, but the woolly side would then be placed next to his eyes. In that position, downward vision is greatly obscured.

With his consent, I offer this development of Mr. Warlock's method: the cotton wool pad is about the same size, but instead of a small piece of card being cemented to the back, a piece of card the full size of the pad is stitched to the pad, and is covered by a piece of light woolly lint-surgical lint of the medicated variety is ideal-which is also stitched to the pad (Figure 25). The stitches should be small, but should be as loose as possible to avoid puckering the edges of the cotton wool.



The lint, which has a similar surface to the cotton wool, effectively camouflages the piece of thin card, and is thin enough not to interfere with the function of the card stiffener. The pad can be left either way up in full view, and the sense of touch will tell the performer on which side the card stiffener is.

SURGICAL PLASTER BLINDFOLD

Dr. Harlan Tarbell, in The Tarbell Course, gives methods of blindfolding the eyes with surgical tape, and I do not intend to infringe upon his ideas further than to comment on this method.

The essential secret in the plaster method is the obtaining of a sideways glimpse, and the method of applying the plaster allows fully for this.

The use of surgical plaster or sticking plaster (white adhesive tape used for bandages), as we know it in England-lends itself to several subtleties, but it has drawbacks. Plaster strips of the self-adhesive variety can be faked by the application of talcum powder, which renders them easier to detach. Too much talcum powder applied to the tacky side will prevent their sticking at all.

If the performer feels inclined to work out a method of using plaster without any pads, discs or coins to cover the eyes, talcum powder should be applied to the eyelids beforehand. A well-stuck strip of plaster on the eyelid can be most painful to detach.

Plaster has another drawback: some kinds will pull out the hairs of the eyebrows, and not painlessly, at that. On the other hand, when it is used, it often serves to conceal some essential gimmicking, such as the hole in the perforated coin or business cards already described.

JOE ELMAN'S SIGHTLESS VISION

The following complete Blindfold Routine is from from Corinda's 13 Steps to Mentalism. It is the method Corinda himself used with great success.

For many years I, Joe Elman, have been presenting my "Sightless Vision" to audiences under all conditions, and to specially invited members of the medical profession, wherever possible borrowing all the requirements from the audience, yet making no claims other than that this could be done by anyone who has had the benefit of the proper training.

The only requirements are:

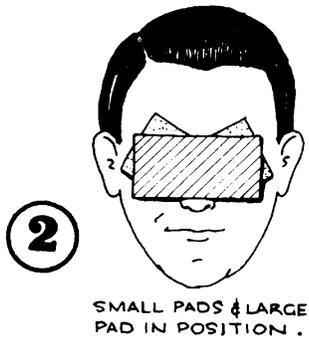
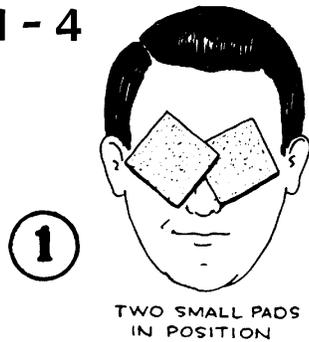
- A chair, for the performer to sit on.
- One or more newspapers, menu cards or programmes, to form the first stage of the blindfold.
- Two table napkins (large), tea towels or scarves to form the second stage of the blindfold.
- A tray, for collection of objects.
- A writing pad or menu back, as large as possible to be used for the written word test.
- A crayon pencil, or at the worst a ballpoint pen.
- Plenty of showmanship.

The chair is placed in a position which is well lit from above, as this makes the task much easier. The tray with the requirements in this order, from the bottom upwards, is on the chair: pad and crayon pencil, table napkins, newspapers.

The performer tells the audience that he wishes to demonstrate the powers of "Sightless Vision," using some rather technical language about physical phenomena, without becoming facetious, and then invites two members of the audience to come up and assist him, laying stress on the fact that members of the medical profession are particularly welcome to assist. The assistants are placed either side of the chair and invited to hold and examine the newspaper and table napkins.

The performer then takes the newspaper and separates it into sheets, folding them to make three pads: one twelve by six inches and two six by six inches. These are then handed back to the assistants to be further examined. The table napkins are folded diagonally to make them about six inches wide and handed back to the assistants. Placing the tray on his lap, the performer then sits on the chair and does not rise from it until the very end of the demonstration. The performer closes his eyes. Taking the two small pads the performer

SV 1 - 4



places one over each eye, making the edges overlap over the nose, but the bottom corner can come below the nose. The long pad is then placed over the two smaller pads so that at least two layers of pad cover each eye, the bottom edge should come to the tip of the nose (Figure SV 1).

Whilst this is being done, but before the long pad is placed in position the performer lowers his eyebrows and screws up his eyes and keeps them in this position until the blindfold has been completed and examined by the assistants (Figure SV 2).

The two table napkins are then tied by the assistants across the face—one napkin over the left eye and round the right ear, the other over the right eye and round the left ear, and the assistants are asked to make sure that the knots are really tight. They are then invited to examine the blindfold and to assure the audience that it would be impossible to see at all using normal vision. Figures SV 3 and 4.

At this moment the performer raises his eyebrows, whilst turning his head from side to side, and ensures that he has a clear “peek” down one side of his nose. This is quite easy with practice, and the tighter the blindfold the easier it is to get the “peek.”

It is essential that the performer does not touch the blindfold with his hands at any time during the following demonstrations.

