

# MAGICAL ROPE TIES AND ESCAPES

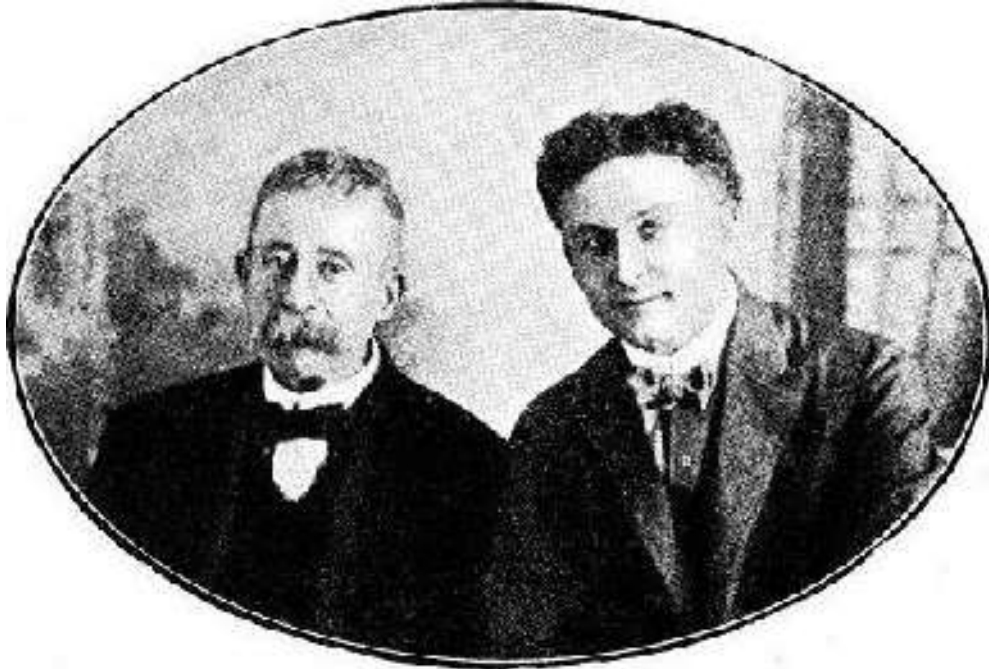
*BY "HOUDINI."*

*Illustrated by Photographs and Line Drawings.*

TO MY DEAR FRIEND HARRY KELLAR Dean of Magicians & Master  
of Mysteries "HOUDINI."

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IRA E. DAVENPORT. "HOUDINI."

## **FOREWORD.**

In the past rope manipulations have been largely confined to the cabinet demonstration of Spirit Mediums, but the value of such material to magicians can hardly be overestimated. Witness the case of the dean of magicians, Harry Kellar, for instance, whose anti-spiritual cabinet séance was world-famous, and yet this classic was built around a single rope tie.

The following pages contain practical ties that possess an entertainment value, and the majority of them may be acquired with but little practice. None of them should be attempted before an audience, however, until the details are thoroughly mastered.

The ties given are of two distinct types, namely, those adapted to use in spiritualistic work, and those intended for the escape artist. For the former a cabinet is usually necessary, and if not absolutely necessary it is better to use one, as it lends an essential atmosphere to the séance; but in straight escapes the cabinet hopelessly weakens the effect. Personally in making escapes from ropes I have not resorted to the use of the cabinet for more than twenty years past, preferring to make challenge tests and prove that I can free myself in less time than is required to secure me.

My assistant is always supplied with a stop-watch; in fact, for my under-water tests, I had specially made by a watchmaker in Glasgow, the largest stop-watch in the world, by means of which persons in the gallery who did not possess such watches themselves could see the second hand as it jumped around the dial, and thus share in the interest, for you should know that not every theatre-goer carried a stop-watch.

Starting at the word of command, I have rarely missed finishing well within the specified time, but on one occasion at the New York Hippodrome, during the Liberty Loan Drive, a committee of navy boys gave me the tussle of my life, by tying me to an oaken kitchen chair in their own peculiar style. They must have practiced all day, for it required only nine minutes to lash me to that chair, and, struggling as I did with might and main, it was twelve minutes before I was "chairless," but the mighty audience applauded and laughed good-naturedly at my discomfiture. Some of my friends, however, who witnessed the performance, told me afterwards that they knew I could have escaped any time that I desired, but I herewith put it on record that I never have played with an audience, but always freed myself from ropes, fetters, or other restraints as quickly as I possibly could.

Should you decide to work without the cabinet, which I advise you by all means to do, your show will require a great deal of strenuous and intelligent rehearsing, for you will eventually encounter a committee who will bind you so tightly that you will have to struggle for your life—that is to say, for your freedom.

The patter used is given merely as a suggestion and should not be followed verbatim, changed to suit the style and methods of the individual performer. Misfit patter is as bad as misfit clothing, and audiences are as slow to forgive an assault in the hearing, as one on the sight.

Rope ties have one distinct advantage over all other forms of escape, namely, no possible suspicion is attached to the ropes themselves. In many cases where locks, chains, handcuffs, trunks, pillories and the like are used, the apparatus is more or less under suspicion, but where ordinary ropes or tapes are the only means employed, the performer gets all the credit for the escape. Where tapes can be substituted it is generally best to use them, as they create even less mistrust than ropes.

The best rope for general purposes is Silver Lake Sash Cord. In some cases the new cord is the better, but in others it will be necessary to work it till it becomes soft and pliable; just how far to carry the softening process differs with different ties, but a little experience will determine this point.

The first thing for the performer to ascertain is, if any member of the committee has followed the sea, or for any other reason is familiar with knots. If such a one is found he should be used for tests where difficult knots and secure binding does not interfere with the effect. By all means, when possible, get a physician on the committee, as it always creates a good impression to have him examine the hands, wrists, arms and shoulders, and have him report to the audience that there is no way of contracting the bones and muscles so as to slip out of the knots.

The programme should be so arranged that each effect will appear a little more difficult than the preceding one, finishing with something showy and apparently difficult. The clothes line tie is particularly good for an effective final.

Don't lose confidence in an effect because it has been presented many times before. An old trick in "good hands" is always new. Just see to it that yours are "Good hands."

Don't allow yourself to "go stale" on your act. Keep up your enthusiasm! There is nothing more contagious than exuberant enthusiasm, and it is sure to "get" an audience.

### **FOR OPENING OF ROPE ACT.**

After the opening remarks have been made and a committee secured, a short address to the committee is in order, also a few questions to such as impress you as being liable to prove expert, inquisitive, or troublesome in any way. The knowledge thus gained may prove useful to you later when selecting sub-committees for the different tricks.

Then continue in something like this style:—"The knot family is a large one. According to the Standard Dictionary it has seventy-nine members, but to my certain knowledge that census is far from complete. The individual members are very much like those of any other family; some are true, some false; some hard and others easy. We have the Lark's Head, the Sheep-shank, and the Cat's-paw-knots; the True-lover's and the Diamond knots; the

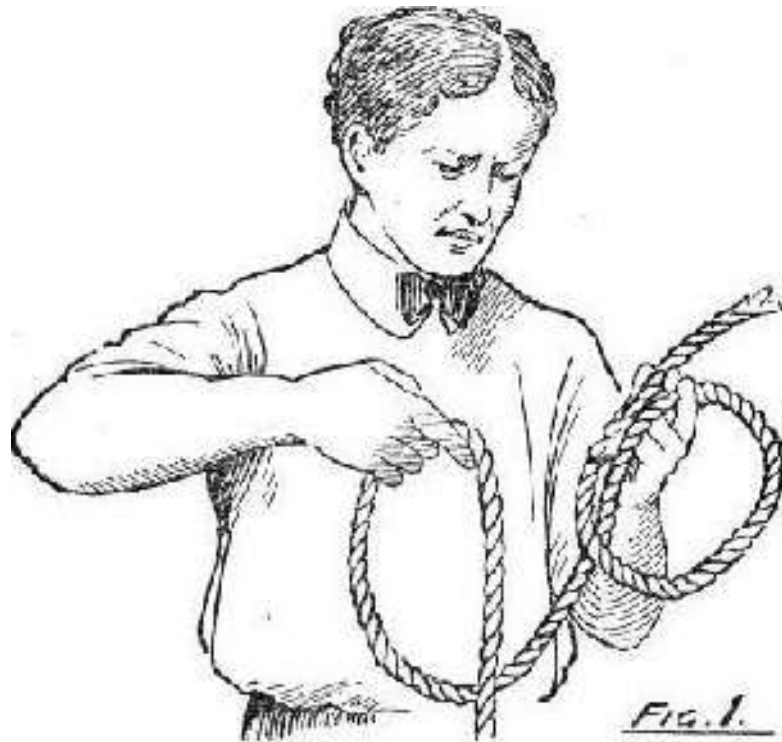
Baby, the Granny, and the Shroud, and, as a finish, some have the Hangman's knot.

"I might go through the Rope family in an equally eloquent and instructive manner, but their family 'ties' are very close and I will not intrude. I will, however, present a member of the family for your inspection. Will you please take one of the coils of this rope and see if you think it has any bad habits." The coil is presented to a person seated or standing in the middle of the row, and the other coils shaken out, the ends being retained by performer until it is seen that there are no knots, and then the ends are passed up and down the line so that all may examine. Then take one end and coil up as before, saying:—"I'm glad you find it all right, as this is the most unreliable of the rope family. You are sure that it is all right, are you? You don't seem to be very positive. Better look at it again." Present it exactly as before, but this time it is found to be tied in a series of single knots.) "There you are! I was afraid this rope would be up to its old tricks if it got half a chance." Gather all the knots in the left hand, saying:—"These being phantom knots, I wish you to look them over carefully. I think there are enough so that each of you may have one to himself. Will you hold the ends, sir, so that none of the knots can get away." The ends are passed to one near the end of the line, and as you pass down to give one to each, the knots dissolve one by one till when the end is reached all have vanished.

Throw the rope aside, saying: "It's no use to go any farther with such a temperamental rope."

The first of the above effects is accomplished by coiling the rope in the following manner, the first coil being slowly made while telling about the Knot family. Take the rope by one end and lay a coil over the palm of the left hand from left to right, holding it in front of the body opposite the pit of the stomach, palm upward. Then slide the right hand down the hanging rope between it and the body, with the palm turned outward. When the arm is at full stretch, seize the rope, turn the hand over to the left, palm downward, and bring it up, at the same time turning it toward the body till the hanging rope touches the loop between the hands, as shown in Fig. 1, and lay the coil thus formed on the left palm. Proceed to coil the rest of the rope in the same manner, slipping the first end between the fingers as in Fig. 2. When this coil is shown to committee it will be free of knots. The second time the coil is made in exactly the same way, but by turning the left hand a little to the right the first end is projected through all the coils, thus bringing both ends

together at the outside of the coils, and together they are passed to the committee. When these coils are shaken out they will be found to be full of knots.



Some of these knots may be found to be tied through each other, but it is only the work of a moment to get them into line, as in Fig. 3, although not so evenly spaced. Now take the end of the rope between the fingers of the left hand as before, gather up the knots one by one with the right hand, and hang them on the fingers of the left.



FIG. 3.

When all are in place turn to the man at the end of the line and pass the two ends to him; as you make this turn a slight twist of the left hand will send the end through all the knots, and they can then be manipulated so as to appear to vanish one by one.

### **A SIMPLE RELEASE.**

This is perhaps the oldest release known to the Conjuring profession, the effect being to release the hands when they are tied behind the back in the ordinary way.

Although simple it is by no means easy, and will require considerable practice in order to escape in the limited time allowed by impatient audiences, but it is a very necessary part of the escape artist's education and should be thoroughly mastered.

It is accomplished by bending the body forward and working the arms down over the hips until the hands are just behind the knees. This will seem impossible at the first trial, but keep at it and you will get the knack after a while. When the hands are in position back of the knees, sit down on the floor and cross the legs, the left above the right, work the left arm down over the left knee and withdraw the left foot and then the right from the looped arms. This brings the knotted wrists in front of the body and the knots may then be untied with the teeth.



For this tie new sash cord should be used, for two reasons, first, because it is impossible to tie very tight knots with it, and second, because its smooth surface facilitates the slipping over the hips.

### **THE KELLAR TIE.**

This is called the Kellar Tie, not because it was used by that artist in his wonderful cabinet work, but because there was a great demand for the secret of his method; the dealers had to supply something and this tie was the result. The writer can give assurance, however, based on personal knowledge, that the real Kellar tie is something quite different. Nevertheless, this is a good tie and the effect is similar to Kellar's.

A piece of sash cord six or eight feet long is examined by a committee from the audience, and then knotted round the performer's left wrist, the knot being on the FRONT of the wrist. When the first turn of the knot is completed, the ends are passed to members of the committee, and they are asked to pull as hard as possible. Kellar always got a lot of fun out of this part of the tie. When all are satisfied that the knot can be drawn no tighter, one of the committee places his thumb on the juncture, the knot is completed, and then comes some more hard pulling. This is seemingly done to make the tie more secure, but really to keep the rope from slipping round on the wrist, which would make the manipulation more difficult.

The performer then places the BACK of his right wrist fairly upon the knot, to show how his hands will be placed for the final knots, then puts his hands behind his back and turns round back to the audience, showing his hands in apparently the same position as shown a moment before, and the right wrist is then tied in the same manner as the left, several knots being made. When all is secure the performer again faces the audience, instantly his free right hand is waved in the air, and then put back behind him again. The committee is then requested to examine the knots and they are found to be unchanged. When worked with a cabinet the performer sits in a chair at one side and, as soon as the doors are closed things begin to happen. The regulation tests are introduced, and each time the doors are opened the knots are examined and found to be secure. Finally the performer steps out with both hands free and the ropes lying in a tangle on the cabinet floor.

The whole secret of this tie lies in one little move, namely, when the performer places his hands behind him preparatory to the tying of the right

wrist and while the hands are hidden, he gives one end of the rope a turn around the knot and then lays the back of the right wrist upon it before he turns for the final knots. The wrists must be held firmly together while these knots are being tied in order to retain the slack. All that is now necessary is to give the wrists a half turn in the direction OPPOSITE to that given the ropes and the right hand can be easily withdrawn. When the hand is returned a reverse twist will make all secure again. This move cannot be mastered in a moment, but, like palming a coin, when once learned it is extremely easy.

The release of the left hand is made by first withdrawing the right and then UPSETTING the knot on the left wrist by drawing the rope at the left of the knot strongly to the right, thus converting the square knot into a slip-knot, from which the hand is easily removed. Of course the performer should see that the first knot is SQUARE.

### THE KNOTTED ROPE TIE.

Another imitation Kellar Tie, which is quite easy, is accomplished by the use of a rope knotted like Fig. 4. This prepared rope should be concealed on the person or in the cabinet.

