

food. In many cases they would find it an advantage to drink as much as they required an hour before meals, but to avoid drinking when they are eating. A tumblerful of hot water taken as a "nightcap" will be of great value to them.

One word of caution needs to be said to individuals who intend to attempt to lessen or increase their weight and size by living upon certain foods and avoiding other foods. Great discretion needs to be exercised when making experiments of this sort, or health may be weakened, and the remedy may be worse than the disease. A physician of experience who was consulted on this subject not long ago expressed the following opinion. "Without a doubt it is possible under normal conditions to increase or reduce weight by dieting, although it is much easier to make stout people thin than it is to make thin people stout.

But it is always wise to avoid sudden changes. Thus potatoes and sweets are the chief causes of corpulence. But individuals who are corpulent generally eat liberally of both, and not only would they find it a great trial to give these foods up entirely, but they would not be so well without them. In attempting to lessen stoutness, therefore, it is best not to make a sudden change of any sort, but to be more moderate in all things. The food which goes to make fat is the food which is not required to sustain the system, and if we all took only as much food as we required we should be less likely to increase in size. This moderation being secured, it would be more beneficial to take a little of all sorts of food than it would be to live entirely on one sort, and to discard other varieties altogether."

(To be continued.)

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## MY CONJURING TRICKS.



something peculiarly fascinating about conjuring, especially to youthful minds. To see a man dressed in ordinary evening costume, with apparently no possibility of his being able to conceal anything on his person without detection, produce, one after the other, the most impossible and extraordinary articles with the greatest ease and *nonchalance*, always aroused in me the deepest interest and curiosity. I determined to find out

"how it was done." With this view I set to work to find a high-class and respectable performer who would give me lessons at a reasonable rate. I at last discovered one who for a fee of five guineas undertook to teach me sufficient tricks to entertain an audience for an hour. Either my professor was such a clever teacher, or I was such an apt pupil, that I actually attained to this, the pinnacle of my ambition. I won't say that no *contretemps* ever occurred, but as I always confined my performance to an audience of children, any little mishaps were, as a rule, easily explained away. Sometimes, however, things *would* go wrong, and it certainly was rather distressing when you asked the crowd of little upturned faces in front of you whether any of them had an egg about them, as you rather wanted one to make an omelette with in the clergyman's hat, if one of them, with eyes more observant than the others, asked "Why for didn't you use the one you had in your hand then?"

Let us draw a veil over such painful scenes and proceed with our history.

On one occasion I was asked whether I would perform a few tricks in a drawing-room after dinner before an audience of "grown-ups." Whether it was because it was "after dinner," or not, I do not know, but at any rate in a weak moment I consented. To that moment's hesitation I date all my subsequent misfortunes. Had I had strength of mind to resist, the occasion would never have arisen, and this story would never have been written. I performed one or two simple tricks, and I think may fairly say with neatness and dexterity. The ladies were astonished! They could not understand how their frizzled heads contained numerous coins, how the air was full of them, and how easily eggs could be laid without the necessity of hens being present. Apparently this simple system of egg-production would do away with the nuisance of fowl-keeping in London: no more annoying of your next-door neighbour, no more rousing up of yourself unduly early, by chanticleer proclaiming proudly the dawn of day. A new era was to be inaugurated—a happier state of things was to be introduced—when new-laid eggs were quietly and unobtrusively to lay themselves on every well-ordered breakfast table. Possibly, too, the system might be further extended, till at length the object of ambition of some of our more advanced politicians and fiscal reformers might be attained. Just a wave of the hand on entering the breakfast chamber, and, lo! a free breakfast table! But you must know how to do it. When you have once mastered the secret, it is quite easy. Filled with these inspiring thoughts, an eminent politician who was present advanced towards me and thus addressed me—

"I had no idea you were such an excellent conjurer. I think now that I can do you a good turn."

I smile loftily.





"HE CONDUCTED US TO TWO LARGE FARM CARTS."

Eminent politician continues: "I happen to live in the same village as a butcher."

"Really!" I say. "How very extraordinary!"