One assistant is asked to take the pad and crayon pencil from the tray whilst the other one takes the tray itself. The one with the tray is asked to collect six articles from the audience, if possible, articles such as driving licences, bank notes, engraved jewellery, credit cards and keys which have identification marks or numbers, and to return the tray with the objects to the performer. The second assistant is asked to get a member of the audience to write a word in a

foreign language on the pad and to return with the pad to the performer. The assistants are asked to stand slightly behind and each to one side of the performer and to place the tray on the performer's lap.

At this stage the showmanship must come in, to convince the audience that the objects are identified whilst held by the performer in front of his blindfolded eyes and I advise anyone trying to get up an act of this nature to rehearse, rehearse and rehearse before trying it out even in front of the family. If humour comes naturally, it can be used in describing the articles, use speed on the uninteresting but dwell on the articles of interest, such as an endorsement on a driving licence, a key or an unusual object. Always leave an interesting and apparently difficult object to last. Return the objects to the tray handing the tray back to the assistant.

The second assistant is then asked to hand over the pad, which is "peeked" and then he is asked for the crayon pencil. Holding the pad at normal eye level the performer turns his head slightly away from the audience and immediately, slowly and deliberately copies the word. It is as well to make some reference to the handwriting, or if possible the origin of the word, or maybe some appropriate reply.

The pad and pencil are handed to the assistant and the applause, which is never missing if this is done properly, is cut short by the performer raising his arms sideways and in a loud voice requesting the assistants to remove the blindfold.

At this moment the performer must close his eyes very tightly and keep them closed until the blindfold is completely removed, so that his reaction to light will be that of a person who has been in the dark for a long time.

He rises from his chair, asks the assistants to return the borrowed objects and "props" and with some further remarks about "well you too could do this if you knew how" takes the final applause.

WATCH-GLASS REFLECTOR

The use of a reflector of some sort is almost essential when the downward glimpse method of blindfolding is used. A reflector extends the field of vision very considerably, and draws attention away from the possibility of peeping underneath the edge of the blindfold. The use of an actual mirror, unless it be very small indeed, seems to me to be rather risky, so I devised the black glass reflector shown in Figure 26.

This is nothing more than a watch-glass, of the same size and curvature as the glass on the performer's own wrist watch, and can be applied when required to the front of the watch.

The glass should be painted black on the back, and when dry should have a coating of wax, or one or two dabs of wax, placed on the back, to enable it to stick to the watch face. It is applied to the face of the watch, as shown in Figure 27, while the blindfold is being fixed. The fact that the performer can safely turn his back to the audience while the blindfold is being knotted makes it easy for him to apply the glass to the watch face. The glass is of convenient size to palm, and no difficulty should be experienced in that direction. The wax, of course, should be soft enough to cause the glass to stick firmly to the watch face.



Using the downward glimpse, it is an easy matter to bring the watch into the line of sight, and equally easy to use it as a reflector.

Black glass is almost as good a reflector as is silvered glass, but the light must be behind the performer as much as possible. The glass, being convex, will give a reflection of a wide area, and the reflected image will be small, so this method is particularly useful to sight what is happening over a wide area. If the test is to involve, say, the reading of print, then this is not the method to use. But if it calls for walking through the audience, for example, and picking out a particular person, or describing the actions of a number of people, then this reflector is excellent for its purpose.

The lighting, though, must be just right. A strong light in front will ruin the effect and make it exceedingly difficult, it not actually impossible. If the main source of light is behind the performer, with only subdued or shaded lighting in front of him, the reflection seen in the glass will be quite enough for the performer's needs.

For the magician who is satisfied only with perfection, it might be worth while painting, faintly, the figures and hands of a watch behind the glass before the black paint is applied.

The stance when using this reflector can be quite natural, with the right hand clasping the left wrist (as in Figure 27) and covering the watch the hands at this stage will be about at waist level and the reflector is in the ideal position for a downward glimpse. The right hand can move down a fraction to uncover the glass (Figure 28) when needed.

Many watches are made with black faces these days, but in my experience these are not good as reflectors. The black surface is flat, while the glass is curved, and also the black surface is too far below the front surface of the glass for it to act as a reflector. With the painted watch-glass, the thinner the glass, and thus the nearer to the outer surface the inner coat of black is brought, the better will be the reflector.

THE BUTTON REFLECTOR

I know at least one member of the Magic Circle who uses his membership badge, worn in the lapel buttonhole, as a reflector. But his eyesight must be more acute than mine if he can focus his eyes on an object as near to them as a badge in his lapel. Nevertheless, the badge does make a good small reflector, as its surface is slightly convex, and there is an area in the middle, about three-sixteenths or one-quarter of an inch in diameter, which is highly polished. But as I have mentioned, the eyes must be particularly agile to focus themselves, while looking down, on the lapel buttonhole.

On the other hand, the button reflector must be near the eyes to give any appreciable reflection. If it is held at waist-level, for instance, the image reflected will be too small to recognise.

THE TRAY REFLECTOR

For this method, the performer, after being blindfolded, carries in front of him a tray for members of the audience to place articles upon. These articles will be use in a later stage of the routine, but the tray itself has a reflecting surface upon it, and thus the performer is able to gain information about people and articles in the audience.

The tray should have plated fittings thereon, and some part of these fittings is used as the reflector. It could be the plated front edge of the tray, or the rail running round it, or even one of the handles. A slightly convex surface is the best, but it will be found that tubular surfaces are of little use, as they present a distorted reflection. A flat surface, on the other hand, must be unduly large if it is to give a reflection of any use. A concave or hollowed surface is quite useless, except at the very closest quarters, as it magnifies the object too much and consequently gives too little field.

