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The Practical Magician and Ventriloquist's Guide: A Practical Manual of Fireside Magic Conjuring Illusions:

From the INTRODUCTORY. MY object in writing these hints on Conjuring is for the benefit of amateurs to promote lively and entertaining amusement for the home circle and social gatherings. My large experience enables me to explain and simplify many of the best tricks and illusions of the art. I present the key to many of the mystical mysteries which have puzzled and bewildered our childhood days as well as confounded us in our maturer years. The young student can in a very short time, if he be in the least of an ingenious turn, amuse and astonish his friends, neighbors and acquaintances. Preference has been given to those tricks which suggest others, the more complete and difficult performances and illusions have been passed by as being out of place; I shall not, therefore, in these elementary papers advert to those experiments which require ample resources, or a prepared stage, for exhibiting them or which can only be displayed to advantage by consummate skill and the most adroit manipulation but confine my remarks at present to those branches of the art to the performance of which a young amateur may aspire with prospect of success. A few hours' practice will enable the learner to execute the simple tricks that I shall first treat of; and they will only require for their display such articles as are readily available in every household. Most of them will be supplied by any company of a few friends, and if not in the parlor, can be brought from no greater distance than the kitchen or housekeeper's room ; such as handkerchiefs, coins, oranges, or eggs, a glass bowl, etc. , etc. There may only remain a few inexpensive articles to be supplied from repositories for the sale of conjuring apparatus, or they may be had direct from the publishers of this work. It may be well explicitly to avow that the time is quite gone by when people will really believe that conjuring is to be done by supernatural agencies. No faith is now reposed in the I "black art of sorcery," or even in the art to which the less repulsive name was given of ' ' white magic. " Many years have elapsed since conjurors have seriously assumed to themselves any credit as possessing supernatural powers, or as enabled by spiritual agency to reveal that which is unknown to science and philosophy, or mysteriously to work astonishing marvels. A well-marked contrast exists between the old school of conjurors and those of modern times. The former, who used boldly to profess that they employed mysterious rites and preternatural agency, designedly put the spectator upon false interpretations, while they studiously avoided giving any elucidation of the phenomena, nor would ever admit that the wonders displayed were to be accounted for by the principles of science and natural philosophy. Modern conjurors advance no such pretensions. They use as scientifically as possible the natural properties of matter to aid in their exhibition of wonderful results. They are content to let the exhibition of their art appear marvelous. They sometimes mystify the matter, and so increase the puzzle, in order to heighten the interest and amusement of the spectators; but they throw aside any solemn asseveration of possessing hidden powers, or of ability to fathom mysterious secrets....