

Shopkeepers' Advertising Novelties.

BY JAMES SCOTT.

IT is a noteworthy fact that shopkeepers, as a general rule, are not so enterprising as is desirable in the matter of attractive display in their windows. The bulk of our shops, it must be

confessed, exhibit a very meagre, untidy appearance to the eye, causing one to ask whether it would not serve as well if the windows were deprived of their exposure to the public. Some few of our tradesmen, comparatively speaking, do, however, possess a keen perception of the power of attraction inherent in novelties when exhibited to the general community. Of their systems of securing this desirable end, I have selected a few notable examples for illustration and explanation.

The strange clock (Fig. 1) has been very popular, though its adoption has not recently been so extensive as was evident a few years ago. Its merits have been discussed by many people who were quite ignorant of the method followed to work it. It records time accurately, and effectively carries out the significance conveyed in its title.

A circular sheet of clear plate-glass is suspended in the window, and is adorned with gilt numerals and divisions in the proper form of a dial. Two enormous hands travel over this peculiar clock, and are calculated to arouse inquisitive and curious people to ask how it is done. Many surmises, relative to the motive force used to drive the hands, were current at the period of its introduction to the public; and these surmises still continue to be broached by people not acquainted with the comparatively simple mechanism of the clock. It was commonly

supposed that electricity was the agent employed to manipulate the hands; but this assumption was wrong. Without being technical and entering into a detailed explanation, I will state that the wheels of an ordinary watch were the medium controlling it.

A well-known journal for workmen, to which I contribute, some months ago gave full details of its construction. The works of a watch are concealed within the central disc to be seen in the drawing, and are connected with the large and apparently heavy hands. The latter are, however, cleverly balanced by means of small compact weights, which are in continuous line with the respective hands, and are of a coincident weight with them.

A very effective display once made by a china and earthenware dealer (Fig. 2), and which served to create an inquisitive crowd,

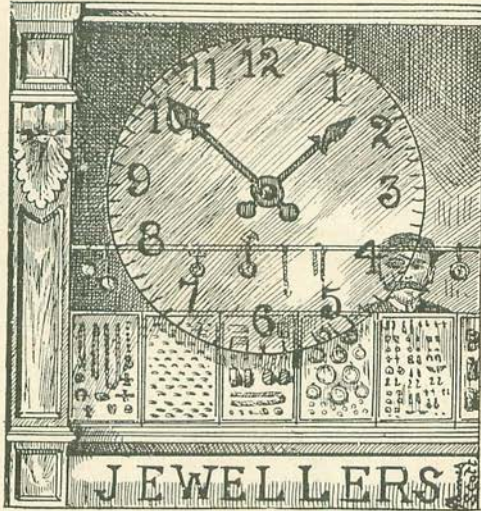


FIG. 1.—A MYSTERIOUS CLOCK.



FIG. 2.—A CHINA-SHOP ADVERTISEMENT.

who, doubtless, remembered his shop when they afterwards required plates, cups, and saucers, consisted of several plates placed one above another, edge to edge, in the pattern of a circle, and had, furthermore, a suspended plate of larger diameter within their radius. To cement them properly in this position would be almost a matter of impossibility, so opinions were hazarded in regard to the connection which upheld them. There they stood, bolt upright, as if challenging, yet defying, detection. I subsequently discovered the method utilized by the ingenious tradesman, who thoroughly deserved the success which was greatly fostered by this uncommon show. Many thought that it was a peculiar instance of unaided equilibrium; but in this they were mistaken—and, indeed, one glance is sufficient to show the impossibility of such an occurrence. The attractiveness of the exhibition was enhanced by the occasional appearance of an assistant, who made matters more puzzling by lifting, simultaneously, the top plate and the larger one suspended from it, without the remainder altering their positions in any way.

Here is the artful man's method: A very strong double wire passed up through the flooring of the shop-window, and travelled behind the plates, in contact with them. In order to prevent the plates from "wobbling" or slipping out of proper line, the wires were formed into loops, flat against the backs of the plates. There they were firmly held by means of staples driven into the plates. The top movable one had a short projection at each side, which fitted into small eyelet holes made in the top points of the wires upholding the remainder of the plates.