My friend Peter Warlock uses a small concave reflector in one of his book tests, but its only purpose is to show him the reflected number of the page, suitably magnified to make it perceptible at arm's length.

DUNCANSON'S "SIGHT UNSEEN"

Annemann published an ingenious blindfold effect, "Sight Unseen," by L. E. Duncanson in the Jinx (also in Practical Mental Effects, page 258, 2nd edition) which made novel use of a mirror reflector. In this case the mirror is suspended by a stout thread running down the inside of the trouser leg, and controlled by the end of the thread, which emerges at the seat of the trousers. The mirror can be hoisted up inside the trouser leg, or it can be lowered to a position on the floor between the feet. The performer's hands are tied behind him, he is blindfolded, and a card is placed in his hands behind his back. The mirror is allowed to drop to the floor between his feet, and the card's reflection is thus seen in the mirror. Other tests are carried out involving the telling of time on a borrowed watch and the reading of a message on a slate.

The performer must stand sideways on to the audience, so that the foot nearest the audience can conceal the mirror when necessary. Once the mirror is lowered to the floor it is covered by his foot whenever the assistant approaches.

A point arises here which is worth noting: in effects of this kind, where some secret operation is to be carried out, the props needed for the next part of the effect should be placed at a distance, so that in going to bring them, the assistant is out of the danger zone while the secret move is being carried out.

Such arrangements will take a great load off the performer's mind. Remember, he is blindfolded, and cannot know what the volunteer assistant is up to behind his back. If he is sure that the assistant is well out of the way, the confidence this gives him will improve his performance. I am in hearty agreement with Eric "Nitwit" Williams here: carefree conjuring is the thing-the magician has enough to worry about just keeping one or two jumps ahead of the audience, without having the added worry of wondering whether his mirror is showing. So he should ensure, by his stage and property plot, that the assistant is well out of the way when the mischief is being done.

Section Three SUBTLETIES

THE TYPE of performer who is going to make good use of blindfold magic is not the type who will simply do tricks while wearing a blindfold, or who will regard the blindfold itself as just another trick. More than ever, when the vision is obscured, the performer is dependent upon keeping one or more jumps ahead of the audience-or, as Lifeman Stephen Potter would say, upon maintaining his state of one-upness.

ONE-AHEAD SYSTEM

And that leads naturally to the use of the one-ahead system. Almost the whole of a blindfold routine depends upon the one-ahead system. I do not say that the whole programme calls for the constant use of the system, but that the routine is held together by it. The first thing noted through or under the blindfold is not necessarily revealed then and there, but should be held in reserve until such time as it would be impossible to see the article under any circumstances. Then the nature of the article is disclosed, with the emphasis on the impossibility of the feat.

As an example, let us suppose that a member of the audience has set his watch at some unspecified time, and handed it up to the platform. It would be very poor showmanship to disclose the hour at which the watch was set then and there. I can imagine that a performer like Kuda Bux, for example, would take the watch and immediately hand it to another member of the audience, to be dealt with later in the programme. But he would, during the fraction of a second in which the watch was in his hand, note the exact time by it, and would then note the exact time by his own watch. He would then know just how much difference there was between the two times, and would use that knowledge later. Some minutes later, perhaps, when it was forgotten that he had ever handled the borrowed watch, he would invite the volunteer assistant to hold the watch above his head. He would then turn in that direction and announce the time now showing on the borrowed watch. He would, of course, arrive at this knowledge by looking at his own watch secretly.

It would be apparent to everybody in the audience that he could not see upward through his blindfold, and the fact that he could tell the time by a watch held above eye-level, and while he was blindfolded, would indeed be a clincher.

PRIOR OBSERVATION

The one-ahead system should be used, in conjunction with alert observation carried out beforehand, as much as possible, but should be interspersed with items involving immediate effect. The intention of this suggestion is to throw the audience off the scent of either the one-ahead system or the possibility of the performer's seeing at all.

It should be taken several stages further than the mere noting of cards, figures, time on watches, colours, and so on. and should be extended to the observation of members of the audience before the blindfold is put on. The assistants the performer intends to call upon the platform should be noted carefully, and especially should he note distinguishing features below the waist-line, so that he can remember them again when he looks down under his blindfold. For however clear vision he may have through his blindfold, the downward glimpse is always useful when the performer appears to be facing straight ahead, and can yet take a downward peep to the side to observe the assistant beside him.

Instead of committing a member of the audience to memory as "bald, large nose, red tie," the performer should remember the man as "brown shoes, one with splash of mud on side, grey flannel trousers sharply creased," and so on. He should also remember any opinions he has formed about the psychology of his victims, so that when brown shoes comes up to hand him the slate or the piece of chalk, he can take any necessary precautions to outwit "Mr. Brown Shoes."

He may have noticed that brown shoes is a suspicious type who will watch the performer's hands instead of the blackboard. In that case, when he sees who is handing him the slate or the chalk, he might turn sideways and move away while he switches the chalk, or carries out whatever move brown shoes might otherwise have spotted.

The one-ahead system must be carried to the extent of knowing exactly where everything on the stage is placed. and the performer must know at once, by listening if not by sight, if anything has been moved. This may seem to have little bearing on the one-ahead system, but it has a very definite bearing on it. For instance, if an article to be used in the one-ahead system should be on a table which the performer has to pass at a given moment, and if the table has been moved out of his now limited line of sight, the whole act is going to be thrown out of gear.

