

THE INDIAN BOX TRICK.

AN EXPOSE OF THE MOST MARVELLOUS OF CONJUROR'S ILLUSIONS.

It may seem an ungracious task to dissect the thrilling illusions of necromancy, and there is certainly nothing more disagreeable in attending an exhibition of the marvels of magic than to have a conceited neighbor who airs his theory of every performance as it is exhibited, and is generally as ignorant of magic as of manners. The world is so painfully real that one likes to enjoy the clever tricks of the conjurers, and does not care to be disillusionized as he witnesses them; but there is, nevertheless, no small amount of curiosity to know the modus operandi of some of the more famous tricks, and this curiosity in regard to the Indian box trick it is the purpose of this article to gratify.

The Indian box trick has recently been introduced in this city by a very clever conjurer, and it has been very successfully performed and very extensively advertised. Among the advertisements that it has received is a statement to the effect that the prince of showmen, Mr. P. T. Barnum, has paid \$2,500 for the secret of its performance. Whether this be true or not, the writer has no means of knowing; but if any rival show desires to have the secret for a much smaller consideration they may possess themselves of it for the price of this number of THE DAILY GRAPHIC.

The trick as it is now performed by prestidigitators is as follows: A common unpainted deal box is first brought upon the stage and subjected to the careful inspection of a committee of three gentlemen from the audience. It is thirty four inches long, seventeen inches wide, and eighteen inches high. It is bound with iron at each of the perpendicular edges, and it has a plain lid fastened on with common hinges and secured by two ordinary hasps and padlocks. The box is exhibited open and the committee-men are soon satisfied that it has no false bottom and that it is simply what it purports to be. At the request of the performer the committee then secure the lid by means of the hasps and padlocks and tie a stout rope around the box, sealing the ends of the rope with sealing-wax and impressing some private seal upon it. A canvas covering is next produced, which is in the shape of a Roman cross, the strip representing the upright beam of the cross being seventy inches long and thirty-four inches wide, and the two arms or flaps being each seventeen by eighteen inches in size. This canvas, it will be seen, is just large enough to wrap completely around the box and cover every portion of it, and it is provided with a strip of wood across each of its four ends, which are attached apparently to make it fit more tightly. The canvas is wrapped around the box, with one of the flaps hanging down over each end and kept in position by the weight of its strip of wood. It is worth noticing at this stage of the proceeding that the flap which thus covers the end of the box is not connected at the corners of the box with the rest of the canvas, but hangs loosely, being supported only at the top. After the canvas is thus placed in position, another rope is tied around the sides of the box and once across its ends, just as any oblong parcel is usually tied up. The ends of this rope are also sealed by the committee, and the box, thus trebly secured, appears impenetrable to any object larger than a flea.

The conjurer's assistant, a small young man, then steps upon the stage and divests himself of his coat, vest, and shoes, and encases his feet in a pair of soft slippers. A large muslin sack of ordinary make is handed to the committee, thoroughly examined and found to be absolutely without any deception whatever. It is large enough to envelope the assistant easily, and it is thrown over his head and pulled down to the stage, completely covering him. The assistant, thus enveloped, lies down upon the top of the box, and the operator, gathering up the end of the bag beyond his feet, ties a handkerchief around it and then directs the committee to tie a ribbon around the extreme end of the bag, and seal it as the ropes were sealed before.

This completes the preparations and the assistant is left tied up and sealed in a bag, and lying on the top of a box secured with two padlocks, two ropes, and a canvas wrapper. A screen is placed around the whole, concealing it from the audience, and the assistant is left to his own devices to work his way out of the bag and into the box. In less than two minutes three raps are heard to proceed from the box, the screen is removed, and the astonished audience beholds an empty bag lying on top of the box and hears the assistant rapping upon the inside of the box. The committee, men suspiciously examine the bag and find it still tied with the handkerchief and secured with the ribbon and their own seal. They next turn to the box and find it intact with canvas, ropes, padlocks, and seals, just as they fastened it. They break the seals, unwind the rope, remove the canvas, and unfasten the padlocks, and then, like a Jack-in-the-box, the assistant pops out from the box amid the tumultuous applause of the audience.