The performer is tied the same as in the Kellar Tie except that only one square knot is tied in the right wrist, and no attempt is made to get slack. As soon as the cabinet doors are closed



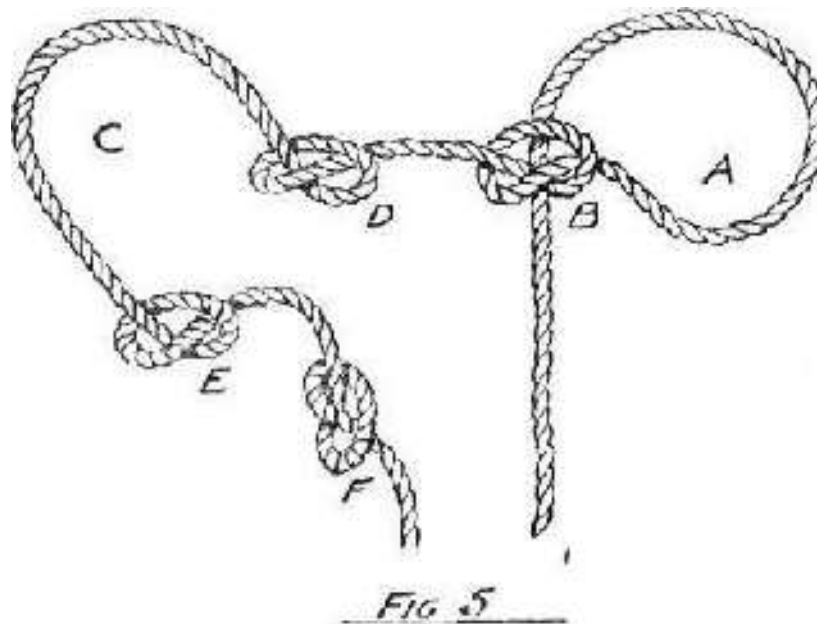
FIG. 4.

he ties one end of the rope to a rung of the chair, and by a hard pull upsets the outer knot, thus freeing his right hand and then the left. He then conceals this rope and substitutes the prepared one, pushing both hands through the loop with the palms turned outward and the honest knot marked A held against the front of the right wrist— this is done behind the back, of course—then by turning the hands, so that they point in opposite directions, the two side knots are brought together between the wrists and appear as one, and the performer will seem to be tied as at first, but can get in and out of the restraint instantly. A bell can be held in the teeth and kept ringing during this change.

Quite a little experimenting will be necessary in order to get the side knots at just the right distance apart, but once this is accomplished the rest is easy. At the close of the act this rope is again concealed and the original shown entirely free of knots. An added effect is obtained by having a committeeman hold a watch and time this last release.

### ANOTHER KNOTTED ROPE.

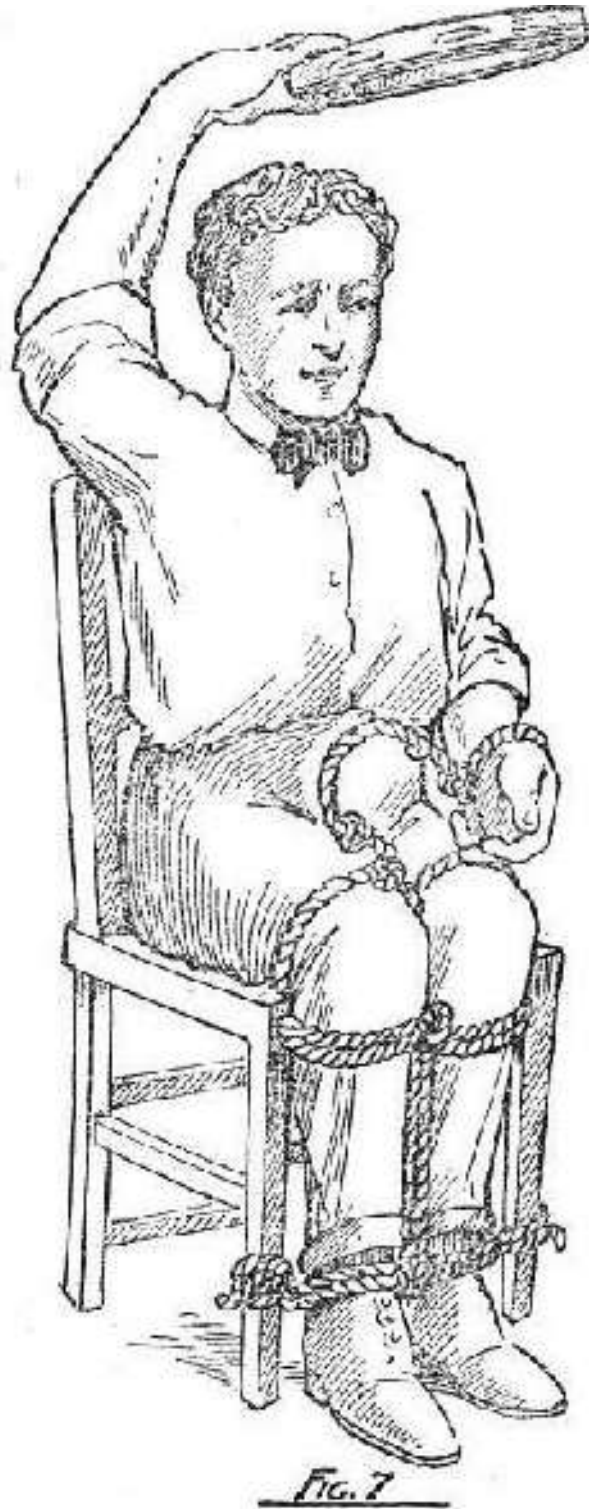
This is based on another form of ready-knotted rope, as shown in Fig. 5. A soft rope about four feet long is concealed in the medium's clothing, and he shows two pieces to the committee, these being duplicates of the one concealed. With these he enters the cabinet, which contains nothing but a chair.



As soon as the doors are closed he proceeds to tie his ankles to the legs of the chair with one of the ropes, and exchanges the other for the knotted one and with this ties his knees together, with the ends knotted together underneath the legs and the prepared knots projecting upward between the thighs, as in Fig. 7. He then passes his left hand through the loop A, the knot B being permanent, and the right hand through C. Now the hands are twisted around in opposite directions, the twisting of the left hand tightening the rope on that wrist, and the twisting of the right bringing the knots B, D, E, F together and forming the complicated imitation knot shown in Fig. 6.

The loop A should be just large enough to squeeze the left hand through, and the relative distances of the other knots must be determined by experiment, as they must conform to the size of the performer's wrist.

It will now readily be seen that a twist in the opposite direction by the right hand will instantly free it, and the left can be freed also if necessary, but all the usual manifestations are possible if one hand is free.



At the close of the séance the knotted rope is exchanged for the unprepared one, the ankles untied and the medium steps forth with the two original ropes in his hand.

### **THE TWIN-ROPE TIE.**

This tie can be learned in a few minutes, and is a sure-fire release.

Two ropes of the same length as in the Kellar Tie are used, and the left wrist is tied the same as in that tie, except that the two ropes are used as one, and held side by side when the knot is made. When the hands are carried behind the back one pair of ropes is twisted around the other, as shown in Fig. 8, and the right hand pressed against the knot, concealing the twist, Then the right wrist may be tied with as many knots as desired. This slack is released by turning the right hand in the direction opposite to the twists, and the right hand may then be easily withdrawn, and when the hand is returned a turn in the opposite direction is all that is necessary to make the tie apparently secure.



All that the general public remembers about the original Kellar restraint is that he was tied with two ropes, and if the above was introduced as the same tie, not one in five hundred in an average audience would know the difference.

## THE JACOBI TIE.

In this restraint the hands are tied in the same position as when strapped in a straight-jacket, and this fact should be emphasized in the patter as a proof of its security. Attention should be called to the fact that escapes are made from the straight-jacket, but it takes the cleverest performer several minutes to do so, and, once out, it is quite impossible for him to get back again.

For this tie two softened sash cords are used, a wrist being tied in the middle of each (see Fig. 8A) and the ends carried around the body and firmly knotted at the back, thus securing the former as shown in Fig. 9. He is then seated in a chair and the ends of the rope tied to the chair-back at a point approximately behind the right shoulder blade. The legs may then be tied to the legs of the chair with another rope in any manner the committee pleases. Performer is then placed in the cabinet or behind a screen and the usual manifestations take place.

The release is easily attained by moving to the right pushing the left arm as far to the right as possible, which will loosen the opposite rope sufficiently to allow the right arm to be carried up over the head, as shown in Fig. 10. This move is made easier by slipping forward on the seat of the chair and thus



lowering the head. It will then be found that the right hand can be used to produce any of the usual manifestations, as there is slack enough to allow the hand to reach as far as the point of the knees.



*FIG. 10.*



To restore the restraint it is only necessary to pass the arm back over the head and sit upright in the middle of the chair, and the committee will then find everything as at first.

A puzzling effect may be obtained by borrowing a ring from a person in the audience and placing it on the chair seat behind the performer. A few seconds after the cabinet is closed the performer calls for "Lights," and the committee will find the ring securely knotted on the rope between the left wrist and the chair, while all the other knots are exactly as at the beginning. Again closing the cabinet, "lights" are called for in less than a minute, and the ring is found on the finger of the performer. This is done by freeing the hands as

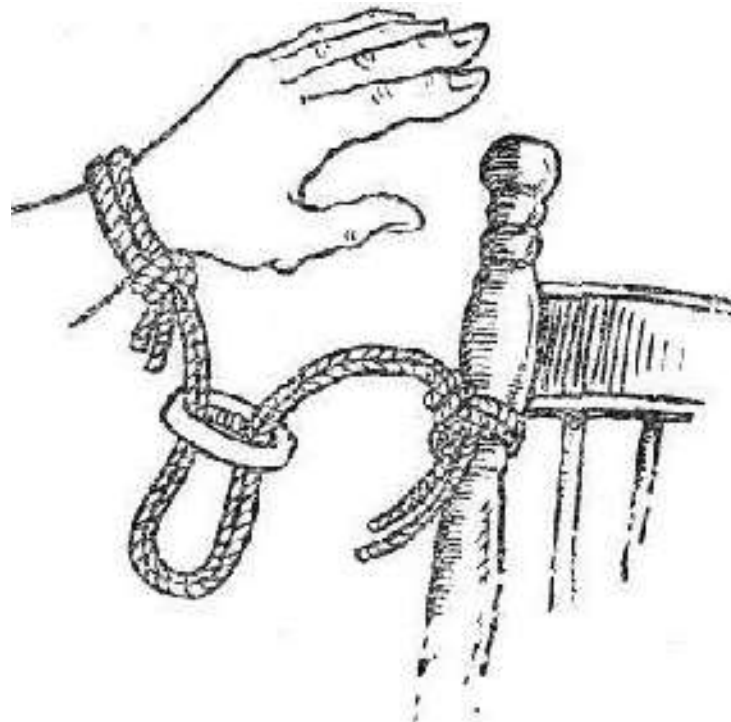


FIG. II.

before and placing the ring on the left hand rope over the double loop, as shown in Fig. 11, and sliding it on as far as possible. Then pass the double loop under the cords encircling the wrist and over the fingers, the same as in the "Handcuff Tie." A large ring is necessary in order to pass the double cords through. The release is made by simply reversing the process. Caution! Don't drop the ring,

Tapes may be substituted for the sash cords with equally good effect.

### **THREE EFFECTS WITH THE HANDCUFF TIE.**

For these effects use about four yards of small cord or tape; I prefer a tape about 3/4 in. wide.

Invite one of the audience to step upon the stage and examine the tape and then tie one end round the left wrist of the performer, not too tight, and to hold on to the other end. This should be done close to front of stage. Then make a fake knot in the tape a few inches from the hand, and holding this in the fingers of the left hand, turn and walk up stage till the tape is nearly taut, and then turn and face the audience again, then take hold of the tape about a foot from the left hand with the fingers of the right, drop the portion held in the left fingers, and a true knot will appear mid-way between the hands.

To accomplish this when walking up stage, drop the fake knot held in the left fingers, and with the right hand make a loop in the tape about a foot from the left, pass this loop under the tape which surrounds the left wrist, give it a half turn and pass it over the hand, as shown in Fig. 12, then down under the wrist tape again, and the knot will be formed. Hold this knot in the left hand in the same manner that the fake was held, turn toward audience and shake out the knot as above. After this knot is examined and the gentleman acknowledges that he cannot untie it without releasing the end,