So it seems to be a necessary principle that not only the necessary props. for the one-ahead system, but also those members of the audience who are on the stage itself, must be incorporated in the system.

STAGE SETTING

For this reason, the stage should be set to a carefully rehearsed pattern, so that the performer can know exactly where everything is at a given moment. Not only that, but he must know exactly where every volunteer assistant is all the time, for the question of angles arises just as much in blindfold magic as it does in other forms of conjuring. Too often, the magician is apt to forget the man on the stage helping him, and consequently he gets careless in the matter of angles. When the magician is blindfolded, into the bargain, this question of angles becomes a problem indeed.

An assistant from the audience must be directed exactly to the spot where the performer wants him, and there must be some firmness about this, or one day the performer is going to find himself afflicted with one of those clever saboteurs who walk round on tiptoe peering into boxes and turning things over. The laughter of the audience should be the clue that something like this is happening.

The moment an assistant is discovered snooping round in this way he should be asked to leave the stage. Watch Peter Casson, the hypnotist, deal with these funny men. Whatever a magician's views may be about hypnotism as an entertainment, it must be admitted that Peter Casson knows how to handle the nitwits who try to spoil his act, or the cranks who demand to be hypnotised. Downright rudeness with such people has a crashing effect, and gets rid of them for good. What is more, the audiences seem to think none the worse of Casson for his tough tactics.

So the funny men should be sent back to their seats with a flea in their ear at once. A little spirited display like this seems to be sadly lacking among conjurers, although other types of entertainer do not hesitate to speak out when their act is being endangered by someone's foolery.

The stage setting should be planned with the view to taking the volunteer assistant as far from the performer as possible at crucial moments. Let us continue the allusion of the switching of a piece of chalk. The performer, say, needs a second or two in which to exchange a piece of chalk secretly, and the volunteer assistant is standing a little too close to him for safety.

At this point, it must appear to be the most natural thing in the world for the performer to ask the assistant to bring him something from elsewhere on the stage. It could be a duster to clean the slate that is needed. If so, the duster should be on the far side of the stage, and the performer must know just where it is. He must make the assistant turn round to go and

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get that duster, and while the man is away on his brief errand, the magician gets on with the dirty work of switching the bit of chalk.

He must not say in so many words: "Would you mind turning round and getting that duster?" He should ask: "Can you see a duster anywhere?" When the man answers that he can see one, the performer knows that he has turned his head, and should be able to tell from the sound of the voice whether the man's head is still turned away from him. He should ask the man to bring the duster, and as the man walks away, there is opportunity for the move to be made to switch the chalk.

A plan should be drawn on paper showing the placing of everything on the stage. Coloured ink could be used for each different effect, so that the diagram will show where everything and everybody is during each effect.

PROPERTY PLOT

In stage plays, the property master has the “property plot” before him all the time. Every cigarette the hero lights-and the inevitable Ronson lighter with which he lights it-is counted and laid out on a table in the wings. The cigarette case to hold the cigarettes is there as well, and the hero, before he makes his entrance, loads up the cigarette case with the right number of cigarettes, sees that the lighter is working, and pockets the things. The property master has also made sure that every other item the players will want is there and ready to hand-money, keys, watch, the fatal mortgage, the flowers in the vase, the furniture on the stage, everything.

So it should be with the magician. But is it? Not once in a hundred times it isn't. How many magicians have you or I seen who have to fumble through half their pockets for a box of matches, or who have to walk twenty yards to find the table where they hid the hat load? It seems like hundreds.

The blindfolded magician, though, can't afford to run the risk of finding himself without any of his props, or not knowing where they are. Dammit, he's supposed to have eyes that see all, so it seems a pity if he can't see the duster hanging over the chair back instead of in its usual place over the blackboard. If everything isn't in its allotted place, there's going to be an awful lot of fumbling round the stage to find it, and a dangerous number of opportunities for the assistant to be in the wrong place at the right moment.

FORCING

There is probably no branch of the magician's art where the force is more valuable than in blindfold magic. But any force used must be straightforward and natural. There is no place for the elaborate counting force here, and fancy card layouts and deals must be avoided completely. Once the audience so much as suspects a force, the whole performance at once loses all its mystery.

Card forces, if cards must be used (to me they savour too much of the kind of trick the audience hope you'll do so that they can whisper to each other: "Card tricks, see! It's all a trick, really.") must be straightforward. The crossed cut or the under-the-handkerchief force may be well known to magicians but I don't think they've got around to the schoolboys and the life-and-soul-of-the-party chap yet. They are simple, sure, natural and straightforward, and what more could you want?

To force other articles-silks, balls, billets and the like-I don't think the simple changing bag can be bettered. Not the fancy type made of velvet, with lots of chromium plating and a mahogany handle that squeaks when it turns, but the ordinary cloth bag with a partition down the middle. Just as good (some may think it better) is the Devil's Handkerchief, which has all the air of being impromptu.

"Book Tests," where a book is used to force a word or phrase, also work well in the blindfold act. The most suitable ones enable are clever enough that the book can be freely handled by an audience member without arousing suspicion. Keep in mind, when a book test is used in a blindfold act, it should be simplified in its effect, and should not be presented as a feat of telepathy. The book, when the words have been selected, should be held before the performer, at some distance away, and he should appear to read the words, despite the blindfold.

There are other forces, naturally, which fit well into the blindfold act, but some excellent methods just don't suit the atmosphere created, or are on the dangerous side as regards the possibility of being spotted.