A novelty (Fig. 3) was once exhibited in the window belonging to a tradesman occupying a conspicuous shop at the east end of the Strand. A glass shade, with a wooden base, was enlivened by the splashing of a fountain playing into its interior from a source beneath the shelf supporting the article. Three or four coloured balls were inserted within the shade, and they occasioned much merriment among the spectators by their eccentric antics. The jet would carry them with a sudden jerk completely to the top of the shade, whence they would tumble back again for a short distance, only to be again hurled upwards. One might

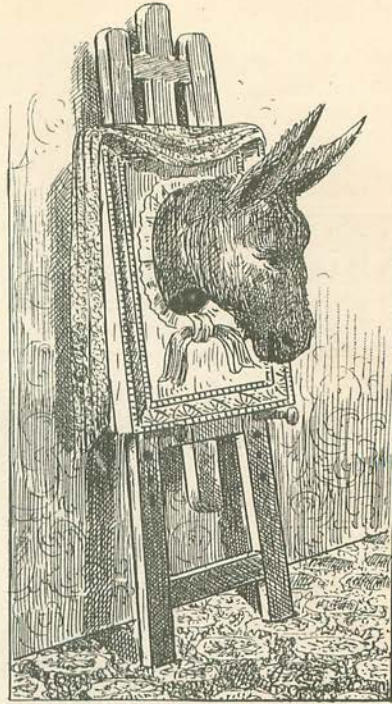


FIG. 4.—A LIVING PICTURE.

be dancing curiously on the crest of the jet; another racing wildly round and round the hole whence the water issued; a third bobbing about at furious speed, careering now and then against its fellows. Altogether, the bewildering confusion engendered within the shade was enough to "draw" a crowd, and leave the shop-keeper's name impressed upon the mind.

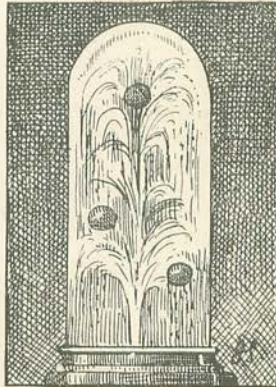


FIG. 3.—THE DANCING BALLS.

A picture (Fig. 4) caused endless fun among the persons residing in the vicinity of the picture-dealer, whose cute foresight enabled him to dispose, by thus attracting people, of a large quantity of framed Christmas-number productions of colour work. Feeling convinced, no doubt, that the proverbial obstinacy of a donkey to proceed in a forward direction was a matter of truth, he evidently harboured no anxiety concerning the possibility of the animal becoming impetuous, and dashing nimbly through his plate-glass window.

By a clever arrangement of drapery and goods for sale, the body of the patient, wondering donkey was concealed from the

grinning gaze of a jubilant crowd, who good-humouredly bantered the proprietor concerning "his excellent portrait" in the window. How the donkey was sufficiently coaxed to induce him to pass his head through the elastic "canvas" is a secret not yet revealed. Perhaps some of the carrots which were frequently provided for his enjoyment whilst undergoing the ordeal of publicity were an important factor towards success.

Whenever I passed, some few years ago, a certain shop-window in the West-end of London, I usually had an additional peep at a large card to which was attached a mummified cat grasping a mummified rat firmly in its jaws (Fig. 5). If I remember rightly,

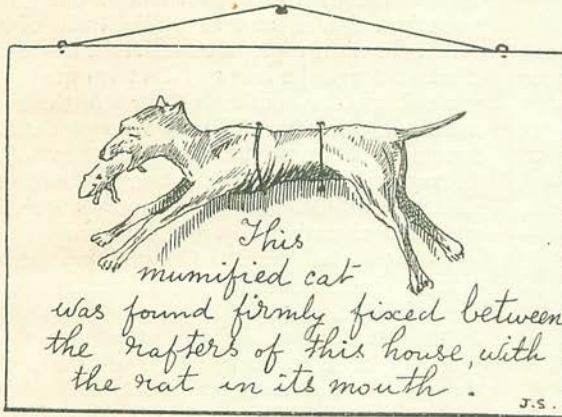


FIG. 5.—A MUMMY.

these animals were discovered, in a preserved, albeit shrunken and dusty, condition, imprisoned between some rafters in the house during repairs. Evidently the unfortunate cat got jammed in its peculiar position accidentally, and being averse to releasing its own prisoner, and thereby being better able to release itself, held it securely until suffocation to both ensued. It was a striking illustration of the powerfulness of determination exercised by even the smaller class of animals.