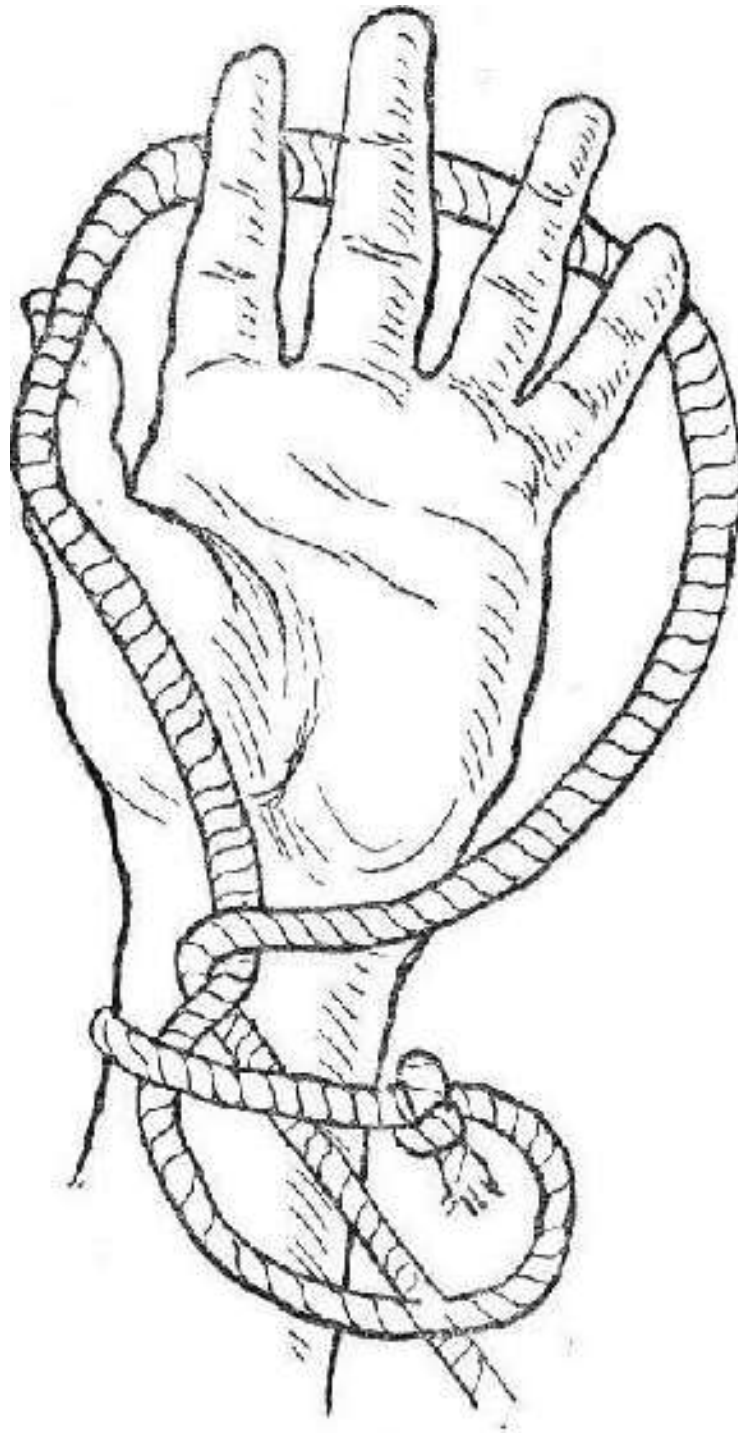
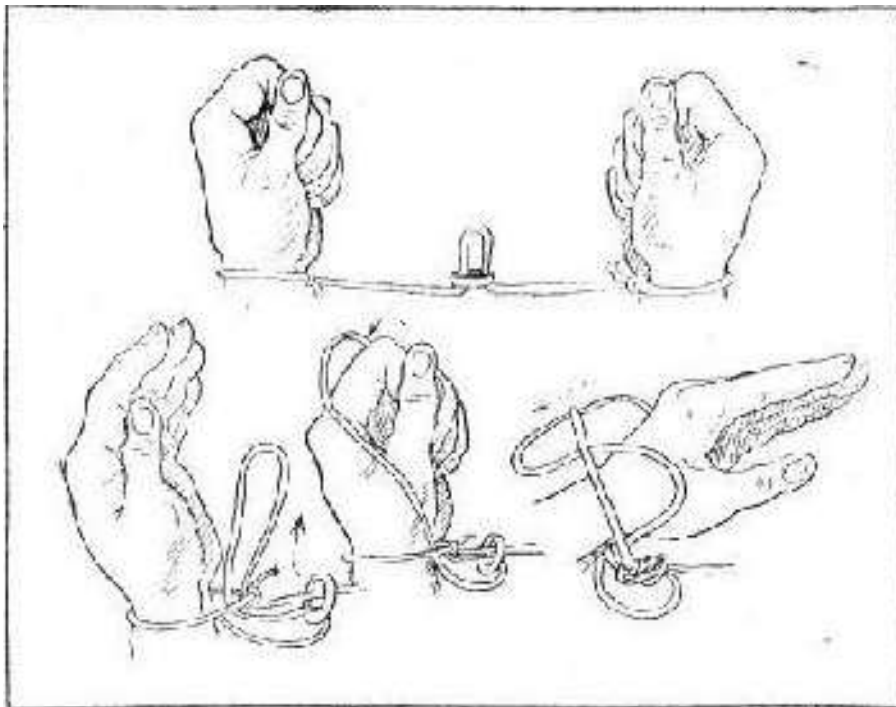


FIG. 12.

which he holds, say to him: "Well, perhaps you didn't see just how it was done. Let me try it once more. This time, for a change, we will have both wrists tied." Have the tape cut at about a yard from the left wrist and the end tied round the right. "Now you see there can be no deception, as I am

practically handcuffed, and to make it a little more interesting, I would like to "borrow a finger ring."

The ring having been procured, it is slipped over a loop in the tape, as shown in Fig. 13. You then ask your assistant to face the audience and hold his hands in such a position that all can see that he does not have a hand in the tying. Consume a couple of minutes in getting him properly placed and then stand at his side and ask him to count, one—two—three. At the word three, separate the hands and show the ring securely tied in the centre of the tape.



FIGS. 13, 14, 15, 16.

This tie is made as follows: While placing the gentleman's face to the audience, stand behind him, so that your hands will be concealed by his body, which will give you sufficient time to make the necessary moves, which require only a moment. While the hands are concealed, pass the loop under the band on the left wrist, as shown in Fig. 14, then over the hand (Fig. 15), and back under the band (Fig. 16). Hold the knotted ring and several loops of the tape in your left hand as you step to the side of the gentleman, and at the word three, let all drop and the ring will be found to be properly knotted.

After the assistant acknowledges that he cannot remove the ring without cutting the tape or untying the knots, say to him: "Is it possible that even now you don't know how it is done? Well, well, well! However, I have known similar cases before, so I will give you one more chance, and this time I will use a ring big enough for you to see. Is this one big enough? Examine it, please. Solid ring? No opening? No? You did not examine it very closely; I find an opening almost big enough to put my fist through. You saw the ring, but didn't see the hole, because the ring part is bigger than the hole, but we all know that the whole is bigger than any part, so, while the ring is bigger than the hole, the whole is bigger than the ring, and the whole is bigger than the hole, and still you didn't see it." While speaking, put the loop of tape through the ring, same as in the case of the finger ring, and hold the ring and loop in the left hand, and continue, "Was that too much for you? Pardon me, I should have asked you to sit down." Go up stage and bring down chair that stands at back and have the gentleman sit at the centre near the front. Then say: "Now I am going to do this one right under your nose. Step behind him and put your arms over his head and bring them down by his sides, which will bring your hands in front of him, and, as you promised, "right under his nose." Make two or three motions, as if tying a knot, then draw the hands apart and the ring will be found to be linked on the tape. Remove the arms and allow the gentleman to rise, saying: "There, you certainly must have caught it that time. Take the ring off, please. You can't? Well, sir, I am sorry to say that I find your case quite hopeless, so I must ask you to cut the tape and free both the rings. Thank you very much. Will you please return the borrowed ring to its owner?"

For this effect two rings exactly alike are necessary. The rings may be of metal, glass or celluloid, the latter being preferable on account of lightness, and they must be large enough to slip easily over the hand and forearm. At the beginning one of these rings is "loaded" on the left arm near the elbow, and kept in place by rolling up the sleeve, preparatory for the several ties. The rest needs hardly to be explained, as you go up stage to get the chair, the original ring is slipped under the vest and the other brought down and held in the same way as the first, then by letting go it drops down to the centre of the slackened tape.

### **AN ADDED EFFECT FOR HANDCUFF TIE.**

After the assistant acknowledges his inability to remove either ring, or to explain how they got on to the tape, say to him:—"Well, sir, I have tried

very hard to make you see how this is done, but there seems to be something wrong with your eyesight. Perhaps with the assistance of the X-rays and a larger ring you may be more fortunate. Examine these, please." Pass him an eight inch steel ring and a small metal tube, and after the ring is examined take it back and hold in the left hand with a loop through it, exactly as the previous rings were held, and continue:—"Now, sir, you hold in your hand the latest form of the fluoroscope, with which you should be able to look through my body and see what is happening on the other side. Just hold it to your eye and look at the centre of my back" (turn round facing up stage). "Can you see through me, sir?" "No? That's strange. My wife can see through me with the naked eye. Look once more. Can't you see my hands? Well, your eyes certainly are bad (turns facing audience). Can you see them now? Good! Now watch closely."

Make a few false twistings of the tape and finally draw the hands apart, and show that the big ring has joined the others on the tape.

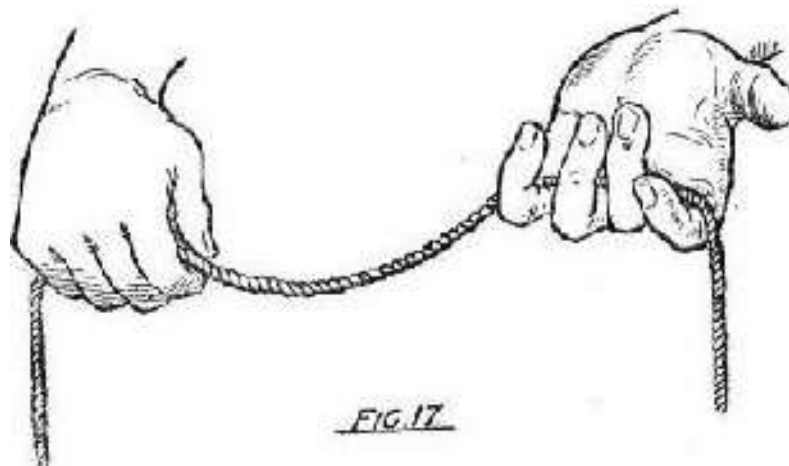
The modus operandi of this effect is quite simple. While the back is turned toward the audience during the fluoroscope trial, upset the knots on the left wrist, as explained on another page, and slip the knot back far enough to remove the left hand, then pass the ring into the tape, return the left hand to its former position, and slip the knot back against the wrist. When you turn and face the audience again the ring is still held in the left hand, as before, and they do not suspect that it is already on the tape.

### **THE TOM FOOL KNOT.**

Here we have a knot with a bad, bad reputation, a naughty knot that fairly reeks of infamy, and is said by some to be the despair of rope escapers and mediums. It was exploited by John Henry Anderson as, "The Waterloo of the Davenport Brothers," a statement which I have good reason to doubt, for in my chats with Ira Erastus Davenport, he stated positively that the Tom Fool Knot never held them, for the simple reason that they did not have to release themselves in order to produce their manifestations.

Further than this, I have met and defeated many of the alleged conquerors of the Davenport Brothers, and let it be put on record that the Tom Fool Knot is not particularly difficult for one who is trained in escapes. It is in reality a double slip knot, and unless backed up by other knots, it presents no

difficulty whatever, and even when so reinforced I have always been able to obtain sufficient slack to free one of my hands by straining at the knots.



But even wicked knots have some good qualities, and this same Tom Fool can be made quite effective as a self-tie for cabinet work. It is nothing but a double bow-knot tied in the centre of a rope, but there is a knack in tying it, and it is often used as a puzzle, for not one person in a hundred will be able to tie it, even after you have demonstrated it before his eyes half-a-dozen times. The secret lies in the manner in which the rope is held at the beginning, namely, the left hand is held below and the right hand above the rope, as shown in Fig. 17. The hands are then turned palm to palm, the rope forming a downward loop, as shown in Fig. 18, and the third and fourth fingers of the right hand seize that part of the rope that hangs down over the back of the left, while those of the left hand seize the part that crosses the palm of the right; see Fig. 19. You have only to pull these in opposite directions and you have the knot.

I have described this form of tying, so that the reader may use it as a puzzle if desired, but there is another way that the same knot can be made that is much easier to comprehend. In this form you need only to make two loops a few inches apart and tie the loops together with a single knot.

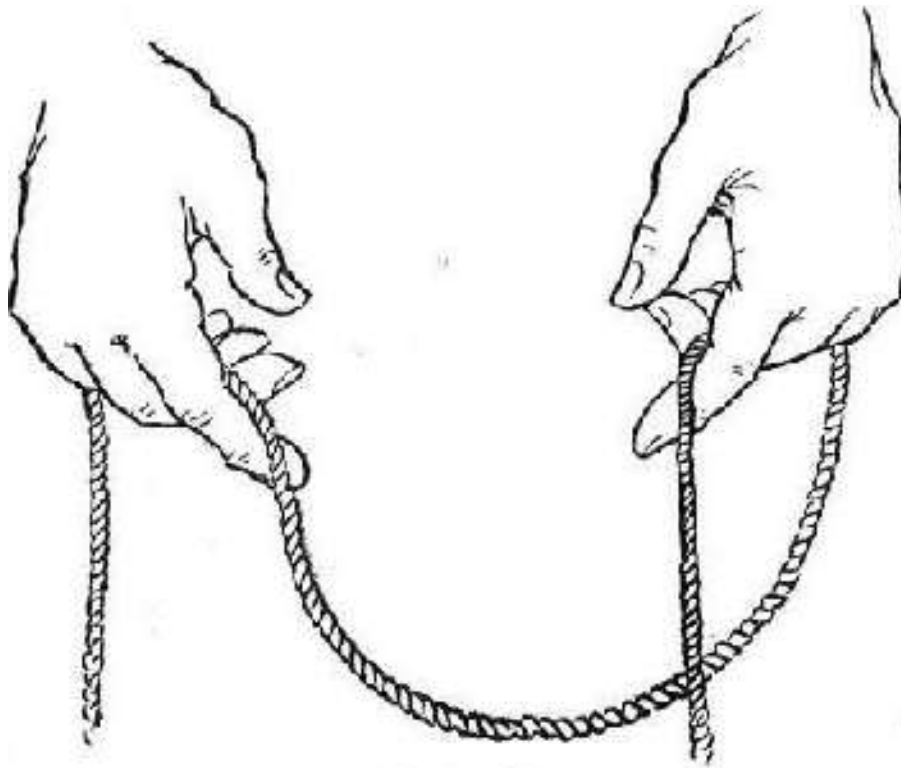


FIG. 18.

To use this knot for a self-tie it should be made in the centre of a rope four or five yards long, and the loops drawn down to a little less than the circumference of the wrists, the knot being drawn as tight as possible, so that the loops will not be pulled through while the body is being tied. Place the knot in the lap just above the knees and pass the rope around the legs and knot it underneath with a single knot. Then with the remainder of the rope tie the legs and body to the chair as firmly as the time will allow, the final knot being made at a point farthest from the Tom Fool. Now open one of the loops and slip the left hand into it and the right hand into the other. By drawing the knees apart the loops will be tightened around the wrists and you will appear to be securely tied, but by bringing the knees together sufficient slack will be gained to withdraw one or both of the hands.



