

Paper-Folding.

BY L. S. LEWIS.



PERHAPS no more entertaining form of indoor pastime has ever been devised than the rapid folding of a sheet of pleated paper into various shapes, such as those reproduced in the following pages. First of all, however, let us acknowledge our indebtedness to Mr. David Devant, the well-known prestidigitateur (horrible word!) and popular entertainer, of the Egyptian Hall, who very kindly gave a complete "lightning paper-folding" *séance* to our own artist at these offices.

The only "apparatus" required is a sheet of paper; wherefore will this entertainment find favour in the sight of all. You are not tied to size; indeed, it may be advisable to commence with a sheet of note-paper and then work up gradually to a great square of

stout cartridge or water-colour paper, such as Mr. Devant himself uses and supplies to his pupils. With just such a sheet as this, the various figures in this article were fashioned, and it measures rather more than 4ft. by 3ft.

Dexterity will come with practice. Mr. Devant evolves from his paper no fewer than forty different figures in five minutes; his record is ten in thirty seconds. The proper folding of the paper in the first instance is an absolute condition *sine quâ non*. It is necessary to bear in mind that you don't fashion your figures direct from the plain sheet, but from the cunningly pleated folds of the paper.

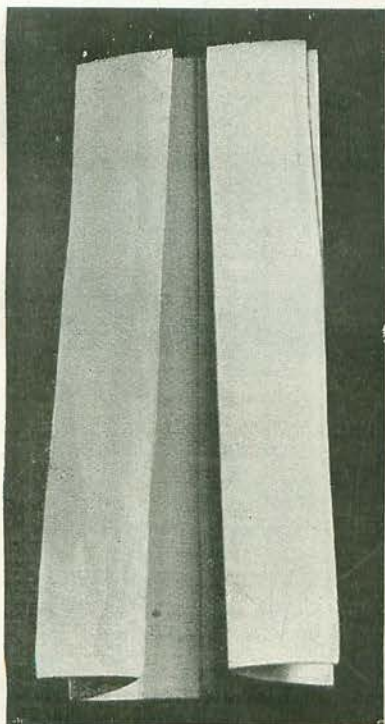


FIG. 1.—THE FIRST FOLDS.

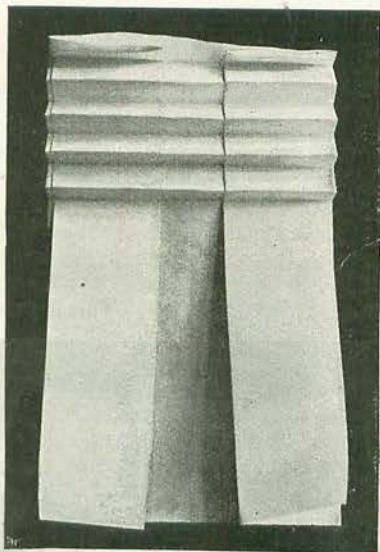


FIG. 2.—COMMENCING TO PLEAT.

Fig. 1 shows us how to commence folding better than pages of description would do. The central space between these first folds, however, is a little exaggerated, solely in order to emphasize the necessity for that space. In the big sheet we are considering the folds should only be about half an inch apart, the *raison d'être* of the margin being to leave room for corners and angles to work round.

One can't dwell too forcibly on the necessity for care in the primary folding. The cartridge paper is stout and stiff, so that one wrong fold is all but irreparable. However, supposing that Fig. 1. has been correctly negotiated, the next illustration (Fig. 2) plainly indicates the manner of pleating. In this, correctness of spacing is everything. You may rule out beforehand the spaces for your pleats if you like, only don't think that

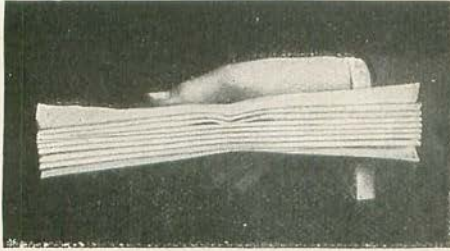


FIG. 3.—READY TO BEGIN.

they can be manipulated as easily as a concertina on Boxing Night. You may console yourself, though, with the thought that after your paper *is* completely pleated, you can with a little practice confidently set up as a society entertainer. Here I may mention that the paper, too, has to get used to its own pleats. What I mean to say is, that a little manipulation is necessary before the folds work easily. Practically, then, the older the pleated paper is, the better it is for the operator.