To explain the modus operandi of this wonderful trick, it will be necessary to show first how the assistant gets out of the bag. The fact is that he never gets into the bag which is left on the top of the box. When he comes on the stage he has a second bag, an exact duplicate of the one shown to the audience, folded compactly and concealed in his loose pantaloons, so that its mouth comes down to within an inch of the bottom of one leg of the garment. When he is lying upon the box the operator skillfully reaches inside of the mouth of the visible bag under the pretence of pushing the assistant's feet further up, seizes the end of the concealed bag and pulls it out a few inches beyond the mouth of the

outside one. He then wraps the handkerchief around the place where the mouth of the outside bag touches the surreptitious one, and this completely conceals the fraud, leaving it to appear that there is but one bag gathered up towards the end by the handkerchief. Thus the end which is given to the committee to tie up and seal is only the end of the inner bag, and the outer one is only secured loosely by means of the handkerchief. The assistant is thus enabled by merely stretching himself out to free the ends of the outer bag from the handkerchief, and he pulls out the duplicate from his pantaloons, leaves it lying on the box, and conceals the other one, in its turn, within his pantaloons.

The assistant is thus left free to attack the box, and he effects his entrance therein by means of a trap in one end of the box, which is so cunningly devised as to defy the keenest scrutiny of the committee. The board composing one end of the box is

hung on pivots at the top, and fits so securely in its place that any ordinary thumping that a committee-man is likely to give it will fall to loosen it. The pivots are concealed by the sheet-iron bands at the edges of the box, and these bands have simulated nails, of which the heads are visible on the outside, and the clinched ends are seen inside of the box. These nails, however, are all heads and points, and of course do not penetrate the wood of the trap-door, but they do give an appearance of strength and security that goes far to aid the deception. It will be seen that

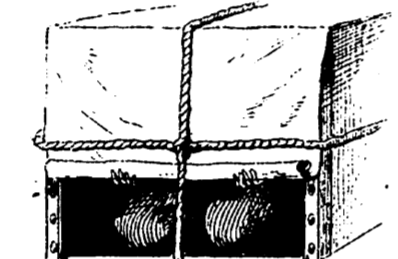


MR. RALPH KEELER. [THE MURDERED "TRIBUNE" CORRESPONDENT IN CUBA.] [From a Photograph by Holton & Co.]



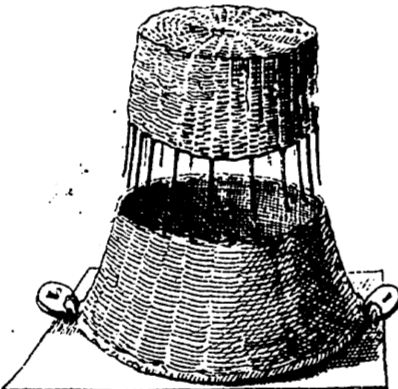
THOMAS COMAN. [RING COURT HOUSE COMMISSIONER.] [From a Photograph by E. W. Bogardus, Broadway and Franklin street.]

this trap-door in the end of the box gives the assistant an aperture seventeen inches wide and eighteen inches high through which to creep into the box, and a slight explanation will show that the canvas and ropes with which the end of the box is secured do not furnish so much of an obstacle to his entrance as at first would appear. The ropes are generally so passed around the box that they both stretch down across the middle of the end of the box. This would leave a space on each side of the rope about eighteen inches high and eight and a half inches wide, but the ropes will give a little and the assistant can easily increase the width of this space to ten, twelve, or even fourteen or fifteen inches. The trap being open and the ropes pushed as far to one side as possible, the assistant has only to raise the canvas in order to enter. This he can easily do by rolling the flap up on its



wooden strip, and he then insinuates himself, feet first, into the box. Then he has only to shut himself up by unrolling the canvas, replacing the ropes, and pressing the trap-door back to its place, which he accomplishes by bracing himself against the other end of the box, and he is ready to amuse himself and astound the audience by beating his little tattoo upon the inside of his box and to wait to be untied and unlocked and unfolded by the puzzled committee-men.

A variation of this trick is performed with a basket instead of a bag, and the basket is ostentatiously



displayed in the street during the day time to show that it is sound and whole. This, however, is a more transparent and far less ingenious device than the performance with the bag, and the trick consists merely in substituting the whole basket for one out in two like a truncated cone, and having its willow ribs so neatly interwoven as to conceal the cutting from the audience. This cannot be exhibited so confidently to the committee as the muslin bag. This method of performing the trick is coming into favor, although some showmen still stick to the sack and earn glory and dollars illimitable from the admiring and puzzled public.

Health is the First of Blessings, but if it is abused or neglected a reckoning day will come. Live sensibly and moderately, and at the first symptoms of dyspepsia, disorders of the skin, kidneys, liver, or bowels, use promptly Dr. Walker's California Viagara Bitters.

American Central Ins. Co. of St. Louis. CAPITAL & ASSETS \$560,000. INVESTED IN UNITED STATES & ST. LOUIS COUNTY BONDS.

MONROSE & MULVILLE. AGENTS & ATTORNEYS, 38 FINE ST.