From inquiries I have made, I am convinced that these particular specimens are not the only ones extant; and I am afraid that many must be manufactured specially for the purpose of exhibition, though I do not insinuate such deceit in connection with the pair to which I have more specifically been referring.

Fig. 6 shows an article which must be ranked among the mystery-arousing section of inventions. A glass cask of whisky, ginger-beer, or tea was displayed in a conspicuous and

handy situation, and customers were invited to help themselves upon making the necessary payment for the commodity required. Although it was easily ascertainable that the contents of the cask were really genuine, and passed through the tap into the glass held beneath it, the elevation of the top of the liquid never varied. Tested either by sight or by measurement, sufficient proof there was that, no matter what quantity was withdrawn, there still remained the original quantity within the cask. Being constructed of glass, a person could see completely through it. It stood at a distance of a few inches from the wall, and was altogether a most interesting and attractive piece of work.

Notwithstanding the apparently insoluble system followed in order to gain this result, the idea was founded upon a well-known law of Nature, viz.: that all liquid will, if allowed, find a common level. If you have two receptacles connected by a pipe, and pour water into one of them, it will run into the other reservoir until the level of the liquid contained in both receptacles is identical. Abstraction from one would mean an equal reduction in both.

In the drawing, A represents the glass cask, which is connected by means of a pipe with a tank placed in another apartment, and hidden from view by a wall. Both tanks are half-full, say, of whisky, which also fills the pipe E. If the cask were an isolated article, and a certain quantity of fluid were extracted from it, the level of the contents would sink to a certain extent. Were the tank B called into requisition, under similar circumstances, the liquid would naturally fall but half the before-mentioned depth in each, as that contained in B would help to replace the stuff withdrawn from A. So, in order to deceive the purchaser as effectively as

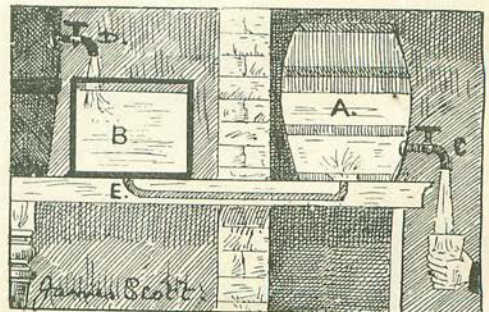


FIG. 6.—A WHISKY PUZZLE.

possible, a confederate kept close watch upon the customers, and as soon as he observed that the tap c was turned, he also turned on tap d. The rate of out-pour being exactly coincident in both cases, the consequence was that as soon as both taps were simultaneously turned off, the amount withdrawn by the purchaser had been replaced at an exact rate corresponding with the abstraction, and therefore no deviation in the height of the fluid contained in A had been manifested.

The mouth of the pipe entering the tank A was concealed by means of a false glass bottom, pierced with a sufficient number of minute holes to allow the proper quantity of liquor to pass from one receptacle to its companion.

A rather grim device was that shown by an enterprising tobacconist (Fig. 7). A skull—whether human or not I could not ascertain

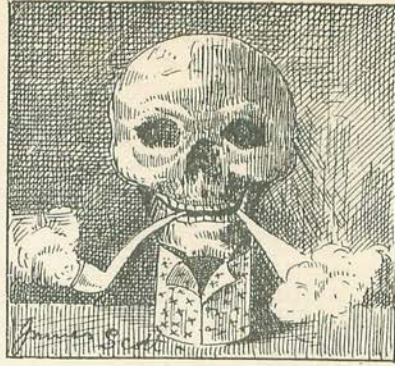


FIG. 7.—A GRIM DEVICE.

The mouthpiece of the latter was connected to an indiarubber tube, through which the artful fellow, concealed from view, smoked contentedly, anon puffing the fragrant fumes through another tube, the outlet of which was in contact with the teeth of the grinning exhibit.

Fig. 8 constituted a pretty and simple, yet attractive, medium for concentrating children around a confectioner's shop-window. It consisted of the blown-out and properly weighted and suspended skin of a snake, chemically prepared to resist any evil effect from a gas-jet below it. Its form was that of a coil, and the continuous result of the hot currents of air beneath it was to revolve it in a steady and almost fascinating manner. As the rays of light sparkled upon its brilliant surface, scintillating colours succeeded each other in a charming way, and gave prolonged delight to the group of mouth-watering juvenile spectators assembled to witness such a promising display.