Fig. 3 shows the paper completely folded and ready for use. It also indicates the method of folding for what is the very first figure—the Venetian blind. This is produced

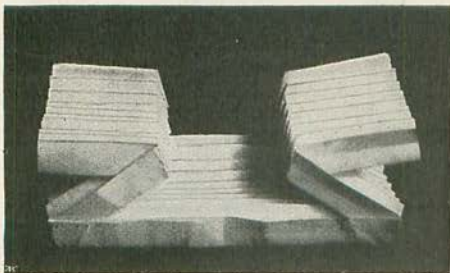


FIG. 4.—SHOWING THE FOUR "SECRET FOLDS."

by simply letting go the bottom and holding up to the audience the *front* of the pleated paper. Here may be interpolated an important piece of advice: Never, by any chance, let the audience see the *back* of your paper—I mean that side on which the narrow space runs up between the folds. The fact is, the spectators are led to believe that it is a plain piece of pleated paper; which it is not.

Whether you are aware of it or not, it contains four secret folds, all of which are shown pulled out in Fig. 4. Now, a certain number of figures can be produced with the pleated paper just as it is; others—more showy subjects—with one secret fold out; and still more intricate articles with two, three, and four folds called into play. The onlookers, knowing nothing of these secret folds, marvel greatly at every item in the performance; which is as it should be. Like many other simple yet genuinely entertaining things, paper-folding is not new. A century or so



FIG. 5.—THE ROSETTE.

ago the pastime was known as "Trouble-wit," and much earlier even than this we hear of a French priest—Père Mathieu—introducing the pastime into France.

Fig. 5 illustrates one of the first figures that can be made with the pleated paper. It is a big rosette, and is formed by bringing together each end in a semi-circle. Needless to remark, all the movements should be executed with tremendous *élan*. While there are no definite rules governing the manipulator's dress, the unwritten law of professional demeanour compels him to wear at least a worried look. He should bound hither and thither, wave the paper up and down, round



FIG. 6.—THE TABLE-MAT.

and round, and generally convey the impression that the whole business is a severe strain upon him, physically as well as mentally.

Look at Fig. 5, and then at Fig. 6. When, after apparently superhuman endeavour, the rosette has been formed, and triumphantly presented for applause, the operator "goes off" again to his arduous pantomime. After a certain number of fantastic gyrations he blows upon the rosette, and, lo! it instantly becomes—a table-mat (Fig. 6). So prosaic an article as a table-mat may (considering the gyrations) be considered something of an anti-climax; but, at any rate, the manner of its evolution is sufficiently obvious. One simply extends, by a swift simultaneous movement of both hands, the semi-circles that form the rosette.

Held vertically, by the way, and with one end flat, a Norman church window is formed. But, above all things, go through your list with *verve* and energy, barely giving your audience time to admire your creation. Also, don't forget the "as you were"; that is to say, after the formation of each figure, bring your paper back to the formation shown in

Vol xii.—89.

Fig. 3. This, however, scarcely applies closely to the more elaborate subjects. It goes without saying that the ambitious operator must "act the part"—particularly if he aspires to be a "lightning" paper-folder. He must help to accentuate the impression his creation makes on the audience by striking a suitable posture. All of us cannot hope to look our best when assuming an aspect of "flirtatious archness," yet this is more or less indispensable to the success of Fig. 7. In the case of this fan, the "secret-fold" side of the pleated paper is turned towards the entertained; but this is exceptional. The fact is, the space or margin which runs between the folds greatly assists this figure—as you may judge for yourself by inspecting and comparing the reverse side of your own fan

when formed. Moreover, it is only held in position for a second or two, so that the audience haven't time to grasp the meaning of the double folds. The fan is made simply



FIG. 7.—THE FAN.