Eminent politician, undismayed: "You know that the Maharajah Dhulah Singh lived near here? If you don't you ought to. Well, when all his things were sold up, he had a most extraordinary collection of conjuring appliances, which were bought for a mere song by my butcher. He doesn't know what to do with them, and I think they might be useful to you."

I express my obligation to the E. P., and promise to go and have a look at them.

This I accordingly did the next morning. The butcher was out, but his good lady obligingly showed me the tricks. There were two large boxes full of the most extraordinary looking articles of every kind and sort. In addition, I was told, there were many more stowed away up above. Before I left I arranged that the things were to be sent into Bury market for my inspection at an early date. Accordingly, on the day mentioned, I attended at the market, accompanied by the member for the borough, and waited on the conjuring butcher. After a brief discussion on meat and an exhibition of sucking-pigs, he conducted us to two large farm carts standing in the market place. They were covered with tarpaulins, and those tarpaulins covered the much-coveted tricks. After a little haggling, I became the proud and happy owner of two waggon-loads of tricks for three golden sovereigns.

My next difficulty was to get them up to London. The butcher, however, proved capable of overcoming all obstacles. Regardless of cost (as I had to pay for them), he purchased crates and packing cases, and packed everything up in meat cloths. I then

went up to London, feeling that either I had done a very good thing or a very bad one—I couldn't quite make out which. I pictured myself being requisitioned everywhere in London. No party would be complete without me. What a sensation I should make! What marvels and mysteries I should accomplish! And then a sort of shudder came across me as I thought with dismay of the train of growlers that would be required to carry two waggon-loads of conjuring tricks to the scene of the performance. Would it be cheaper to take a season ticket for a delivery van? And then I thought of my wife's face when I told her that two waggon-loads of mirth-provoking mysteries were coming to stay with her? Were they likely to provoke her mirth? I felt a little uncertain. And then there was the housekeeper! She would think I had gone mad. And the footman, when he opened the front door to two waggon-loads of conjuring wonders and had—Heaven knows what—to pay for their carriage! By the time we had got to Cambridge I felt decidedly uncomfortable, and before I arrived

home I felt I had made an abject fool of myself. However, I put the best face on the matter, and gently broke to my wife that I had bought a few—just a few—small conjuring tricks. Oh, no! there was no need for any anxiety, not at all; and there were no animals among them—nothing objectionable at all.

A day or two passed, and I heard nothing of my tricks, and I really began to think that it was all a horrible dream. But I was soon to be rudely awakened from this idea. I was sauntering down to luncheon one morning, and in turning the corner into my street became suddenly conscious that something unusual had happened. As I approached, it seemed to be my house that was the centre of attraction. Was it—could it be a fire? No, not enough excitement for that. The policeman and messenger were talking and laughing together as I passed, looking hugely amused at something, and as if I were partly connected with that something. There were of course several stray street boys loafing about, and an enormous covered cart on the other side of the street, with a tired looking horse with his head in his nose-bag. As I took out my latchkey I noticed an unusual litter on the doorsteps, and as I opened the door a most unusual and extraordinary odour assailed my nostrils. It was a happy blending of rats and mice and mouldy straw and damp meat cloths. They had come—they had arrived, with seventeen and something to pay. They filled up the passage, they blocked up the hall, they were half-way up the staircase on both sides, they had invaded my study and overflowed into the dining-room. Never shall I forget that scene! They were certainly high and not clean. At the top of the steps stood my wife, waiting to receive me, shall I say smiling a welcome? She



was evidently wanting me, evidently glad to see me.

I fear that luncheon was not a pleasant meal. I felt somehow moody and depressed. But after luncheon I was a man of action. I summoned the footman, and ordered him immediately to open all the windows, and then to collect all the meat cloths as quickly as possible, put them in a bundle, and return them to their owner, whose nose must have been sadly missing them. Then, with our coats off, and soap and water and austers, we set to work to clean the tricks and stow them away. The house was literally inundated with them. After some hours' labour we got them fairly clean and stowed away in different places.