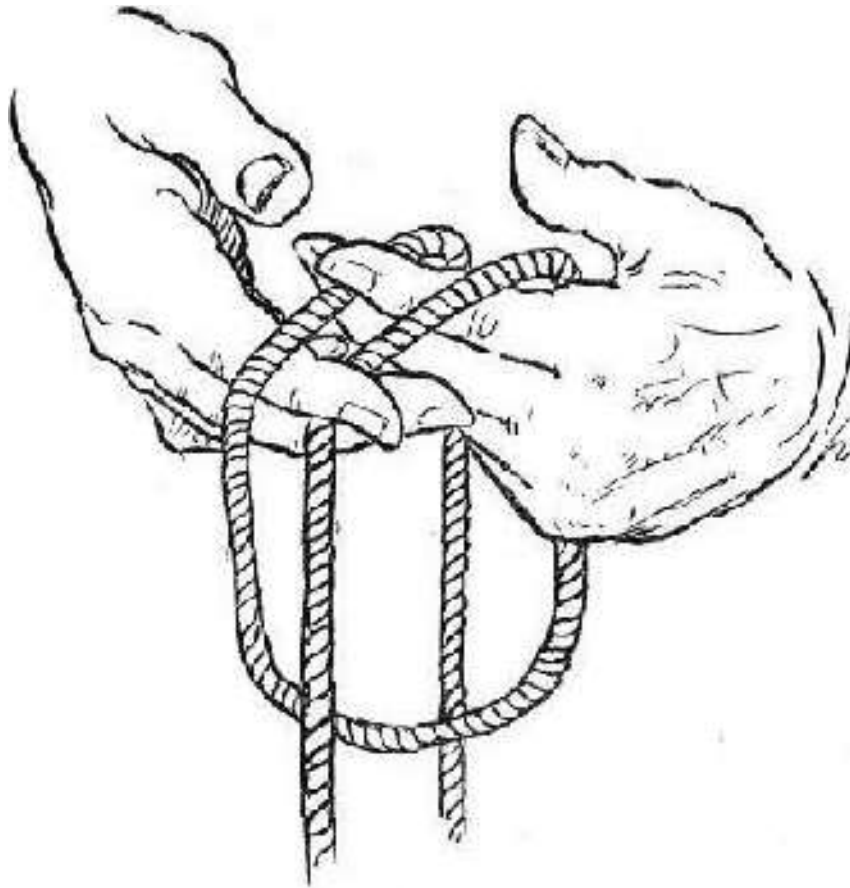


FIG. 19.

### **THE DOUBLE-HEADER.**

Another self-tie, which is somewhat similar to the Tom Fool Knot, but much more convincing in appearance by reason of the apparent complication of the knots, is known as the Double-header.

This knot is so simple that little description is necessary beyond that conveyed by the two accompanying illustrations.

A soft rope, four or five yards long, is doubled in the centre and a single knot tied, as shown in Fig. 20, leaving a loop at the end just large enough to pass the two ends of the rope through. Single knots are now tied at such distance from the centre on each side that the space between is just sufficient to span the wrists, and the ends of the rope are passed through the centre loop in opposite directions. See Fig. 21.



FIG. 20.

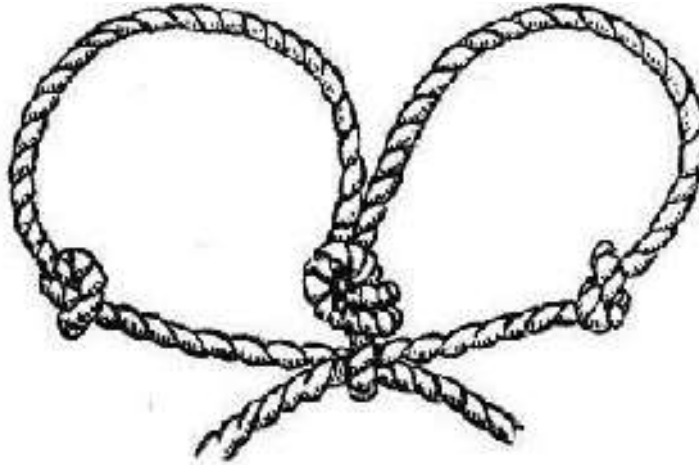


FIG. 21.

When the hands are inserted in these loops and the knots drawn together, what appears to be one large and complicated knot is formed between the wrists.

A little practice will enable the performer to judge the distance between the knots so accurately that he can make the knots and tie himself to the chair in the space of two or three minutes.

The tightening and loosening of the cords around the wrists is accomplished by moving the knees, same as in the Tom Fool Knot.

### **THE VOLUNTEER RELEASE.**

This is one of the best vehicles for introducing a comedy element into a rope-tying series.

The principle is one of the oldest in magic, being no less than that of the classic, "My Grandmother's Necklace," which can be found in nearly all of the older books of tricks, and the apparatus has been sold by thousands in the boxes of tricks sold in the toy shops; still, in good hands, the trick never fails to "get over."

It has been shown in many forms, the one given here being, in my opinion, the most effective, for the reason that a member of the committee is tied to a chair and then released by means wholly unknown to himself.

A committee of three from the audience is asked to examine two ropes, or two pieces of carpet binding, about five yards long, also three brass and three iron rings. After the examination, either the brass or the iron rings, as the committee decides, are strung on the ropes and tied in the middle with a single knot, and the same with the other rings. The ropes are passed now round the top rail of a chair and another single knot tied. Now a member of the committee is asked to remove his coat, which is hung over the back of the chair, and one pair of ropes is passed through each sleeve. A member of the committee is then asked to stand on each side and hold the ends of the ropes, standing as far away as the length of the ropes will permit.

The coatless member is now asked to sit in the chair and slip into the coat, leaving the skirt still hanging outside of the chair-back.

During the above the performer should introduce as much serio-comic patter as possible. He then continues: "Now will each of you gentlemen let me have one of the two ends that you hold. It makes no difference which end. That is to say, one end makes no more difference than the other, and the other much less difference than the one, so perhaps the safest way is to give me the one nearest your hand. Ah, thank you, sir, I see you believe in safety first. Now you, sir, one end only. Thank you. If either of you feel that you have given me the wrong end I will make the exchange willingly. Both satisfied? All right. Now I will proceed to tie these ends across the manly bosom of our handsome and intelligent friend, who seems to be wondering what is going to happen to him, and return an end to each of you, requesting that you hold them firmly but kindly, while we review the situation.

"Let us see, we now have a set of brass rings, a set of iron ditto, and a man, all separately tied into the ropes. (Performer then goes behind the chair and puts his hands under the coat.) Now which do you wish first, the brass or the iron rings? The iron? (Pause.) Something seems to be wrong! Oh, I forgot to set up the electric current. Will you, sir, place one of the hands holding the ropes against your heart and the other at the base of the brain? Thank you. And you, sir, please place one against your stomach and the other against your jaw? Good! Now, you see, we have the iron rings as requested. (Produces them.) And now the brass ones. (Produces.) Now send a little stronger wave, please. That's it! Will the gentleman rise please. Thank you. Now we have the chair as free as the speech of a socialist. (Brings out the chair and sets it aside.) But now comes the most difficult problem —how to free the man! In the case of inanimate objects it is well known to you all that

they are all alike, merely a group of molecules held together by that unknowable force which we call cohesion, and when you sent those electric waves along the ropes it weakened that force sufficiently for the ropes to pass through the rings, and then, the circuit being broken, the rings immediately assumed their original form.

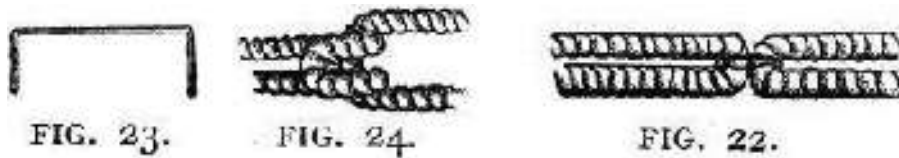
But to cut a man in two is quite a different matter, and if he failed to rally from the effect of the operation we might find ourselves in a very unpleasant situation. However, if we work rapidly enough, I think we can get away with it.

"Will each of you gentlemen face away from your victim, passing a rope over each shoulder and holding them firmly. When I count three, walk straight ahead as far as the length of the rope will permit." Some fun can be made by false counts, but finally they get the word, and the ropes are drawn quite away from the gentleman's body, and are found to be entirely free of knots.

The secret, in case ropes are used, is that they are tied together in the middle with a piece of thread or small string, as shown in Fig. 22, the hand covering the point of juncture, so that the ends hanging down from each side of the hand are really the two ends of the same rope. Follow the trick as given above to the point where the rings are to be produced, then break the string and the trick is done.

I prefer, however, to use the webbing called carpet binding, having the pieces separate at the beginning and thoroughly examined by the committee. When they are returned there are two methods of joining them; one is to use an ordinary pin, but this is liable to attract attention, and I prefer a piece of soft copper wire, bent as in Fig. 23, the opening being just wide enough to hold the webbing. This fake is held between the middle fingers of the right hand, and when the webbing is returned it is placed between the upturned points of the wire, which points are immediately bent down by the right thumb and the webbing transferred to the left hand. As this transfer is made, the webbing is separated by the right thumb just to the left of the juncture, and the fingers of the left hand passed through the opening thus made, then a shake will bring the webbing into the position of Fig. 22. From here proceed same as with the rope.

A good finish can be made by "showing how it is done," with two pieces of rope about six feet long.



Have these examined and then placed around your neck. Then you have two of the ends—either two—tied in a single knot at the throat and the same with the other two, then with two ropes in each hand have the committee tie as many knots as they please. They may then pull the ropes as hard as they see fit and nothing happens, but when you give the word the ropes come away and the double loop is found to be just large enough for the neck, but not enough to pass over the head.

Secret:—When the ropes are returned take one in each hand and during the explanation pass the right hand rope into the left hand, looping them together, as inside the back of the collar, it cannot be broken by pulling the rope if the head is held well back. To release, put the thumb and middle finger of the left hand BETWEEN the ropes that are around the neck, just back of the knots, and then free the links at the back with the right hand, which should be rubbing the neck as if the ropes hurt. A light pull will now bring the rope away, the thumb and finger being inside the double loop, the right hand immediately seizes the other side, and the double circle is shown complete.

### **THE REVENGE TIE.**

This is a good one to work on a troublesome committeeman. As soon as some wisenheimer shows a disposition to make trouble, explain to the committee that sometimes the ties that seem the most secure are really not all difficult. Then propose to have one of the committee and yourself tied in exactly the same way, selecting, of course, the trouble-maker, and by giving him the secret he will be able to escape practically as quickly as you do.

Allow yourself to be tied as follows: Have the right wrist knotted the same as in the Jacobi Tie, then cross your arms BEHIND, just at the small of the back with the right arm OUTSIDE of the left, the RIGHT WRIST BELOW the left forearm, and the backs of the hands resting against the waistline on

either side. The loose ends of the ropes are then tied in a double knot at the largest point of the abdomen. You are then tied in a manner from which escape would seem very difficult, and this is really the fact, as you will learn further on.

Now have the committeeman tied in exactly the same way. Take him one side and explain the "secret."

Give him to understand that all that is necessary is to work the ropes up over the head, thus giving him sufficient slack to get at the knots and untie them. You then enter your cabinet and a screen is placed around your opponent. And this is what happens to him. As soon as the ropes have been worked up to the neck they draw tight across his windpipe and it is quite impossible for him to move them up or down, and, in fear of strangulation, he lustily calls for help.

After he has been freed from his unhappy position by his fellow committeemen he will probably have about all he wants of rope tying and will give you no more trouble. The chances being that he will immediately leave the stage.

During the excitement you step out of your cabinet with the unknotted ropes in your hands.

Your freedom is achieved as follows: Push the ropes **DOWNWARD** in front as far as possible, then crouch down, bending the body forward, and work the **RIGHT** arm down under the seat and as far toward the knees as possible. Then, by sitting on the edge of a chair with the **LEFT** leg crossed over the right you will be able to draw the ropes forward and slip them over the knee with the **TEETH**, and by drawing the leg up toward the body they can be worked over the foot. This will leave the ropes twisted round the right leg. Now take the right leg in the lap and work the ropes over that foot, which will give you all the slack you need to untie the knots.

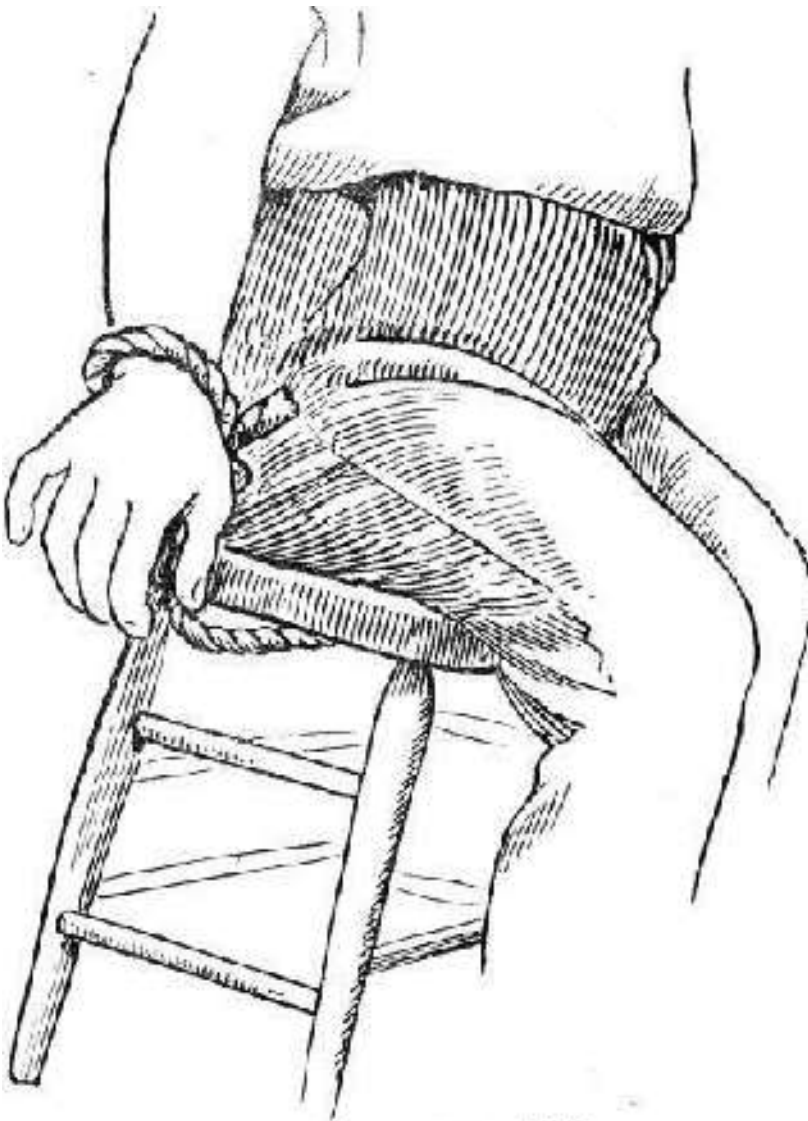
This release is hard work from beginning to end, but practice will develop little knacks that will prove helpful.

**NEVER USE A THIN, SOFT ROPE FOR THIS TIE.** Thickness and stiffness help marvelously. A projecting nail head somewhere in the cabinet can be used to good advantage in drawing down the ropes, the height from the floor being determined by experiment.