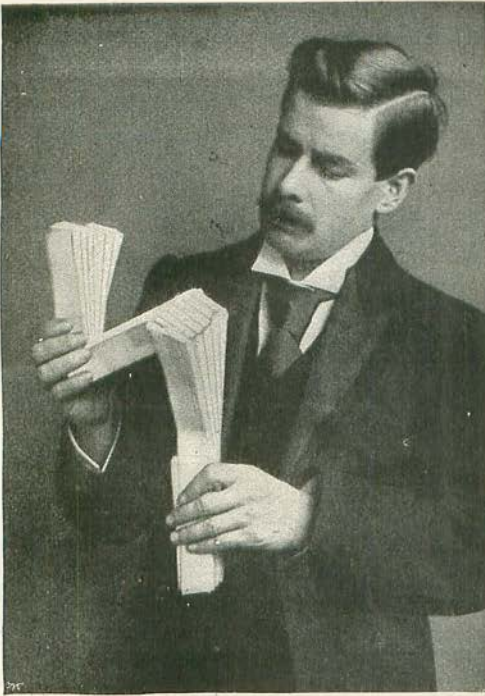


FIG. 8.—TWO FOLDS OUT.

by bunching together the pleats at one end and extending them at the other. Of course, there is the expression to be assumed. It seems that the most correct way of producing the fan is to throw the paper into the air and catch it as it falls, presenting the figure instantaneously. This, in the language of the local reporter describing a melodrama, "electrifies the audience"—whatever that means.

In Fig. 8 we see the secret folds coming into play; but there are some figures omitted through want of space. The "epaulette," for example, is made from the fan, by pulling out the set of folds



FIG. 9.—THE SETTEE.

forming the upper part of that article. One extends the pleats horizontally in a semi-circle, and then places the epaulette on one's own shoulder with a smart military salute. Fig. 8 shows a movement preliminary to the formation of some of the most striking subjects. It will be seen that there are two folds



FIG. 10.—AN EASTERN WATER-POT.

out. Turn your paper up the other way and spread it out, when you will have a capital representation of a drawing-room settee (Fig. 9). This settee, whose surface is mainly composed of acute angles, is not one on which lovers (or others) would care to linger long, but all the same, there is no denying the effectiveness of the thing, an article of "paper sculpture." Now close up the settee and reverse the paper, as in Fig. 8. Then bring the whole round in a fine sweep for the Eastern water-pot (Fig. 10)—

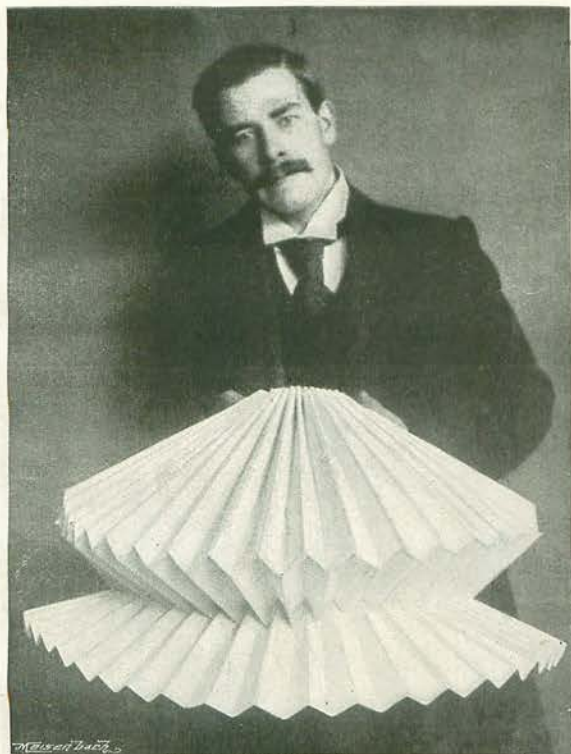


FIG. 11.—A LAMP-SHADE.

perhaps the most successful of all the paper shapes. Here, again, you have to act the



FIG. 12.—FLOWER-HOLDER.

part by placing the jar on your shoulder and posing as though it were full of water instead of the lighter element.

Another very remarkable figure is the "lamp-shade" (Fig. 11). No one would think, at the first glance, that this is formed by turning the Oriental water-pot upside down, and giving it a very wide spread. Yet so it is; but as a rule the elegant little flower-holder (Fig. 12) comes between the two, in order that their connection may not be too obvious.