W. W. COLLENDER. MANUFACTURER OF PHENOLIC. Standard American Billiard Tables. OFFICE & WAREHOUSES, 738 BROADWAY.

MUSIC BOOKS FOR THE HOLIDAYS. BOOSEY & CO., 39 EAST FOURTEENTH STREET. National Songs of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales in cloth, gilt, \$2 each, and other handsome books suitable for Presents. SEND FOR CATALOGUE.

MAGIC LANTERNS. M'ALLISTER'S PATENT ARTOPTICON. The most powerful Magic Lantern ever made, with brilliant Oil Lamp; for Home, Sunday-school, and Lectures. Stereoscopes, &c. Slides at reduced prices. A profitable business for a man with small capital. Send stamp for Catalogue. W. MITCHELL M'ALLISTER, 1814 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia.



THE COMING RACE. While Mesdames Wilkins and Perkins are discussing grave School-Board matters and Parliamentary business, their respective Husbands are engaged on a topic more genial to their softer natures and weaker intellects. "Isn't she a darling pet, Fred! And just fancy—two front teeth, and only four months last Tuesday week!" "Well, I never! Why, my darling icicle Totty hasn't cut a single tooth and he's six months to-morrow! How do you feed her, Tom?"

MATCH IT! FISHER'S PARAGON GOLD QUILL PEN. 102 FULTON STREET. A PERFECT SUBSTITUTE FOR THE QUILL.

RIFLE AIR PISTOL. Requires no pumping. A fine Parlor Amusement, and profitable in saloons. Shoots darts accurately 40 ft. Price, complete, \$2, sent by express C. O. D. Address WARD B. Sayre, 60 Nassau St. Call and examine my assortment of Holiday Goods, Skates, &c., or send stamp for illustrated price list.

BLOOD'S PATENT NEEDLE CASKETS. PATENT LOCK ATTACHMENT. Morocco & Gold. Will not Tear. Front view with Trade Mark. Back view with Patent Lock Attachment. CASKET OPEN. BEWARE OF ALL SPURIOUS IMITATIONS. Sold by the principal Jobbers, Retailers, and News Agents throughout the U. S. O. HOWARD BLOOD, Sole Importer, Proprietor and Patentee. Office and Agency, 32 and 34 Worth Street.

MOLLER'S PUREST NORWEGIAN COD-LIVER OIL. His Majesty Charles XV. the King of Sweden and Norway, knighted Peter Moller, and conferred upon him the order of Vasa and St. Olaf, for producing his Cod-Liver Oil of such purity and delicacy. It gained the first prizes at the great exhibitions of London, Paris, Bergen, Stockholm, and this year at Vienna, heading fifty-six competitors.

The late Physician to the North London Consumption Hospital, ANTHONY SMITH M. D., M. R. C. P., affirms that Moller's Oil is more readily retained by delicate persons, and more efficacious than any other. Dr. L. A. SAYRE, New York, says: "Of late years it has become almost impossible to get any Cod-Liver Oil that patients can digest, owing to the objectionable mode of procuring and preparing the livers." Moller, of Christiania, Norway, prepares an oil which is perfectly pure, and, in every respect, all that can be wished."—Dr. L. A. Sayre, before Academy of Medicine. See MEDICAL RECORD, December, 1868, p. 447. Dr. J. MARSHALL SIMS says: "For some years I have given up the use of Cod-Liver Oil altogether; but since my attention was called by Dr. Sayre to Moller's Oil, I have prescribed it almost daily, and have every reason to be perfectly satisfied with it."—BOLD BY DRUGGISTS.

W. H. SCHIEFFELIN & CO., SOLE AGENTS FOR THE UNITED STATES AND CANADAS. 170 and 172 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

DUNDAS DICK & CO'S IMPROVED CAPSULES.

THE FORT WAYNE GAZETTE. The only Morning Paper in Northern Indiana. The SIXTY trains that daily arrive and depart on the SIX lines of Railway that centre in Fort Wayne afford facilities for the very thorough circulation that the DAILY GAZETTE has, reaching as it does all points within a radius of 100 MILES EAST, WEST, NORTH, AND SOUTH. It is therefore a valuable ADVERTISING MEDIUM. For rates, address GAZETTE PRINTING CO., FORT WAYNE, Ind.

KNABE Grand, Square, and Upright Pianos. NEW YORK HOUSE, No. 112 FIFTH AVENUE. WM. KNABE & CO., New York and Baltimore. THE FIRST PRIZE MEDAL at the Vienna Exhibition, awarded to the Pianos of the Knabe Co. (Hammoudsport) for the best speaking viols. H. B. KIRK & CO., Depot 60 Fulton street.