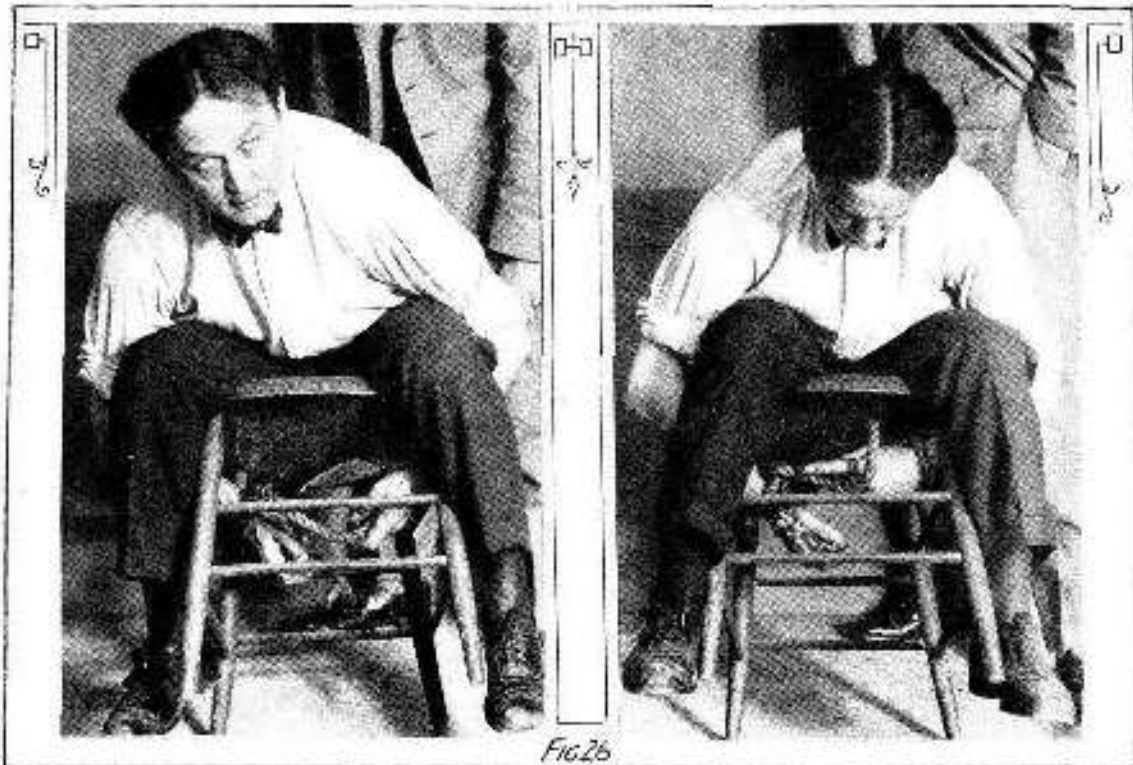
### **A GOOD CHAIR TIE.**

For this tie four short ropes are required. A smooth sash-cord being best for the purpose.

The first is tied around the waist and the ends tied to the back of the chair. Each ankle is then tied to a leg of the chair with a separate rope, and the right wrist tied with one end of the fourth rope, the other being carried under the seat of the chair, drawn as tight as possible, and tied round the left wrist. (See Fig. 25.)



*FIG 25*



With this tie it is possible to produce practically all the usual cabinet demonstrations.

The explanation is very simple, namely: The ropes round the waist and ankles are not removed, as only the hands need to be free, and, as the ropes under the seat is drawn very tight, it is impossible to tie the left wrist securely, the knots being merely a series of half hitches around the cross rope. To free the left wrist, therefore, it is only necessary to lean forward as shown in the Fig. 26, and slip the knots along the rope till the hand can be withdrawn.

At the conclusion of the "test," slip the hand back into the loop, slide the knot along into its original position, straighten up in the chair and call, LIGHTS!!

### **AN INTERLUDE.**

This knot is usually shown as a trick in magic, but as such it would have no place here. It may be used to good advantage, however, in giving instructions to committees In which case the patter would be something like the following:—"Now, sir, you are at liberty to use any form of knots that you see fit in tying me, but, as a precaution, I would advise you to cling to



such knots as you are familiar with, and that you know to be secure, rather than try to invent new ones, as was the case with a gentleman who essayed to tie me on a recent occasion, "I asked him to tie my left wrist with a single knot, like this (Tie knot as in Fig. 27), and then put a like tie on the right, like this (Make knot like Fig. 28), my two wrists being supposed to be in the two openings you see here. Then I said, 'make a third knot in any form you please,' and that is where he fell down, for he tied one like this (Form the twist as in Fig. 29), which simplified my labors materially, for all I had to do was to pull the rope straight and the knots went where the flame goes when you blow out a candle, as you see."



FIG.  
27.

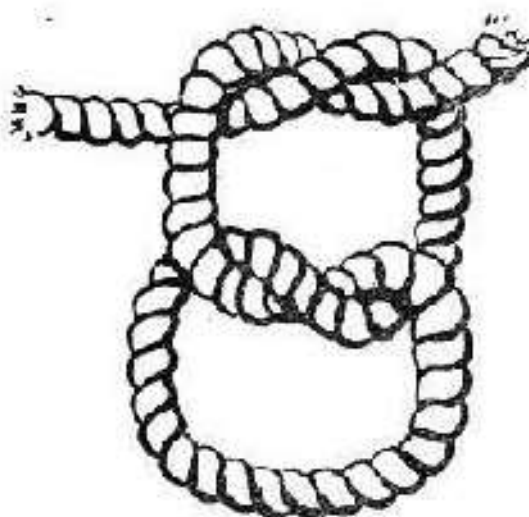


FIG.  
28.

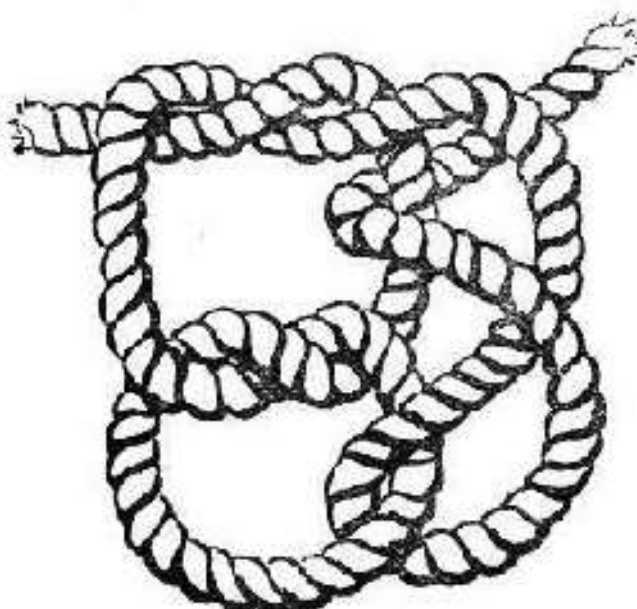


FIG.  
29.

This method needs no explanation further than has already been given. Just take a piece of rope and make the knots as shown and nature does the rest.

### THE COMEDY TIE.

This is a very clever tie, which practically works itself, the effect being to produce laughs, and, therefore, it may be used as a comedy interlude, but the release is no less mysterious on that account.

Only one Committeeman should be invited on the stage for this tie. The middle part of a rope about two yards long is tied round the left wrist in a SQUARE knot. The hands are then put behind the back and the right hand secured by another square knot. The performer then faces the audience and asks the volunteer to tie the ankles also, giving as many humorous directions as possible, finally saying, "Be sure and tie that ankle securely, it is much more skittish than the other," at the same time bringing the right hand from behind and pointing toward the left ankle. This will cause a ripple of laughter, and when the voluntary assistant looks up to see what causes it, the hand is already behind the back again, and the performer swings round and says, "By the way, I don't feel quite right about those knots, will you please see if they are all right."



FIG. 30.

The knots on the wrists are then examined and pronounced all secure, and the assistant is asked to step forward and make a positive statement to that effect. While he is doing so the performer again brings his hand forward and puts his finger at the side of his nose knowingly, then puts the hand behind, turns suddenly, and asks that the knots be once more examined. When he reports them all tight, he is asked if he is sure that his eyes are quite normal, and the answer being "Yes," the performer continues: "I am glad of that, for I once had a

gentleman on the stage who was so color-blind that he could not tell whether the knots were knots or not knots, and if not, why not. But you are all to the good, my friend. I thank you." Saying this, he brings his right hand forward and slaps the volunteer on the back and then presents his hand to shake, at the same time the left hand drops to the side holding the tangle of ropes, both wrists being free.

Explanation:—For this tie new sash cord should be used, as a soft rope will not work satisfactorily. Have the left wrist tied as shown in Fig. 30, and put it behind the back, then place the back of the right hand squarely against the palm of the left, pressing the wrist against the knot, both hands pointing downwards. Do NOT CROSS THE HANDS. The ends of the rope should be held taut by the volunteer, and as he crosses them for the first half of the knot, the hands should be brought AS FAR UP

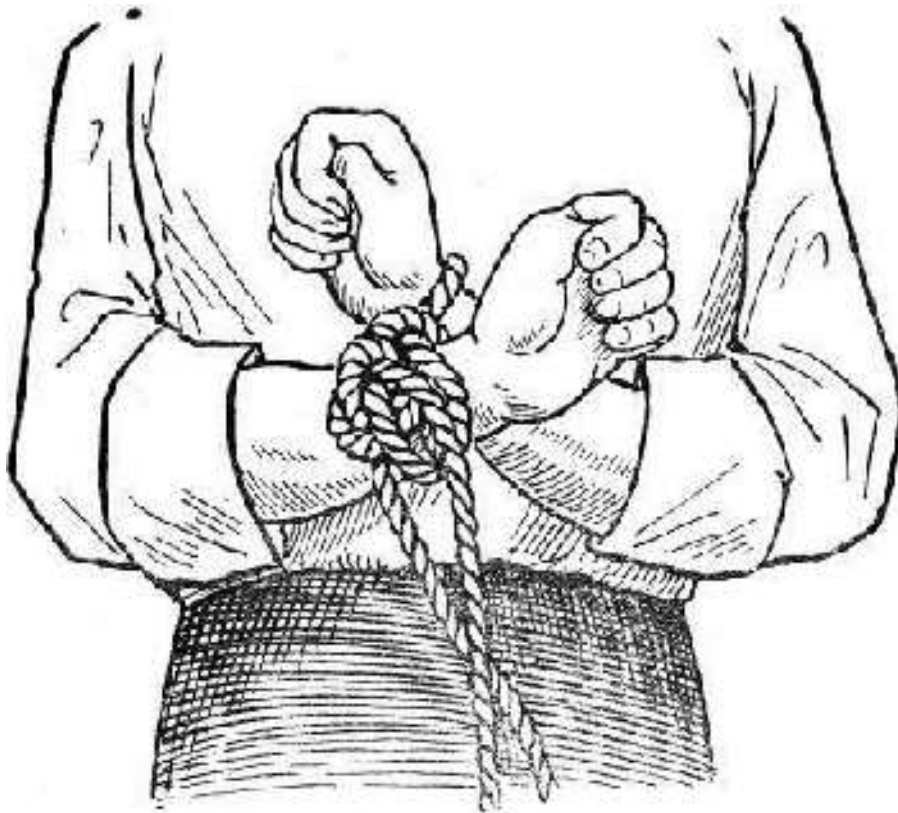


Fig 31.

THE BACK AS POSSIBLE, crossing them as in Fig. 31. This will make an invisible twist in the rope and give all the slack necessary. Have the waist knot tied in this position. Try this with a rope and all will be clear. To

release, it is only necessary to drop the hands to the first position, pointing downwards, and the right hand can be removed with very little effort.

The final release is made as follows: While telling about the color-blind man, the right hand is freed and the knot on the left wrist "upset"—which is quite easy if the rope is new—and a slip-knot formed from which the hand can be quickly withdrawn.

### **THE THUMB TIE.**

Methods of escape from apparently securely tied thumbs are easily traced back to the days of Clip Pinetti, 1784, and future research may give them even greater antiquity; the tie in which two cords are used, however, as it first attracted attention when introduced into this country by the Japanese Ten Ichi Troupe, it has become known as the "Ten Ichi Thumb Tie." With the single exception of the Kellar Tie, no other has caused so much discussion or brought out so many imitations. Many clever performers have duplicated the effect, but none seem to have been able to prepare the hand-made, fiber paper cords as used by the Japs, and, therefore, no one has thus far exactly reproduced the original method, although the effect remained the same to the eyes of the public.

The sudden popularity of the trick created a demand for the secret, and many manufacturers of magical apparatus put out various forms of metal fakes, false thumbs, etc., by means of which they claimed that the effect could be duplicated, but all of these were promptly discarded and to-day only sleight-of-hand and showmanship are made use of in this "tie."

The usual form of presentation follows closely that of the Ten Ichis, that is, the thumbs are tied by a committee and the performer takes a position fifteen or twenty feet away. The committee then throw a number of solid hoops toward him, which pass between his hands and into his arms. The knots are instantly examined and found to be unchanged. Other tests of the same nature follow; such as, linking the arms with those of a committee man whose hands are clasped, linking through the backs of chairs, around an upright pole, and the like.

The first method which I shall describe is the one that is most commonly used and the one that probably approaches most closely to the Ten Ichi method. For this two fairly stiff cords, about one-eighth of an inch in thickness, and respectively sixteen and twenty inches in length are used. Some performers use cords wound with Japanese paper, but this is worse than useless, as any smooth woven cord will answer the purpose and does not give the impression of preparation.

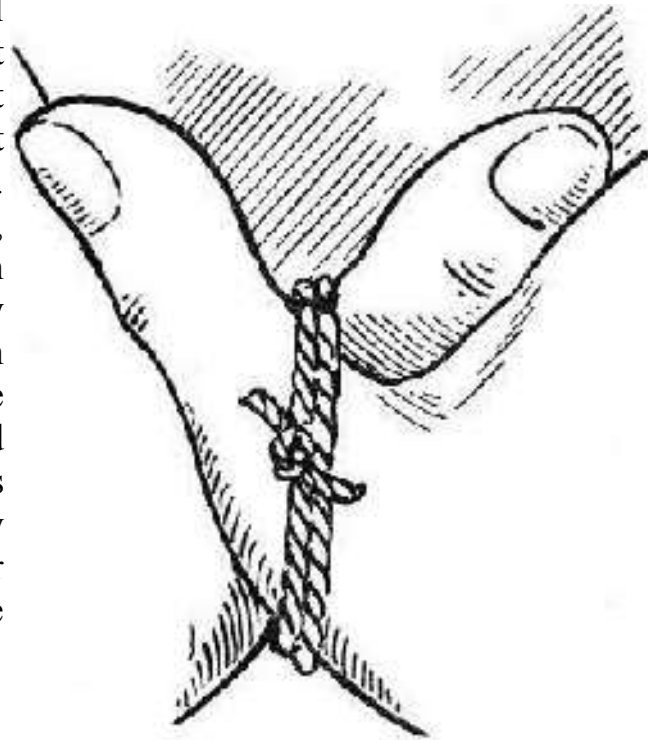


FIG. 32.