When taking out a fold to form further articles, much mystery is thrown about the business. As I have remarked elsewhere, the plain pleated side is always turned towards the audience; and when the required fold is pulled out all the way down,

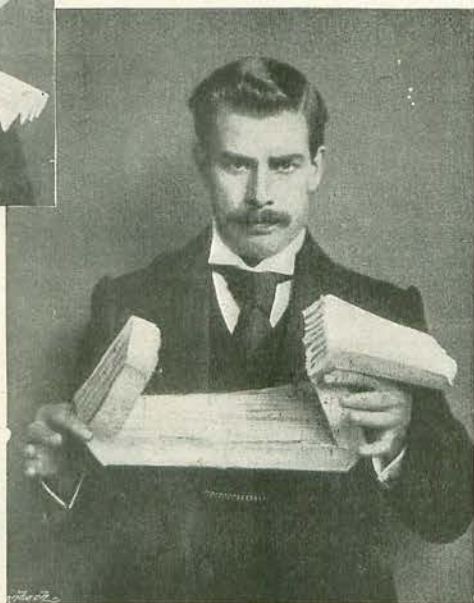


FIG. 13.—THREE FOLDS OUT.

the pleats are gathered up ladder-wise with nimble fingers, and to the accompaniment of a rustling noise that is not a little puzzling to those who know nothing of the secret folds.

So elegant are many of these folded paper figures that one might almost think some of them worthy of remaining in permanent form. Take Fig. 11 for example. If that lamp-shade were in green or red paper, and made quite circular, it is obvious that it would serve a useful as well as ornamental purpose; it would, in fact, be "just the thing" for a table-lamp or a big drawing-room floor-lamp. In Fig. 13 we see that three folds



FIG. 14.—HOW THE SAUCEPAN IS MADE.

have been taken out, forming a saucepan in embryo. Fig. 14 shows the manner of actually fashioning that homely utensil, and the next illustration (Fig. 15) depicts it complete, though in highly ornamental and "fluted" guise. Of course, these comparatively intricate shapes and figures are exhibited rather longer than the more simple ones. Also, appropriate gestures and movements are devised for each.

But supposing that the saucepan has palled upon you and your audience—and too much saucepan is apt to pall—there are many other capital subjects left in the paper-folder's repertoire. "As you were," then, in Fig. 13. Now, by an elaborate (and exaggerated) movement you bring round the pleats to form the "cosy corner" represented in Fig. 16. The magician is not nearly done yet, however, and as roars of applause (more or less) greet the results of his wonderful art, he contrives yet another restful abode—one for rather a different season, though—namely, a garden-seat (Fig. 17). That is rather a nice garden-seat, with a sheltered mushroom top. In a way it reminds us of those arranged round big trees in the London parks.

I refer, of course, to those seats which seem to be intended solely for the amusement of muddy-booted children playing at circus, and for the benefit of the great family of unprofessional wood-carvers, whose deplorable efforts to attain immortality are

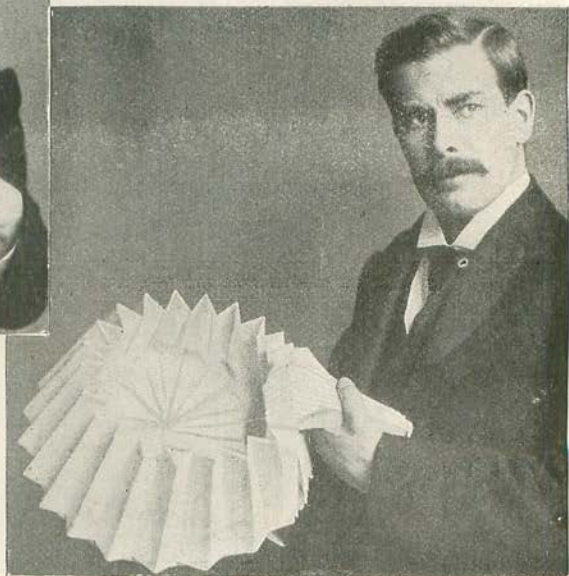


FIG. 15.—THE SAUCEPAN COMPLETE.

writ (or carved) large on the monuments and places of the world.