Effects involving the force of a word, number, or a total of dice, have all been used with success in blindfold work. In addition, any Living and Dead Test involving the use of a force with long and short cards, narrow and wide cards, rough or smooth paper or the like can be incorporated in a blindfold routine and made convincing.

The simpler colour forces are effective, too. It is well known among magicians (Is it equally well known to the layman?) that most men will call "Red" when asked to name a colour, while most women go for blue or green. In this connection, the colours of, say, ribbons, could be detected by their texture, with a final effect using a force of colour. The tendency to make this into a prediction should be avoided.

Numbers and effects concerning them take on a more baffling air when a blindfold is used. The old turn-over pad idea to force the total of a sum fits in well here, but for the sake of showmanship and so that the whole audience can check the figures, the total should be written on the blackboard. The rest of the sum, which after all is faked, should be destroyed.

CARD SET-UPS

If cards are to be used, the value of a good set-up is obvious. I personally favour the Nikola System, which is especially useful not only for memorising the whole pack, but for its complementary memory system for memorising numbers and objects to which numbers can be applied.

Some of the more usual set-ups are rather too well known among enthusiastic schoolboys. For instance, I was once caught out by a schoolboy who insisted on repeating the “Eight Kings” system which I was using. The Si Stebbins, or Howard Thurston System is too regular in its arrangement. Paul Clive’s “Identity Pack” is good, I believe, but having committed myself to Nikola’s System I find Paul Clive’s hard to remember. The moral would seem to be that the performer should stick to one set-up, the more irregular and less widely known, the better.

I prefer a straightforward card reading to a series of trick effects which involve “choose a card” methods.

MEMORISING

I have already mentioned the value of a good card memorising system, but many magicians seem to confine such a system as the Nikola just to card effects, whereas it is of great value in memorising any string of numbers. Each number has a letter to represent it, so that numbers containing many digits can be translated into words, which are easier to remember.

When numbers are memorised, they should be set aside for use later, as with the watch effect I have mentioned.

A simple, but convincing effect would be to have a number of people each write one digit on a card, which is then passed to an assistant on the stage to write on a large blackboard. The performer could sight the numbers as he took the card, and convert them into words. He could then read them off the blackboard while using only a downward glimpse blindfold, through which he could not possibly see the blackboard.

An astute performer would also memorise, before the blindfold was put on, the number of seats in the hall and the number of seats in each row, so that a swift glance would tell him how many seats in a particular row were occupied. This, of course, would involve a little collusion with the caretaker or some similar person, but could be made quite telling in the performance.

Memory “techniques,” which use visual imagery, can also be incorporated into blindfold work.

GENUINE BLINDFOLDS

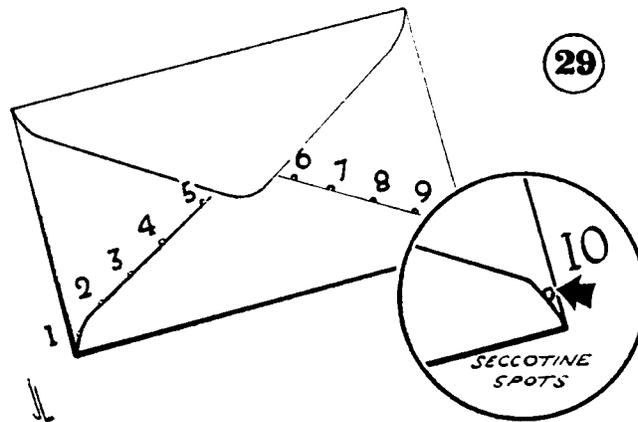
There are a certain number of excellent effects that can be performed while fully and genuinely blindfolded. The great majority of these depend upon a force or upon memorising. There are, of course, many self-working card feats that involve neither force nor memory, and these can just as well be done blindfolded as otherwise. The number of such card effects is far too great to be detailed here, but if the performer is anxious to present card tricks blindfolded, there is no lack of them. Greater Magic, Paul Clive's wonderful Card Tricks Without Skill, Hugard's Encyclopaedia of Card Tricks, Bruce Elliott's Phoenix, and the file of Annemann's Jinx will produce enough self-workers to last a lifetime.

Even many of the card effects that are not self-workers can be adapted to a blindfold routine. An example is the usual "Do As I Do" type of trick. Stripper decks, short cards, rounded corners, thick cards, and longs and shorts can be rung in most unscrupulously when doing blindfold magic. A bold "reader" or marked pack, which uses a system such as Ted Lesley's (it requires absolutely no memorisation and can easily be read with a downward glimpse), would lend itself to a smashing routine.

Other types of effects that could be done without seeing a thing would be the Book Test (force), Sum Tests (force), Living and Dead, with variations (force), the many Lock and Key effects (force), Giant Memory (memorising), Knight's Tour (memorising), the Clock Dial (force, varying each time the hand is spun), E.S.P. Tests (mainly forces) and many prediction and spirit effects that can be altered and adapted to fit the blindfold routine, where the performer, be it remembered, is not psychic nor telepathic, but merely able to sense what other people see.

As an example of adapting a well-known effect, I would mention the following: the performer is well and truly blindfolded with a genuine blindfold. A number is written on the blackboard, together with any other matter he may direct. He turns his head, still blindfolded to the blackboard, takes out a pencil and pad from his pocket, and writes on the pad. He then holds the pad above his head with one hand and takes off the blindfold with the other. He recapitulates what has been done, reads the numbers etc. from the board, and hands the pad to a member of the audience, who finds that the performer, while blindfolded, has duplicated what was written on the board.