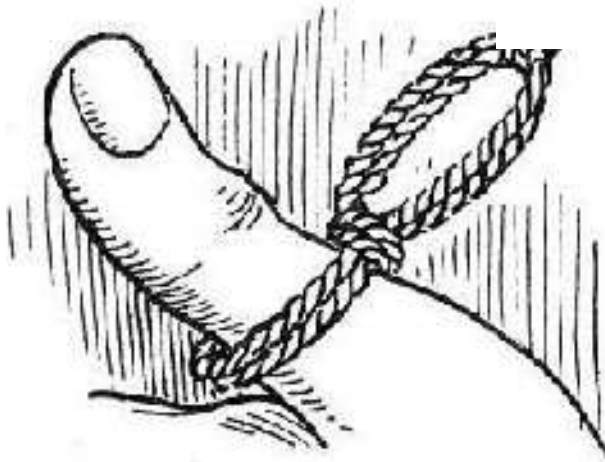


FIG. 33.

After the cords have been examined the longer one is wound twice around the thumbs, which are presented as in Fig. 32, the cords drawn as tight as possible and knotted on the top, as shown. During the tying the thumbs should be held somewhat closed together at the tips than shown in the cut. The shorter cord should be passed between the thumbs

and wound twice round the other at right angles, tying this on the top also, thus forming a sort of figure eight, as shown in Fig. 33, with a thumb through each loop, and the remaining ends may be tied together if the committee desires. Now by moving the tips of the thumbs farther apart, like opening a pair of scissors, it will be found that the right thumb can be instantly withdrawn and returned to its loop.

When waiting for the hoops to be thrown the hands should be held flat, palm to palm, the fingers pointing upward. In this position the thumbs cannot be

plainly seen, so the right thumb may be withdrawn before the hoop is thrown. Then catch the hoop between the hands pass it into the arm, return the thumb to the loop and bring the tips together as before and step quickly forward to have the knots examined. All these take but an instant if they have been properly practiced.

### **ANOTHER METHOD.**

This form of the thumb tie is not difficult to acquire but a certain amount of "showmanship" is necessary in order to present it effectively. Two pieces of one-eighth inch woven cord, one twelve, and the other eighteen inches long, are used, and they should be prepared by boiling them in paraffin for thirty minutes, which leaves them fairly pliable, but sufficiently stiff to retain any shape into which they may be bent.

In this tie the thumbs are not crossed, but held side by side, and the longer cord is passed fairly around them as shown in Fig. 34, but as the hands are brought down so that the committee may make the knots on the tops of the thumbs, the forefinger of the right hand is slipped under the cord (see Fig. 35) and the hands clasped as in Fig. 36 these two moves being made simultaneously— and the thumbs are then tied by the committee. A little comedy may be introduced here with good effect. Tell the committee to pull the knots as tight as possible, as they cannot hurt you, but at the same time show by your face that the operation is painful. The knots should really be drawn very tight, otherwise the effect is lost.



FIG 34



FIG 35

When these knots are finished the forefinger should be slipped out and the hands shown as in Fig. 34. To accomplish this, the instant that the tip of the forefinger is removed the cord should be held firmly against the sides of the thumbs by the roots of the forefingers so that it cannot slip, then when the palms are spread open the slack will be transferred to the back of the hands, and these being held near to the body, the slack is not visible. Now the hands should be brought back to the position shown in Fig. 36, but with the fingers straight instead of clasped, the slack having been shifted to the inside of the hands by the method mentioned above. The next move is a little difficult at first, but easy enough after one gets the knack of it. Still retaining the slack inside the hands, keeping the palms near enough together to hide the slack, the performer should himself pick up the short cord and place it in position for the cross tie, which is made the same as in the method already explained, but just as the committee are about to tie this knot the forefinger is again slipped into the slack and the hands clasped as before.



FIG 36

After this final knot has been tied the committee should be allowed to inspect their work in order to see that the thumbs are securely tied. For this inspection both the inside and the outside of the hands should be shown, the slack being shifted to the opposite sides as explained above. When the committee is satisfied that all is secure, the performer should again clasp his hands, but this time the left hand should be inside the right, then with the left forefinger slide the cross cord as far as possible over toward the left thumb



and it will then be possible to slide the right thumb out and in to the loop with perfect ease.

### **THE HANDKERCHIEF RELEASE.**

An instantaneous release that is quite effective and which may be used as an illustration of solid through solid is performed as follows: With the hands held palm to palm, allow the wrists to be tightly tied together with a silk handkerchief. A rope about twenty feet long is then examined and one end passed between the arms, the free ends being given to one of the committee with instructions to wind them around his hand to make sure that they do not become separated.

The performer then backs up stage till the rope draws taut, and shows that it is really linked over the handkerchief. Then he works his hands to show that they cannot be withdrawn, after which he walks swiftly down till within a yard of the holder of the ropes, turns and walks quickly back again. This time, as soon as the rope draws taut it drops to the floor, and the performer instantly turns and comes down again, showing the hands to be tied as at first.

There is a little knack in this release, but once learned it presents no difficulty whatever. When performer backs away he draws the rope strongly against the handkerchief, and in working the hands as above he presses the heel of his right hand against the wrist of the left—just above the rope, working the bight down between the hands till it can be seized by the fingers. To do this it is necessary to slacken the rope slightly, and it may take two or three attempts, but there is plenty of time while showing that the hands are securely tied, so don't hurry.

Hold the loop concealed in the hands and walk down, as directed above, then turn, and during the walk up, slip the loop over the left hand, as shown in Figs. 14, 15 and 16 in the Handcuff Tie, and the release is accomplished.

### **THE CLOTHES LINE TIE.**

This is a very showy tie, and is well adapted to close a rope act.

About fifty or sixty feet of sash cord is used, and the statement that it is a seventy-five foot clothes line is never disputed.

The whole secret lies in the fact that it is quite impossible to tie a man while in a standing position, with such a length of rope, so that he cannot squirm out of it with comparative ease, if the tying **BEGINS AT ONE END OF THE ROPE** and finishes at the other.

At the beginning of this test you should hold the rope coiled in the hand, and the first move is to uncoil the rope and have it inspected by the committee. Then explain that there seems to be a few skeptics still, and for that reason you will give the committee "plenty of rope" and let them tie you in any manner they please. During this speech you again coil the rope, at the same time explaining to the committee quietly, that in this form it will be more easily handled, passed through the knots, etc., the object of this being to force them to begin the tying at one end. Some performers have a slip-knot already tied in the end of the rope, but this is not necessary, and is rather suggestive of preparation.

It is the experience of all who have used this tie, that the first few knots are carefully tied, but after a time it will be found that the rope is being used up very slowly, and they will begin winding it around the body and making very few knots. A hint to "hurry up, as the audience is getting restive," will also induce less careful knotting, and, as they are following no regular method, and several are handling the rope, they are bound to work more or less at cross purposes.

If the committee happens to be very much in earnest, and begin to make more knots than suits you, it will be well to swell the muscles, expand the chest, slightly hunch the shoulders, and hold the arm a little away from the sides. After a little practice you will find that such artifices will enable you to baulk the most knowing ones. You should always wear a coat when submitting to this tie, as that will be found to be an added help in obtaining slack.

It is an excellent idea to practice with a couple of assistants who know the game. Let them try their best to secure you and you will get a great deal of needed experience. The actual escape is always possible, but practice is necessary in order to acquire speed in execution.

A sharp knife with a hook-shaped blade should be concealed somewhere on the person, as it may be found useful in case some of the first, carefully tied

knots, prove troublesome. A short piece cut from the end of the rope will never be missed.

When the last knot is made you should turn to the audience and say: "Are you all satisfied that I am securely tied?" and then immediately answer your own question by saying, "Of course, you have to be satisfied, for the committee has done all that is possible, in fact, they have 'reached the end of their rope.'"

After being placed in the cabinet you should call attention to the fact that it has taken six or eight minutes to bind you, and ask some one to hold a watch and see how long you require to escape.

### **SIMPLEX TIE.**

This is so easy that it can be worked by any boy with very little practice, the practice being for speed only.

Note the way the hands are tied in Fig. 40, with a space of ten or twelve inches between them. When tied in that manner the escape is only a matter of untying knots.

When tied to the chair, as in Fig. 41, the hands can be easily brought together and one unties the other.

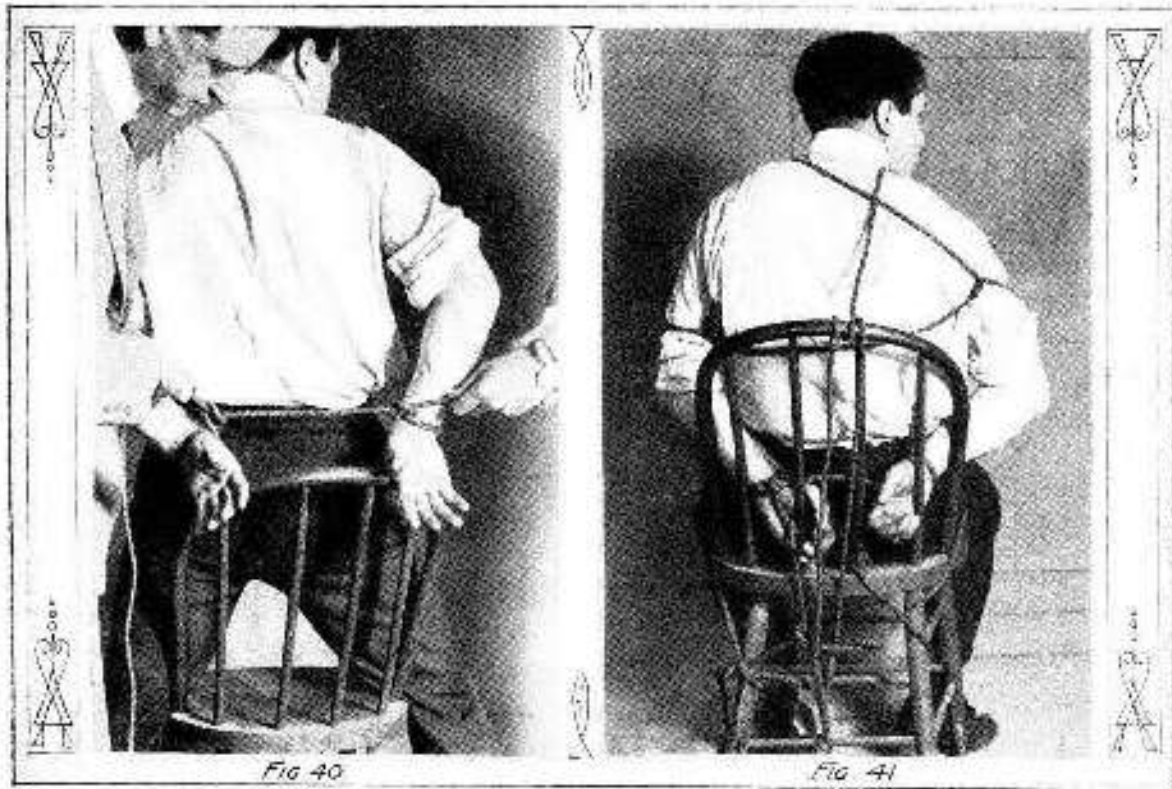
With both hands free the rest of the knots can be managed without difficulty, particularly if a rather stiff rope has been used.

### **UNDER WATER ESCAPE.**

This belongs to the high school of escapes, and should never be attempted by a beginner.

In the first place it is absolutely necessary that the aspirant be a good swimmer, well versed in treading water, floating, and all methods of keeping afloat without the use of the hands. This is not as difficult as it at first appears, but it should be thoroughly practiced, either in a tank or in a shallow stream, and always with a friend at hand to act as a life-saver in case of accident.

It is also necessary to acquire the art of swimming with a forward and back motion of the feet, in place of the old scissors stroke, and once having mastered this method the body can be kept afloat as easily as by the old style. The necessity for the above is apparent when we consider that the hands must be used on the knots continuously.



### **SIMPLEX TIE.**

Bear in mind that the release must be accomplished rapidly, not only on account of the necessity of breathing, but because the ropes shrink when they become water-soaked, although this is not rapid enough to seriously interfere with your work.

The hands must always be released first, and the student should practice all the methods explained in the foregoing pages, studying the appearance of each knot, sort of knot he has to contend with and the manner in which he should attack it. After the hands are free the remainder of the knots should be fairly easy.

In the illustration I have used short lengths of rope, but the escape is no more difficult from one long length.

Deep breathing in order to strengthen the lungs and increase their capacity must also be practiced, for it will be necessary to hold the breath for a considerable time, and as the escape is bound to require rather violent struggles, this is no child's play.

Let me caution you to use extreme carefulness and not to neglect the smallest detail. This is dangerous business at the best, and two of my imitators have been drowned when thrown overboard in manacles. If you are not an absolutely fearless swimmer, I warn you to keep away from ropes under water, and unless you are an expert of the highest order, never substitute handcuffs unless you resort to fixed cuffs, which require only a pull to open, and even these might go wrong with disastrous results.