The next thing was evidently to get an expert's opinion of them. I could make neither head nor tail of them myself, and till I could do so it was evident they were useless to me. Accordingly I sent off to my late instructor, requesting him to inspect and report on them. For various reasons it was some days before he could come, so meanwhile, if anyone came to luncheon or called, we always conducted them upstairs to the home of mystery. At length the great man arrived. With inward trepidation I followed him upstairs and awaited his verdict. He rapidly cast his eye over them and grunted. He was evidently pleased with them. I had really got hold of a good thing this time.

"Well, Professor?" I said, cheerfully.

His summing-up was brief and to the point: "They're no use to you, sir; they're only fit for a travelling platform conjurer."

I grew pale and faltered, but only for a moment. Then I drew myself up and said firmly, "Professor, you will oblige me by making arrangements for the instant removal of these accursed tricks."

Forthwith the professor, who was a very worthy man, stepped downstairs with me and agreed to take them off my hands at once. In addition he was to pay £4 for them, give me as many lessons as I wanted, and make me a special conjuring table. Well, I thought, I haven't made such a very bad bargain after all.

I thought our interview was over, but the professor seemed in no hurry to go. At last he cleared his throat, and thus delivered himself—"About the money, sir?"

"Oh, there's no hurry about that," I said. "Whenever convenient to you."

"Thank you, sir," he said heartily, and seemed relieved.

The next morning an enormous waggon arrived with two strong men. The policeman and messenger got together again, the urchins congregated on the doorstep, deriding the strong men as they carried unearthly looking objects out of the front door. I seized a convenient opportunity and

slunk out. When I returned, they had all gone, thank Heaven! The street had resumed its normal aspect. They had gone, and all would be well again. Ah, little did I know what was in store for me!

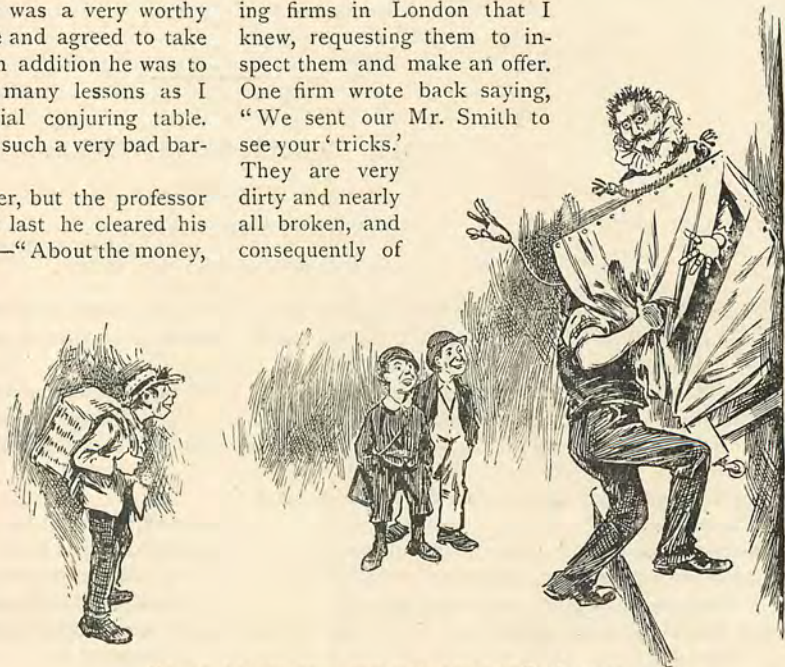
The days flew on; weeks passed and months passed; the old year had gone and the new one came, and no news of my tricks. At length I thought that really some considerable time had elapsed, and my professor might fairly be asked to perform *his* share of the bargain.

And now comes the melancholy part of my tale. I wrote to the good man, and said I did not want to press him, but supposed he recollected the terms of the compact. Days passed by, and no answer arrived. At last came a letter to say that my poor professor had fallen a victim to the influenza. I was sincerely sorry, for he wasn't a bad fellow at all, and I have pleasure in paying this tribute to his memory. But then followed words which sent a cold shudder right through me. The letter went on:—

"My poor brother has died very badly off. His widow is totally unable to carry out any arrangement with regard to the tricks. Therefore she begs you to *send for them at once*, as meanwhile she is paying rent for the warehouse in which they are. She further asks me to say she would be much obliged for £1 rcs. for expenses in connection with them."