The method? Simply a thumb writer and the ability to write with it while one is talking. Annemann's "Pseudo Psychometry" lends itself to genuine blindfold work, if the original instructions are varied a little. The effect, in brief, is that members of the audience are given envelopes, into which they are asked to place some article from their possession. The performer is blindfolded meanwhile, and the envelopes are handed to him. He takes one at



a time in his hand, and announces, after tearing open the envelope and handling the article it contains, to whom it belongs.

The original instructions called for a pencilled number inside each envelope, so that when the envelope was torn open, the number would be exposed to the performer's view. Long ago I gave up using the pencilled numbers, and now always use a method of identifying each envelope by touch. Envelopes are prepared beforehand by placing a of Seccotine or Durofix in a certain place on each. The positions vary for each number (Figure 29) so performer has only to run his thumb over each to identify each number, and consequently each person.

There is temptation here to identify each person's envelope before it is opened, but this should be avoided. After all, it is the articles and their owners that are being identified, and not the envelopes. The more thoughtful members of the audience would soon tumble to the secret, I think, if the envelopes alone were identified.

With a little thought, many other effects can be adapted in this manner. The main thing to remember is that some other sense has to replace the sense of sight. In the case of the envelopes, it is the sense of touch, but I see no reason why the senses of smell, taste, hearing and balance should not be enlisted as well.

Misdirection would have to be employed strongly, but there is always, at the performer's aid, the fact that the articles he is identifying are normally identified by sense of sight. It should not be too difficult, with practice, to recognise figures and letters chalked on a blackboard by the sound made in forming them with the chalk. Pencil reading is a comparatively simple task when using the eyes; chalk reading is almost as simple when using the ears. The use of other senses will nearly always be apparent when the magician gives a little thought to the matter.

PSYCHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE AUDIENCE

It must be realised that the whole success of blindfold routine depends upon the performer's psychological approach to the audience. In this connection, the nature of the effects presented must be simple and broad. There should be no complex effects which demand prolonged attention by the audience, no "sucker" effects, nothing to lead the audience up the garden path to a grand climax wherein the performer says, in effect: "See! I've fooled you after all!"

In my opinion a blindfold act would be ruined by including the average type of trick in which mystification "per se" is the object. In a blindfold act, the magician is offering as the crowning mystery the fact that he can sense without his eyes (!) things and events that everybody else needs eyes to see. Therefore the simpler the effects, the better. Needless to say, nearly every effect will involve a trick, but it must not appear to be a trick, from the audience's point of view.

As an example of the type of effect I have in mind, I would cite the needle-threading. In one version, the performer offers the choice of a number of lengths of thread. He takes the chosen coloured thread and a needle, places his hands, empty except for the needle and thread, behind his back, and brings them out almost at once, with the needle threaded. Whereas, if simplicity is aimed at, the feats look like a remarkable piece of delicate handwork performed under desperately hard conditions. Both are simple, with nothing for the audience to remember, and both are as near what the Americans call sure-fire as any trick could be.

Now let us take another trick-the first that comes to mind as I write being the pound note in the lemon trick. Does it gain anything from being performed while the magician is blindfolded? Of course not. And what is worse, the audience have probably seen it performed as a conjuring trick time and time again.

Once an elaborate trick goes into the routine, the audience are going to whisper to each other: "It's a Conjuring trick!" To my way of thinking, they should never suspect that a trick is being performed. There is a school of thought today that says: "Oh, but we must not deceive the audience into thinking we can work miracles; that wouldn't be fair. We must admit that it's all done by trickery, and that we know how to do it while they don't." Did Houdini ever tell his audience that he was performing a trick? Only on the occasions when he is alleged to have sought the Monday night audience's help by giving him information about the Tuesday audience. Apart from that, not one person in a thousand had the slightest clue about Houdini's mysteries.

I have never yet seen Kuda Bux use a trick as we know it in his blindfold act, superb sleight of hand expert though he is. The result is that Kuda Bux's audiences talk about his act long after they have forgotten the jolly conjurer who found a rabbit in the rector's pocket.

As far as I'm concerned, the thing to do is to baffle the audience completely, and it's good to know that some magicians do believe in that principle. I cannot imagine Peter Warlock hinting that his profound mysteries were anything in the nature of a trick. The performer who puts across the blindfold act well will leave his audience debating learnedly on highly trained psychology, sensitive finger tips, or that article they read in Reader's Digest on extra-sensory perception. But rarely will they leave the hall comparing his act with that of the other magicians they have seen. It should be something quite different from a conjuring act. Those are my views, at any rate, and I hold them most strongly, while nevertheless accepting and admiring the showmanship and entertainment potentialities of the other school.

Another vital point is the manner in which the performer describes his act to the audience. It is impossible to avoid making reference to "seeing," but the reference should only be made negatively. For example it would be permissible to point out that when blindfolded one cannot see, but it would never do to announce that the performer could see, despite the blindfold. Rather should the words "sense" or "visualise" be used for what happens after the blindfold is on.

Similarly, when goggles are being worn instead of a blindfold, the word "glass" should be avoided, unless, perhaps, to announce that the glass of the goggles has been replaced by, say, opaque plastic plates or discs of metal. The opaque nature of the lenses must be stressed all the time. "Discs of metal" has an opaque sound, whereas "black glass" has the fatal word "glass" in it, and glass has always been something we can see through.

A good showman with a strong personality might be able to get away with describing the lenses of the goggles as being made of "A type of glass used in X-ray practice, and consequently photographically 'safe' to all rays of light." If this is done, the goggles must be given out for inspection and trial, to prove his words.