I have never used fixed manacles in any of my stunts, always allowing stage cuffs to be affixed. When I did use my own it was only to add extra weight, so that I might sink quickly to the bottom and out

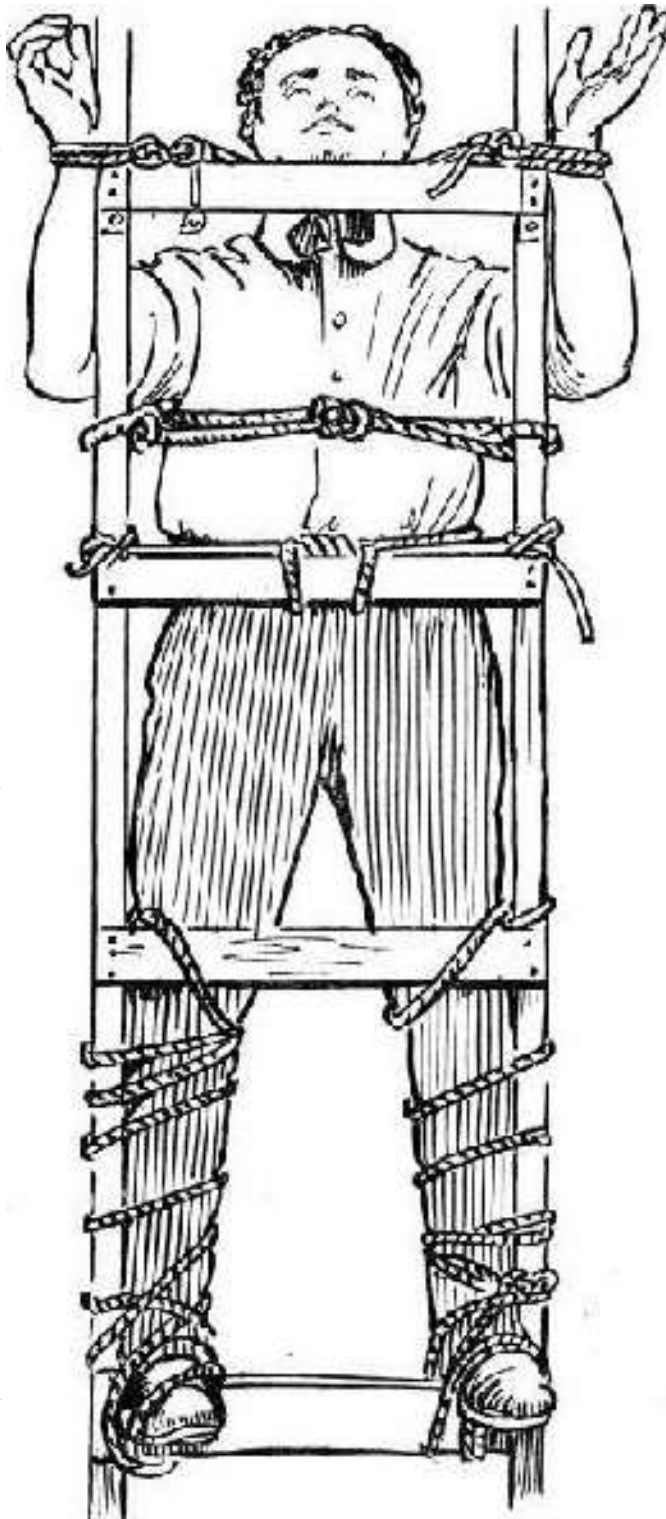
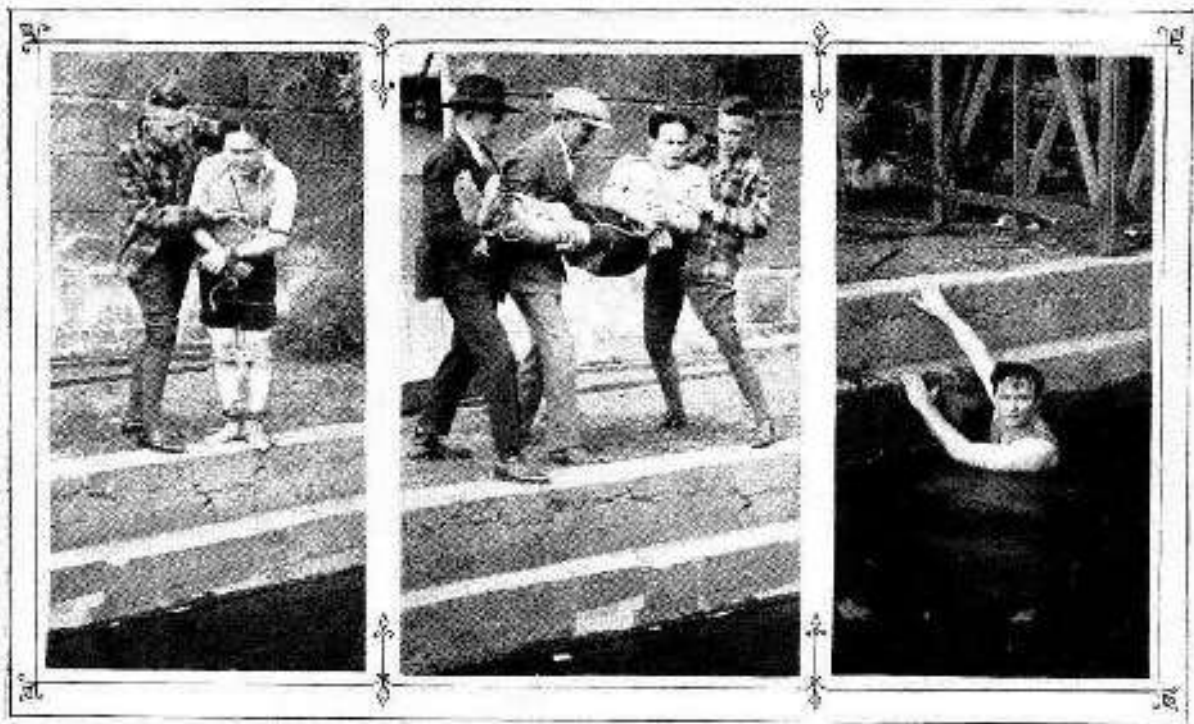


FIG. 44.

of sight of my audience, so that they might not inspect my method of releasing myself.

### **SPECTACULAR ESCAPES.**

Strange as it may appear, I have found that the more spectacular the fastening to the eyes of the audience, the less difficult the escape really proves to be. For example, the ladder tie here shown (see Fig. 44) gives the impression of an almost unescapable restraint, while in reality it is simply a slow but sure proposition.



### **UNDER WATER ESCAPE.**

Note carefully the manner in which the hands are tied to the sides of the ladder, and when the committee have finished the tying, start to wriggle the arms and strain at the ropes. This should give you sufficient freedom to work one of your hands to the front of the ladder, thus bringing one section of the rope within reach. This you work loose and you will then find that knot after knot can be untied, and with one hand liberated, the rest is only a matter of time.

It is advisable to use short lengths of stiff, new sash cord, the stiffer the cord the easier it will untie. If the ladder is placed upright against a wall it should be securely fastened in place, as a fall in such a helpless condition might prove disastrous. In case the ladder is laid on the floor, the upper end should be rested on a box or something of the kind, thus leaving room to work the hands to the front side.

### **THE BIG WHEEL RELEASE.**

This belongs to the "spread-eagle" class of spectacular escapes, which depend largely upon "scenery." We are all aware that many mediocre plays have attained a measure of success entirely through an artistic or realistic setting. So with the spectacular release. An audience which would go to sleep while an artist was making a really difficult escape from the wheel of a farm wagon will break into tumultuous applause over a comparatively easy one from a cannon wheel, as shown in Fig. 45.

The first object in all these releases is to work for the liberation of one hand, after that it is only a question of untying knots; a science in which the escape artist should become expert before attempting any release. He should accustom himself to all forms of knots by having himself tied by a sailor, or someone who knows how to tie real knots. I have always encouraged my assistants to devise new knots and fastenings, getting my practice in that way, and I'll say that they have given me some pretty hard tussles, for nearly all of them have been in the Navy or before the mast in a merchantman.

Do not go before the public until you are letter perfect in the particular release that you propose to present. I have worked weeks and weeks on one escape before venturing to present it in public.

It has always been essential that my assistants be expert in the matter of tying knots, for in most of my outdoor stunts my life depends on the manner in which my feet are lashed. For a long time I made use of heavy padding for my ankles when hanging from high buildings in the straight-jacket escape, but even that would eventually become painful.

### **THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN TIE.**

During one of my engagements at the Lasky studio, in California, that popular leading man, Tom Meighan, who established a lasting reputation by his admirable work in the screen production of the *Miracle Man*, told me of

a tie that was formerly used to secure an Indian who had imbibed too freely of "fire-water."

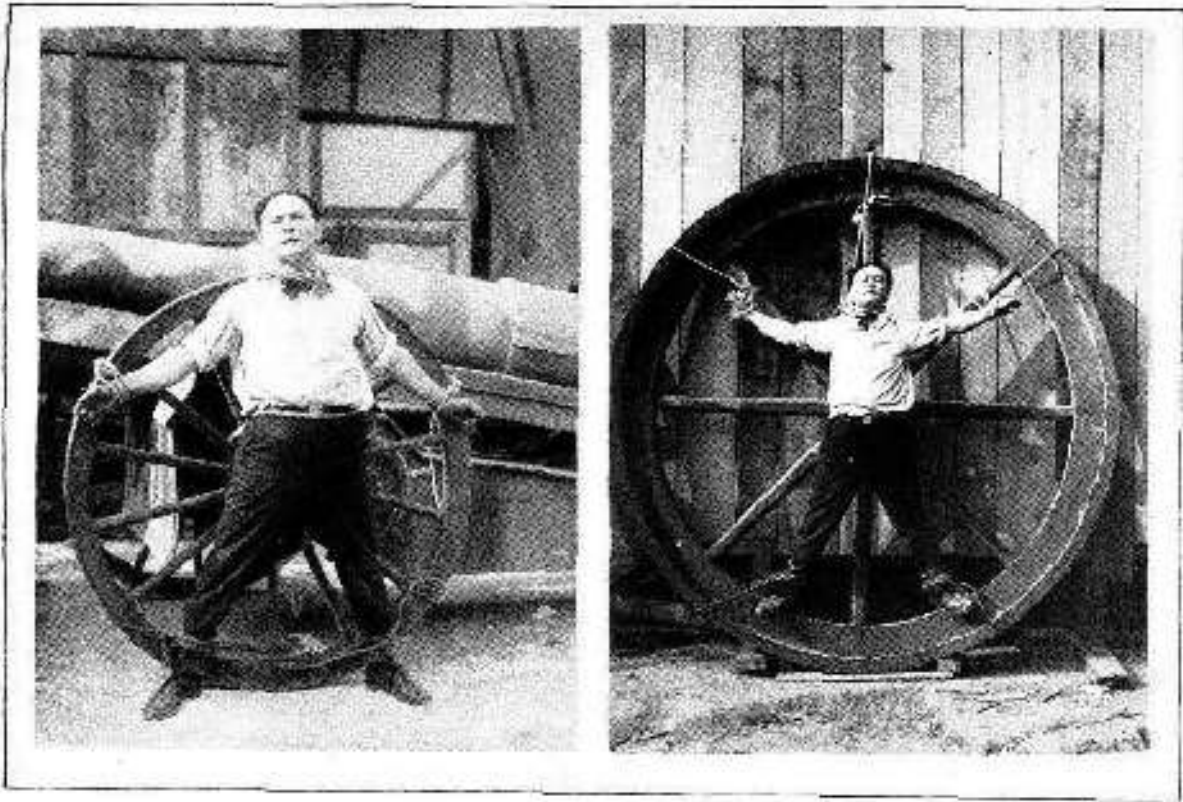


FIG. 45.—THE BIG WHEEL RELEASE.

The accompanying illustration (Fig. 48) shows Meighan in the act of subjecting me to this tie. I am led to believe that he carried the process considerably farther than was the custom in the case of the bibacious aborigine, but I succeeded in freeing myself in less than four minutes.

The manner of liberating myself—or yourself—is to bend the body forward and downward as far as possible, which should enable you to get the rope off the neck, or, if this is found impossible, it will allow you to reach the knots with one or other of the hands and untie them.

This was only used while conveying the man from place to place, and at a time when his wits were not at their best, which I presume to be the reason that he did not free himself. It is not a bad tie, however, and is shown here to give the reader an idea when changing his programme.



The restraint used by the Indians themselves is in a class by itself. No ropes are used, but they find a stout sapling and place the prisoner's legs around it, entwining his feet and resting his body on his haunches in such a manner that he is powerless to raise himself. By this means they secure their man without resort to fastenings of any kind.

Once, in Oakland, when my challengers had drawn me up about a hundred and forty feet, I made the escape successfully, but the ropes became twisted, and it was impossible to lower me to the ground. There I hung suspended in mid air where no one could reach me. They called out the fire department, but before they could get up their scaling-ladders, a window-cleaner, who was accustomed to doing stunts while washing high windows, fastened himself to a window frame with a couple of towels and, standing on the ledge, leaned far out and dragged me to safety. This taught me a lesson. My ankles were in pretty bad shape, for I hung there a long time head downwards. My recollection is that it was about eighteen minutes, but I will not attempt to say how long it seemed to me.

After that I always had a life-line on one of my ankles, and my assistant stood ready to haul me up or in, as the case might be, to the nearest window.

During the engagement where I made this escape twice a day, at the New York Hippodrome, I adopted an ankle fastening which consisted of two strong bands of webbing. These were placed around my ankles with the ropes attached to them. After that my ankles gave me no more trouble, and I could hang upside-down with ease and comfort.

### **THE RUSSIAN TRANSPORT TIE.**

This is the restraint used by Russian officials when transporting prisoners into Siberia, and it is supposed to render them helpless during the journey; but, of course, there is no reason why a prisoner should attempt a release, as he is always under the eye of an officer, and such an act would probably earn him a severe beating.

In using this tie as a stunt, however, the release may be classed with the easy ones. The hands are tied in any manner in front, the ropes being carried up to and around the neck, as shown in Fig. 49, in which I am being secured by the celebrated Russian dancer, Kosloff

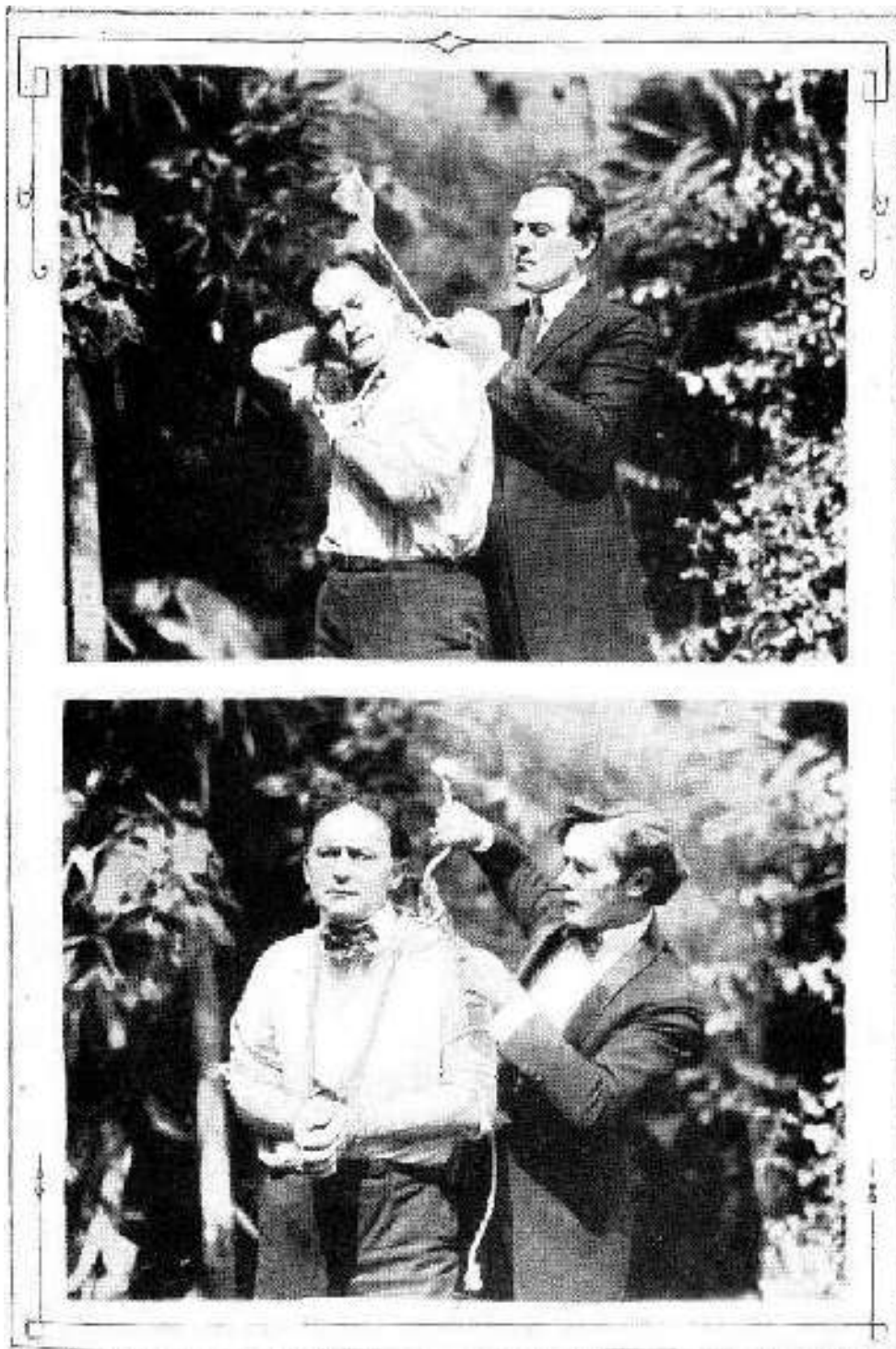


FIG. 48.—THE NORTH AMERICAN INDIAN TIE.