But we have digressed, as the novelist says when he or she (especially she) is conscious of having worked in a fine slice of irrelevant



FIG. 16.—A COSY CORNER.

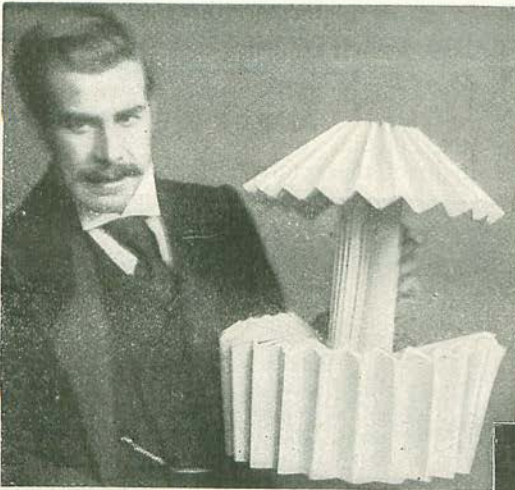


FIG. 17.—THE GARDEN-SEAT.

padding. Evidently the range of subjects in paper-folding is extremely large. Articles of clothing, of comfort, of utility, of ornament—all these can be shown; in short, no phase of life is neglected. Even that which

is reputed next to godliness is represented in Fig. 18, which shows what purports to be a portable and collapsible foot-bath.

The connection between the different figures will be noted by those who closely follow this subject. Thus, the handle of the saucepan is the frill of the lamp-shade and the seat of the settee. Comparing the garden-seat (Fig. 17) with the saucepan, we find that the seat of the one is the handle of the other. By taking that part of the paper which forms the lower vertical section of the garden-seat, and inserting it in the corresponding fold (thus making the two one double fold), the lower part



FIG. 18.—A FOOT-BATH.

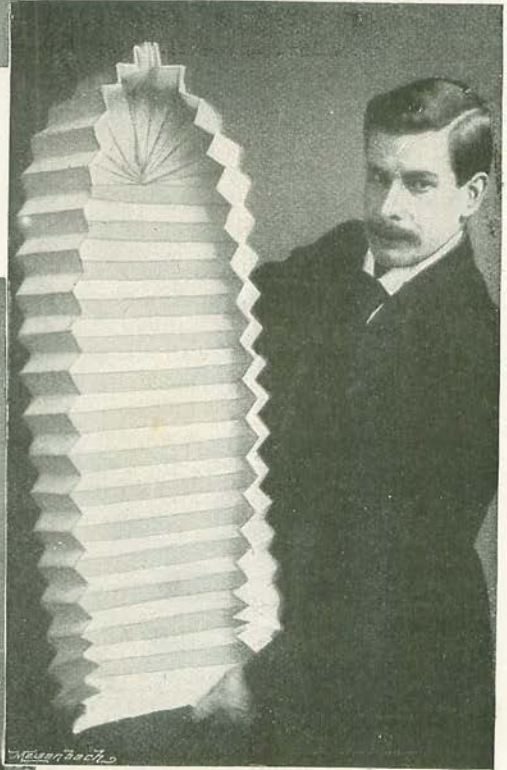


FIG. 19.—THE SENTRY-BOX.

of the figure will be found to resemble the top—only reversed, of course. Now close up the whole and then make the ends meet, until you have the saucepan without the handle. So far, good. Take hold of the ends now, and pull out until the foot-bath (Fig. 18) is produced.

Next comes one of the "lightning changes" before described in regard to the rosette and table-mat. Let go one end of the foot-bath and pull out until you are able to announce the "sentry-box" (Fig. 19).

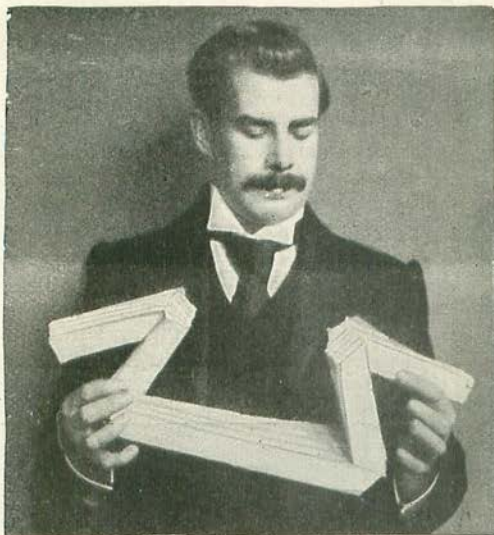


FIG. 20.—FOUR FOLDS OUT—FOR BON-BON.