Both in the case of goggles and the more usual type of blindfold it might be good to mention infra-red rays and infra-red photographic methods, which can function in total darkness. At least, there wouldn't be many in the audience who would be able to correct the performer by telling him that infra-red rays were better known as heat rays and could convey nothing visible to the human eye. If the "infra-red" patter is used, it should be read up first in a photographic or scientific book. Nothing sounds worse than a man talking about something he obviously knows nothing about.

Sealed Vision The X-Ray Eye Act

Because of the possibility of reminding the audience-many of them have played blind man's buff, as children, remember-that a peep down the nose is possible, a plain blindfold should never be followed by a more elaborate one in the same performance. And conversely, having used a more elaborate blindfold, the performer should never abandon it for a simpler one during the show. If he can see through one, he can see through the other, the audience will argue, so why should he change in mid-programme? He really can see through one of them, the crafty beasts will rejoice. For a magician to vary his methods too much in one programme is as good a way as any of putting the audience on the track of one at least of his secrets.

At all times when he is not needing to see, the performer should keep his eyes closed, and even when he does need to see, and has occasion to walk about, he should do so hesitantly, as though he could not see. Sometimes, something may happen within his range of vision, which will cause him to alter his plans. An assistant might unwittingly move a chair, for instance. In this case, the performer should not appear to know that the chair had been moved.

Section Four PUBLICITY AND PROGRAMME IDEAS

THE PURPOSE of this book is not so much to describe a number of tricks that can be performed while blindfolded, as to outline the method of seeing so that tricks can be presented. For that reason I do not propose to describe in detail the effects that follow. I have appended a list of suggested effects that seem to me to lend themselves well to a blindfold act, and have quoted the sources where these can be found.

The books quoted are in the possession of the majority of magicians, so that the performer can easily look them up.

THE BLINDFOLD DRIVE

Very little seems to have been written on the Blindfold Drive, so I give a few hints that I have found useful. Some police forces will not allow a blindfold drive on the roads in their area-I believe the (London) Metropolitan Police Force is one that forbids it. So the performer should make sure of this before he starts to break the law. It may be found that it is permissible to do the drive on private ground, such as at a garden party.

The car to be driven, if not the performer's own should be carefully checked over and driven beforehand, to ensure that the performer knows exactly where all the controls are without having to look for them. It's too bad if the ignition key is situated in a different position than the performer is used to. If it is, then it just means looking for it, and the minute the magician bends his head and peers about the dark interior of the car, an interested whisper will go round among the onlookers. Traffic lights: I should avoid at all costs a route involving traffic lights. If the car stops at a red light, it may attract undue curiosity-not to mention becoming a hard to, pedestrians. It is likely that onlookers will step into the roadway to get a closer look at the man who is driving a car with his head in a large bag, and that's not so good for road safety.

It is very comforting for the magician if he has sitting beside him in the front seat a confederate who is in on the secret. Something may go wrong with the blindfold, and the confederate can always guide the driver slowly to the kerb by whispering instructions to him. It goes without saying that the reader must be thoroughly proficient and competent in his abilities before attempting a stunt of this nature. He or she must also be aware of the potential legal implications and liability involved. For this reason, the Blindfold Cycle Ride has gained increasingly in popularity in recent years.

THE BLINDFOLD CYCLE RIDE

If a blindfold drive is out of the question, a blindfold cycle ride is quite effective.

Whether a car drive or a bicycle ride is attempted though, the means of accomplishing it have been outlined in the earlier chapters of this book. I personally prefer the improved bag for this effect, as, to the onlookers, it is quite impossible for the performer to see, and they themselves cannot even see his face—a strong psychological point, this last.

THE LETTER DELIVERY

The introduction of a little further mystery to the drive is permissible, such as the delivery of a letter, addressed and sealed up in an envelope, to the correct addressee. Several methods of reading the address on the inner envelope are available: carbon impression, switching the inner envelope (a confederate is useful here to switch it back when inside the car), alcohol rub, or simply a non-sealing faked envelope. Any mentalist would be able to think of half a dozen methods straight away.

A SUGGESTED STAGE PROGRAMME

If I were planning a new programme for a blindfold routine, I think I should choose something like this: I should first speak to the audience very briefly about the impossibility of seeing without the eyes, and about the almost unexplored possibility of yet sensing what was going on. Then I would have my blindfold examined and tested and placed over my eyes. The audience are going to listen much more attentively now to what I have to say because they don't know when the mystery is going to start.

I should then point out that when a child first learns to use its various senses, the first thing it learns to recognise is colour. (This may be quite wrong from the child psychologist's point of view, but I would risk it.)

Then would come an effect involving the recognition and matching of colours. It would be doing the thing too badly to hold up a ribbon and announce: "Look! This is a red ribbon and I can tell even without seeing it!" Instead, there should be two sets of ribbons of say, seven or eight colours, and one set should be given to an assistant from the audience. He is invited to choose one ribbon and hold it up. I would then select the corresponding ribbon and hold it up. And so on.

Remember, here, that if the ribbons are long enough to reach the ground, a downward glimpse would be possible if the assistant were standing no further away than the range of the downward glimpse.

A bit of showmanship might be to confuse red with green every time, right throughout the programme or perhaps not every time, but nearly always. It could be explained that the wavelengths of red and green are so similar that confusion is often caused by them even among people who use their eyes. Here there will be learned whispers about colour blindness. The confusion is convincing, paradoxical though it may seem. So long as all the other colours are given correctly, the red-green mix-up will appear logical enough.