This was awful! The prospect of having those horrible things in my possession was more than I could face. I wrote off instantly to say, "Get rid of them, but I cannot possibly take them back." The professor's brother declined to try and get rid of them, and said, "I must take them back." I positively declined to take them back, and said the brother or widow must get rid of them.

I wrote to all the conjuring firms in London that I knew, requesting them to inspect them and make an offer. One firm wrote back saying, "We sent our Mr. Smith to see your 'tricks.' They are very dirty and nearly all broken, and consequently of



"THEY HAD COME—THEY HAD ARRIVED" (p. 204).





"A DUSTMAN CAME AND ASKED FOR A DONATION."

no use to us." In desperation I wrote one final letter, and got the following response :—

" 398, BROWN STREET.

"DEAR SIR,—I have instructed for many years members of the Royal Family and nobility. I have zealously practised my profession for about fifty years. On receiving your note yesterday I went to see your tricks. There were a few very dirty broken remnants piled up anyhow in hampers and boxes, inches deep in dirt and dust. The tables were evidently good once. It was sad to see such a sight. The tricks are no use to me, but I will make you an offer of £1 10s. for them. Wire if you accept.

"Yours faithfully,  
" W. SMILER."

I immediately answered this by saying I was confident the things were worth a great deal more, and could not think of letting them go at so much below their value. This was the answer :—

" 398, BROWN STREET.

"SIR,—I will give you £2 10s. for your tricks, and not a penny more. In addition a choice of £1 worth of my beautiful new tricks. Anticipating your acceptance of my offer, I have been to Wardour Street to fetch them away. I met with fearful abuse from the widow. She abused you, too, out in the street. 'How came you ever to go to such a man? I cannot find words to express what I feel about him.' I had to go up a ladder into a roof after the tricks. I wish I'd never touched them. They are a nice dirty lot; my wife says she never saw a dirtier. I have been to a lot of expense over them. This is what they've cost me so far :—

|  | s. d. |
|--|-------|
| To four-wheel cab to Wardour Street and back twice ...                       | 3 0   |
| To poor little boy for bringing pail of water to clean dirty tricks with ... | 0 3   |
| To poor man for bringing tricks down steep staircase ...                     | 3 6   |
| To two men with waggon and horse for removing tricks ...                     | 2 0   |
| To man's valuable time for cleaning dirty tricks ...                         | 8 9   |

I enclose two beautiful new catalogues of newest tricks, post free.

"Yours, etc.,

" W. SMILER."

I smiled considerably on reading this letter, and willingly consented to Mr. Smiler taking the tricks. That night I slept the sleep of the just. I was rid of my bugbear.

My tricks have returned to me no more. I now sleep peacefully at night. The combined odour of damp meat cloths and odorous rats and mice has gone. The street has resumed its wonted quiet, and I have ceased to be an object of wonderment and ridicule to the policeman and the messenger. In fact, I am now so much looked up to that a dustman came and asked for a donation for a beanfeast this morning!

GEORGE MANNERS.

## THE YEAR'S JEWELS.

BY M. C. GILLINGTON.

BLOODSTONE: MARCH.

*Courage in peril and firmness in love.*

☞ MERRY, merry cloud o'er the blue sky scudding,  
While the throstle's song is loud in the almond's  
budding!

In the winter's pale now the red blood reigns,  
The green wood-mosses are sweet with rains,  
And with daffodils a-crowd all the fields are flooding!

O merry, merry wind, through the larch-boughs  
sweeping,

The days are left behind of our woes and weeping!

Come with your carol, and shout and sing  
For uttermost laughter and joy of spring,  
In the hearts of human-kind set the warm blood  
leaping!

O merry, merry bird in the tossed trees singing,  
The echo of your word sets the young leaves swing-  
ing!

In the burgeoned willows the red blood stirs,  
There's a gleam of gold on the dark green furze,  
And all the brooks have heard what the hours are  
bringing!

O merry, merry heart in the morn forth faring,  
So blithesome as thou art, meet for deeds of daring!  
No danger daunts thee, no peril gives pause  
To thee, Knight-errant in Love's own cause,  
On whose clear heights apart hangs a crown for thy  
wearing!