This evolution is much appreciated—only don't forget the mystery and gyrations. Once you have your paper correctly folded in the first instance, the rest is easy enough, but your audience are not to know that. Of course, practice is required to go through the "show" with credit to one's self and amusement to others.

We now take all four folds out, as in Fig. 20, which illustrates the preparations

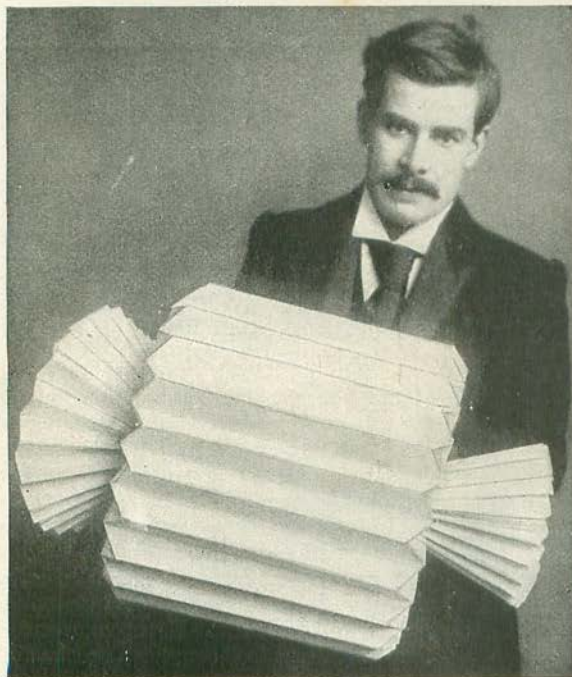


FIG. 21.—THE BIG BON-BON.

necessary for making the gigantic bon-bon. The next illustration (Fig. 21) shows the completion of this always-popular subject. Indeed, Fig. 21 is considered by some the very best of these paper shapes. To make the bon-bon from Fig. 20 you simply take hold of the centre, and describe with the



FIG. 22.—A DUMB-BELL.

pleats a circle round the folds themselves.

You may then, if you wish, partly close the figure, turn your paper round the other way, and evolve from this the great dumb-bell seen in Fig. 22. Not even Sandow, in all his glory, ever saw such a dumb-bell as this, for, by a little judicious manipulation on the part of the operator, it can be made to do duty as the paddle-wheel of a Thames steamer.

The evolution of the Beefeater's hat from Fig. 20 is very well shown in Fig. 23—a photograph which speaks for itself. After having presented the dumb-bell, close your figure and draw two ends together until they meet, as in the accompanying illustration (Fig. 23). If you do the same with two ends on the other side, you will then find that the Beefeater's hat is ready to be placed *in situ*, as in Fig. 24; which, it will be admitted, is quite an elegant and creditable form of head-gear, that might very well be copied by the Bond Street shop-keepers.



FIG. 23.—SHOWING HOW TO MAKE A BEEFEATER'S HAT.

I have omitted such elementary forms as the candlestick, which when inverted masquerades as a mushroom. Doubtless, many other shapes will be designed and



FIG. 24.—THE BEEFEATER'S HAT COMPLETE.

fashioned by the ingenious. At the same time, it is well to point out that figures which are made by reversing other subjects should never be given in consecutive order. The



FIG. 25.—DUTCH GIRL'S BONNET.

audience must have time to forget, say, the Oriental water-jar, before the lamp-shade is presented for their approbation. And in order to assist this convenient oblivion, other figures must be presented in between.

Now, returning for a moment to Fig. 24.

Catch hold of the brim of the hat where the ends meet, stretch out the pleats a little to fit the head, and then the Dutch girl's bonnet is complete (Fig. 25). Here, again, the effect may be heightened by a well-simulated simper—expression is everything; but beware of over-stepping the mark in this direction. Take heed, we say, lest in straining after adventitious effect you excite perversely the risibility of your audience.