If coloured silks are used, please don't refer to them as "silks." Only conjurers and textile merchants use the term, anyway. They are either handkerchiefs, scarves, or squares of material for your purpose.

Having proved that I could match colours, I would then point out that the next thing a child learns to distinguish is simple shapes. So I would have one or two drawn on one of my blackboards. (I use two blackboards, so that one can be used by the audience and one by myself.) I would match the shapes on my blackboard, sometimes purposely drawing my shapes less accurately. The audience will note the slight difference between my diagram

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and the test one, but it will take them a few seconds perhaps. Then they will comment on it, but still, I shouldn't have done so badly, drawing a nine-sided figure with a line through it, instead of a nine-sided figure with two lines through it! Better than they could do, anyway.

Then I would go on to short words on the blackboard. After that, a word or two from a book or newspaper, held ten feet away. The watch effect would fit in well about here, too.

As a finale I might do a sum test or something that's a little difficult even for those in the audience who can see plainly. I wouldn't include a card trick, unless it were a straightforward card reading from a shuffled (?) pack, with the cards perhaps held up at the other end of the hall.

Or the last item might be Annemann's "Pseudo Psychometry" or the needle threading - there are a hundred and one simple effects on which to close.

The whole programme is simple-it would be too simple to perform for magicians, but not for the ordinary audience. It should be sufficient for them that the performer can do ordinary things that they can do-but he's blindfolded and can't see what he's doing. They will try it for themselves when they get home, and that will mean that they have believed in what they've seen. But would they believe in a blindfold act with the rising cards, the egg bag, and the bird cage thrown in? I don't think so. As conjuring, perhaps, but not as something they could understand but which yet baffled them.

If a laugh can be introduced, introduce it, but don't play it up for too long. Apart from that, be serious, and be confident. Sustained comedy and blindfold magic just don't go together.

The programme should be a short one, with two or three real high spots in it. If I were playing in a place where there was a dartboard, I would play a game of darts-a short one-blindfolded. A direct vision blindfold would be needed, of course, but it would be baffling, even if I lost the game. If I worked the blindfold act regularly, I would arrange to travel my own dartboard, and make it one of the big items of the show. Oddly enough I play better darts when blindfolded. But perhaps it's not so odd. People have said that it would be impossible to play worse darts than I do at any time.

It might be possible to introduce a short billet-reading item into the act, but it would be asking too much to ask the audience to believe that you could read the billets through the envelope. Some of them are going to remember having seen the Great Gizmo or somebody do that in a conjuring act.

And while you are undoubtedly giving a conjuring act, most of the audience will set it aside as being different from conjuring as they've seen it before. They will be a little doubtful as to whether it really could be conjuring. To prove that, just ask a few intelligent people who have seen a good blindfold act.

I really believe that if they were told it was all a trick which could be learned from a book and some hours of practice, they would be bitterly disappointed.

Conjurors will disagree with much of this argument, but after all, it isn't the conjurers who are going to pay your fee. I hope my views on this evergreen problem won't write me down as heretical in the date books of all my magician friends, who are one and all far more skilled than I can ever hope to be in the matter of the invisible pass, the merry jest in the patter, and the securing of all those double fees and return dates from the local Women's Institute and the Rat and Sparrow Club.

APPENDIX

WITH one or two exceptions (such as the needle threading) blindfold effects depend upon accepted principles of mental magic. Many tricks and effects can be found among collections of mental effects, therefore, which can be adapted or changed to suit a blindfold routine. These effects, in some cases, are suitable for putting into a blindfold routine exactly as they are; others require some adaptation. I have not included many card effects, as such items are far too numerous to detail. I give below a number of items as examples, chosen from Practical Mental Effects, which is available in both hardcover and paperback editions.

There are, of course, many other sources of excellent effects for a blindfold programme: Greater Magic, Peter Warlock's monthly periodical, Pentagram, Bruce Elliot's Phoenix magazine, Jean Hugard's Magic Monthly, Lloyd Jones's Bat, and many books of collected effects, besides all the periodicals devoted less to mental effects than to varied conjuring items. My list does not pretend to be anything like complete; it is simply a number of suggested items that can be found on almost any magician's bookshelf. Stock effects are also put out by dealers from time to time, either specially designed for blindfold performance, or possible of adaptation.

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Mental Hatpin, Dr. Jaks (Billet force).....	26
Mind-reading Publicity Effect, Annemann (Stolen centre)	37
Impression Modem, Annemann (Wax impression)	42
Dead or Alive, Annemann (Living and dead test)	54
Dice and a Book, Annemann (Book test)	71
Jaipur Jinee, Eddie Clever (Book test)	82
Travel Thought, Hen. Fetsch (Map reading)	118
Number Thought, Dr. E. G. Ervin (Mathematical).....	122
Calendar Conjuring, Tom Sellers (Mathematical)	133
Date Sense, Walter B. Gibson (Mathematical)	135
Pseudo Psychometry, Annemann (Identification of objects)	150
Extra-Sensory Perception, Annemann (Duplication of designs).....	177
Thought Rays, L. E. Duncanson (Slate effect)	222
Controlled Currency, Annemann (Reading number on bank note).....	235
Duplex Date Reading, C. T. Jordan (Reading date on coin).....	245
Par-optic Vision, Annemann (Cards)	249
New Sheet Reading, Annemann-Hull (Two persons routine).....	251
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In the Mind, Hen. Fetsch (Cards and genuine blindfold).....	254
With Sight Unseen, L. E. Duncanson (Concealed mirror).....	258