Other tradesmen, in lieu of adopting so expensive a sight, have taken advantage of cut-out coloured sheets of cardboard. For the information of some enterprising shop-keeper who may wish to try the effect of the imitative method, I may say that, if a large sheet of cardboard be marked as shown by the small sketch accompanying my illustration of the suspended snake, and be then cut along that line, and the cut-out result be hung over a gas-jet or lamp by its tail, in a swivel, all that is needed to be done will have been accomplished.

Genuine and rare specimens of Nature are always capable of arousing public notice and

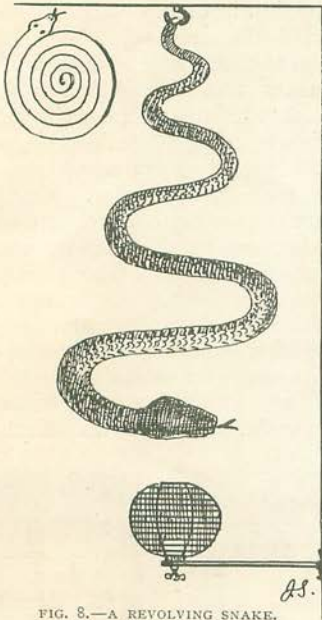
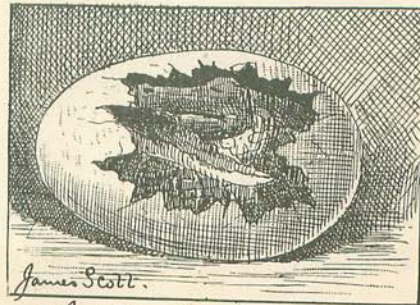


FIG. 8.—A REVOLVING SNAKE.

with absolute certainty—decked in a masher-collar, stood upon a shelf, and puffed at a lighted pipe with a hideously real appearance. The pipe was frequently replenished by a smiling, affable gentleman, who was the genuine cause of keeping the pipe alight.



A Very young, crocodile.

FIG. 9.

comment, which are, when associated with the names of the persons who reveal such information, serviceable means of advertisement. The unhatched crocodile, contained in its broken shell of but a few inches length, is an object which excited the curiosity of the passer-by in a certain street in London a short time back (Fig. 9). To see this class of unwieldy and hideous reptiles in the Zoological Gardens, and to learn that they often attain an enormous size and length; and then to reflect that these self-same products of mysterious and wonderful Nature were hatched from shells smaller in dimensions than those of an ostrich egg, is a fact almost incredible.

The two-headed goose (Fig. 10), shown by a taxidermist, is an example of Nature when she has a disposition to be frivolous and surprising. Swans with two necks must have been plentiful at one period of our history, if we may judge from the large number of taverns called

"The Swan with the Two Necks"; although it must be stated that some authorities aver that "necks" is a corruption of "nicks"—marks for certain purposes.

A well-known caterer for the requirements of the stomach, who has many branches of his business about the town, is wont to attach a pair of convex mirrors (Fig. 11) outside some of his establishments, in order to lure people into his crowded, and sometimes very uncomfortable, shops. Your reflection, as seen in one mirror, is supposed to represent your very lean aspect *before* you have partaken of his very cheap meat puddings. Of course, you should rightly have a very dejected mouth, to accord with your thinness; but, despite this expectation, you are bound to smile. The companion looking-glass is intended to convey your appearance *after* having indulged

in the prominently-flattered luxuries. Concerning in what manner such a transformation is to be so quickly developed, there is no evidence forthcoming which may be accepted as truthful. But if the mirrors *do* exaggerate the facts, they answer their main purpose, and as such may be regarded as serviceable companions to the other novelties described.

An ordinary pyramid of oranges in a fruiterer's window cannot be regarded in any way as a novelty; but a pile—or, rather, an apparent pile—such as that depicted in my illustration (Fig. 12) must be looked upon as somewhat of a curiosity, and has the merit

of newness. It is a matter for surprise, when one considers the vast number of uses to which mirrors may be extended, where illusory effects are desired. Stage wonders are often obtained simply by the judicious arrangement of a number of silvered plates of glass.

The small sectional diagram annexed to the larger illustration

under reference will be clear enough, I think, to convey sufficient enlightenment respecting this novelty. An ordinary pile of oranges is placed within a small box, and a mirror laid almost horizontally in direct contact with the apex of the pyramid. The front of the case is inclosed between the front edge of the mirror and its top; and the whole is then fixed in

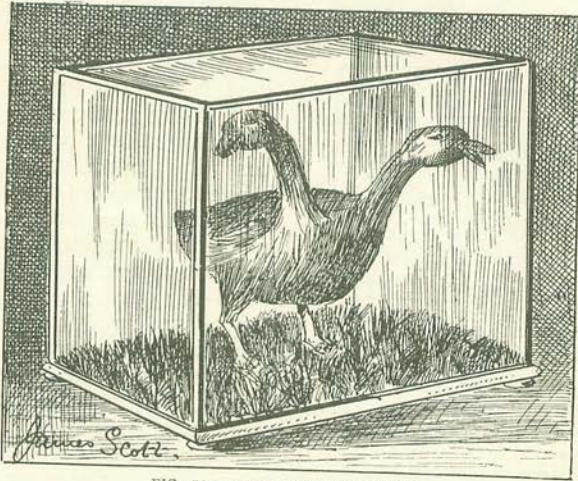


FIG. 10.—AN ATTRACTIVE FREAK.

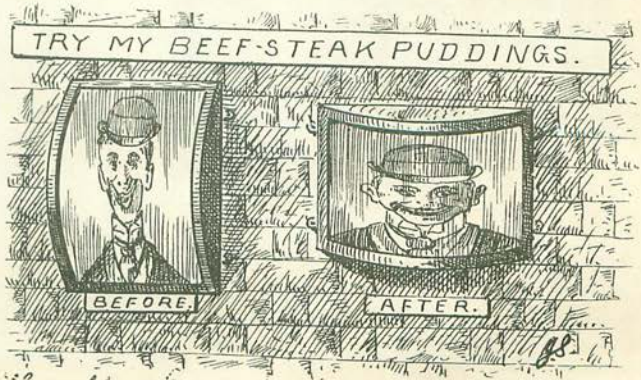


FIG. 11.—THE EFFECT OF MEAT PUDDING.

the window at an altitude almost corresponding with the height of a pedestrian's eyes. To a passer-by, the contents of the box appear as shown in the larger drawing, as the reflection of the lower half of it conceals the fact that its upper portion is really an inclosed and empty space. By judiciously papering the lower interior of the receptacle with a neat pattern, the whole appears as a long box containing a pile of fruit supporting an inverted and equal quantity.

Chicken-hatching by artificial means has become so universal a process as to excite but little comment; yet when one philosophically considers that by the aid of a specially-prepared contrivance, and the application of gathered knowledge, exercised by skilful manipulation, we are able so successfully to supplant Nature as understood by the instinctive hen, we must rank artificial incubation as one of the wonders of the age.

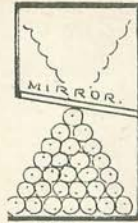
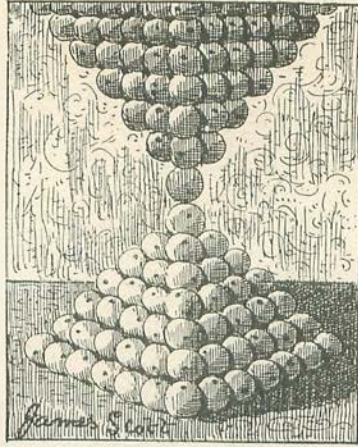


FIG. 12.—A DECEPTIVE PILE.

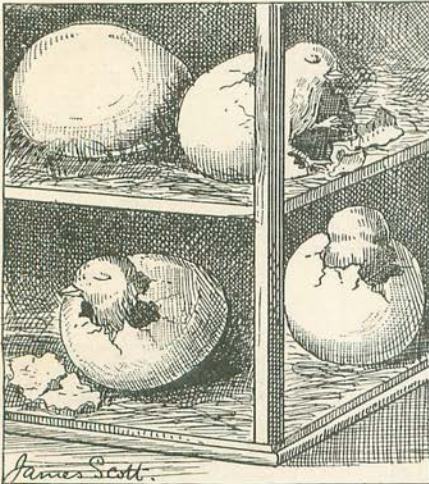


FIG. 13.—CHICKS HATCHING.

A certain West-end tradesman must be credited with possessing a keen perception of human curiosity, allied to a praiseworthy desire to satisfy that curiosity and advertise his wares simultaneously. He exposed in his window some incubators containing eggs

which belched forth their lively contents before the eyes of the public (Fig. 13). Although I have not personally witnessed the actual birth of these tiny creatures, I have seen them when they were but a few minutes old, if the term "old" is permissible. Of course, it must be admitted that the unborn chicks would not have developed sufficient shyness to debar them from issuing into this world whilst the human gaze was fixed upon them; so it was quite possible to see the actual

demolishment of the shells.

A living and apparently severed head (Fig. 14) rightly belongs to the domain of conjuring; but as at least one tradesman has availed himself of this bewildering optical illusion, I feel that it has a right to be noticed among other attractions. Certainly an enterprising shopkeeper could utilize his shop and cash to worse purposes, if he desired to supply himself with an effective advertisement. To an onlooker the spectacle appears as a severed head, possessing the full vigour of life, resting upon two brass bars fixed within a kind of cupboard. The head smiles and speaks, and proves conclusively to the wondering audience that it is devoid

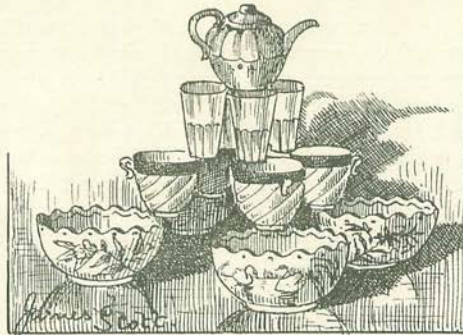


FIG. 14.—A SEVERED HEAD.

of no essential possessed by a head attached to a body. This perplexity is produced by the aid of a few mirrors and fittings placed as hereafter described. First, two boards are placed in an upright position, and are surmounted by a third one, with an intervening space of convenient dimensions. A glance at the smaller sketch will assist my brief explanation. Within the space are fitted, at right angles to each other, two upright mirrors, their front edges being bevelled from the back, each being sloped at the top to permit a third mirror, having a large central hole, to rest upon them. The top glass is a thin one, and upon its top face are laid the two longitudinal halves of one brass rod, the reflections of which provide two apparently solid rails for the head to rest upon. A young lady occupies a seat behind the mirrors, and pops her head through the opening. Her neck is surrounded by a very wide lace collar, which conceals the opening referred to. By using a floor covering having a neat geometrical pattern upon it, the mirrors may be so fixed in relation to each other as to reflect the pattern, and thus convey the idea that between the head and the floor nothing but space exists. Judicious drapery completes the illusion.

A china and glass pyramid can claim to be no more than an illusion, as nothing but skilful manipulation and a steady, firm foundation are requisite for its construction. To the passer-by an array of this kind induces com-

ments of suspicion concerning the probability of the articles being cemented and bound together; but as a matter of fact, equilibrium alone is responsible for the formation of the pyramid. Four basins, weighted with sugar or liquid of some kind, are placed at the corners of an imaginary square (Fig. 15).



A china and glass pyramid.

FIG. 15.

Upon the rim of each basin a large cup is so balanced that its tendency is to fall into the basin. Each cup is then required to support a glass tumbler, whose tendency is to fall away from the cup. The arrangement is neatly formed in such a way that the four glasses contact with each other, and as each presses equally against its companion, nothing can possibly

fall, providing proper balancing of the cups has been secured. If the whole of the articles have been properly fixed and weighted, they will sustain a teapot or similar article. Of course, cups may be replaced by glasses, or glasses by cups, as the case may be; but in any case, more than one person must be employed upon the building of the pyramid, which should be relegated to the quieter streets, for the sufficient reason that the rattle of vehicles in a busy thoroughfare would soon destroy the fascinating equilibrium.

A universal consideration of the subject upon which I have been engaged would, perhaps, tend to bring about a more extensive application of attractive displays of novelties in some of our shop-lined streets, and cause a walk through them to be a more enjoyable occupation than can now be claimed in connection with it.