FIG. 49.—THE RUSSIAN TRANSPORT TIE.

For the release you have only to bring the hands up within reach and untie the wrist knots with the teeth, and with the hands free the remainder of the knots can be readily negotiated.

Do not get the idea, however, that, because easy, this escape is not effectual. Try it before an audience after you have mastered it sufficiently to acquire a measure of speed, and you will be surprised at the enthusiasm it will cause. The spectator will not stop to think that you are working at high pitch.

I can recommend this unqualifiedly to the performer who only presents one tie.

### **SLADE'S KNOTS.**

One of the simplest as well as most convincing methods of causing knots to appear on an endless rope is the one practiced by the medium, Henry Slade, who was enabled by this clever device to thoroughly mystify the celebrated astronomer, Zöllner. The latter, while able to forecast to the fraction of a second an eclipse of the sun, or a transit of Venus, thousands of years in the future, was utterly at a loss to solve this problem in pure hocus pocus, and went to his grave in the belief that this, as well as many other stunts of the mediums, was accomplished through some practical application of the elusive fourth dimension of space.

EXPLANATION.—A soft cord about three-sixteenths of an inch thick, and four or five feet long, is best suited for the purpose. A duplicate of this cord with eight or ten loose knots tied in it and the ends tied together, is concealed in the right sleeve of the performer's coat, with the knotted end just inside the cuff.

The other cord is then carefully examined by the committee, and the ends are tied together by the performer with the same knot as used for the duplicate, namely, by laying the two ends side by side and tying a single knot. He then asks to have the knots sealed or nailed to the seat of the chair inside the cabinet, or both, if the committee so desires.

While making the above request, the cord is held in the closed right hand, the knotted ends projecting between the thumb and forefinger and the loop hanging below the hand. While the committee is preparing to seal the knot, the knot of the duplicate is drawn out of the sleeve and substituted for the other, as shown in Fig. 50. After this exchange the right hand should be held

with the palm downward and loosely closed, thus concealing the other knot and the part of the cord running into the sleeve. As the long loop

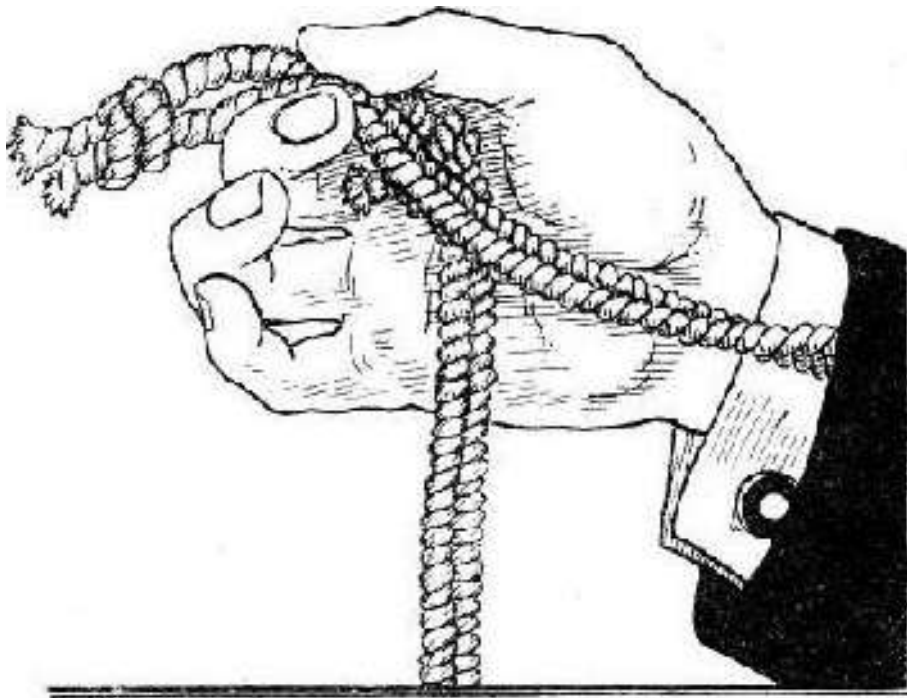


FIG. 50.

is in sight all the time, the substitution of the duplicate knot is never suspected.

After the knot is sealed and the cabinet closed, the performer has only to pull the knotted cord from the sleeve, secrete the other in its place, and call for "lights," when the seals will be found to be unbroken, and the cord full of knots. The cabinet need not be closed for more than five seconds.

This is slightly different from Slade's method, as that clever gentleman usually worked in darkened rooms, and a modern audience would not stand for some of the raw work of his day. He did work this test in the light sometimes when he had a single "sitter" on the opposite side of the table, which gave him a chance to hide his hands while making the exchange.

## **THE COTTON-BANDAGE TEST.**

### **ONLY SUITABLE FOE SPIRIT CABINET WORK.**

This is the test that made Annie Eve Fay famous, or, perhaps it would be nearer the point to say, she made IT famous, for she was one of the cleverest mediums of history. According to Truesdell, however, the test was first made use of by Laura Ellis, a successful medium, who retired to private life some ten years before Miss Fay began her sensational career.

The secret is now quite pretty well known, and I introduce it here only for the reason that it forms an important link in the history of restraints and releases.

The usual mode of procedure is as follows:—The "lecturer," after the usual harangue, tears off five strips of cotton cloth about an inch and a half wide and eighteen inches in length. The right wrist is securely tied in the centre of one of these and the knots sealed or sewed together. Then the left wrist is tied in like manner, the hands passed behind the back and the four ends tied together, leaving a space of about six inches between the wrists.

Meantime the cabinet has been thoroughly examined and found to contain an upright post about six feet tall, which is securely screwed to the floor, also a stool and the usual equipment of tambourines, bells, musical instruments, etc. A ring held by a staple driven into the post hangs at a point a little above the height of the stool, and a screw-eye about two feet higher.

A third bandage is now linked on those connecting the wrists, and an end of this passed through the ring and the ends tied together and sealed. This tie should be made by the lecturer, and he must leave enough slack for the medium to pass her hand through the loop between the ring and the point where it crosses the other bandages. A fourth bandage is now tied around the medium's neck and secured to the screw-eye, and the fifth is tied around her ankles. All the knots are honest and all should be either sealed or sewn.

As soon as the cabinet is closed the medium puts her left hand through the loop of the third bandage and pushes the arm as far through as possible, bringing



FIG. 52.

both hands round to the right side of the body, as shown in Fig. 52. By sitting as far back as possible a little more "reach" is gained, and, although the hand is never actually free, enough freedom is gained to produce nearly all the manifestations necessary.

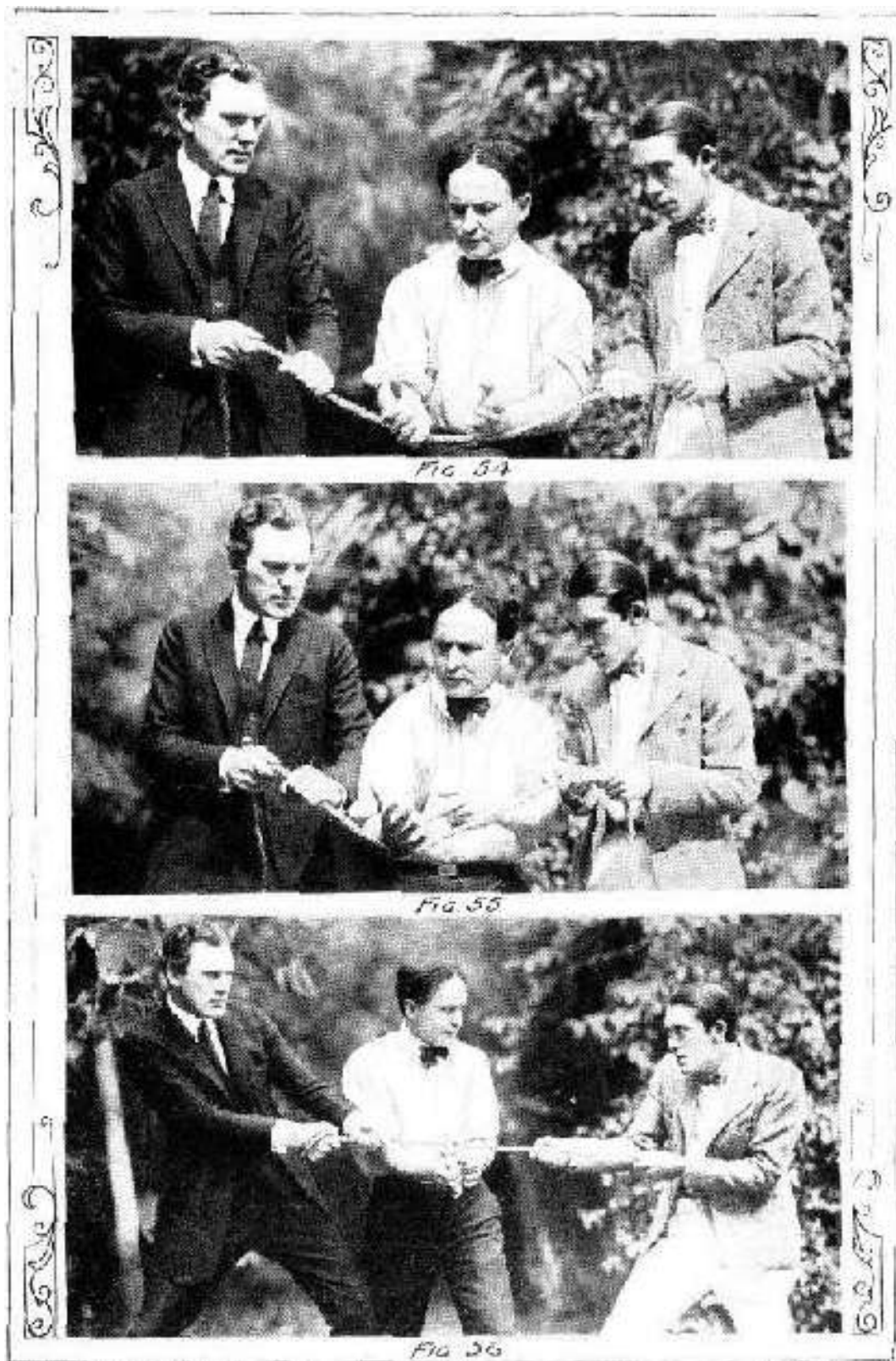
If the reader desires a more detailed account of the manifestations possible in this test, I would refer him to the book entitled, *BOTTOM FACTS CONCERNING THE SCIENCE OF SPIRITUALISM*, by John W. Truesdell, New York, 1892.

### **HOUDINI'S "FULL VIEW OF AUDIENCE" RELEASE.**

This release, if worked with the proper dash and address, never fails to "get them," but the manner of stealing the slack is so bold that a certain amount of "nerve" is necessary in order to "put it across."

A piece of smooth rope, about three feet long, is held horizontally by one of the committee, and the performer places his wrists fairly upon the centre of it and asks that they be tied at the smallest point. (See Fig. 54.) As he makes this request he draws the left hand backward and points at that part of the right wrist just back of the heel of the hand. (See Fig. 55.) As this hand is returning to the side of the other the left little finger catches the centre of the rope and draws a loop up between the wrists, holding it firmly between the heels of the hands. After a little practice this steal becomes absolutely undetectable, and the grip is so secure that after the first half of the knot is made the committee may indulge in a "tug-of-war" at the two ends of the rope without endangering the release, as shown in Fig. 56; the committee in this case consisting of the screen favorites, Tom Meighan, and Jack Pickford who, as all the world knows, is a brother of the renowned Mary.

I have always used this as a quick release, to get a laugh, and I usually called one of the stage hands and asked him to tie my wrists, as I wished to try out a new tie. After he has tied the wrists, having called another to help draw the knots tight, I ask, "Are you sure you have tied them good and tight!" To which he will probably answer, "Yes." Then I say, "Thank you; much obliged," suddenly free both hands, wad up the rope and walk away. This is sure to get a laugh.



HOUDINI'S "FULL VIEW OF AUDIENCE" RELEASE.



## **THE TURNED VEST.**

It is quite effective to take one of the committee into the cabinet during one of the "tests," and this is one of the best for that purpose.

**EFFECT.**—A tape about four feet long is tied to the wrists of the volunteer, as in the Handcuff Tie, namely, one end tied to each wrist, and the knots sealed. A duplicate tape is linked through this and tied to the wrists of the performer, who is in his shirt sleeves, and sealed in the same manner. The volunteer is then blindfolded and the cabinet closed. Almost instantly a bell begins to ring and a horn to blow, and the noises continue till lights are called for, when it will be found that the tapes are still linked and that the performer's vest is turned back-side-before and buttoned up the back.

**EXPLANATION.**—As soon as the cabinet is closed the performer asks the volunteer to clasp his hands across his chest so that the spirits cannot remove his coat. This brings his hands together so that the tape hangs down in a long loop. Meantime the performer rings the bell and blows the horn, which he holds in his teeth all through the following, blowing it continuously and ringing the bell once in a while.

Performer now takes the hanging loop and slips it under the tape on one of his own wrists—in the direction from the elbow toward the palm—then over the tips of the fingers and under the tape again at the back of the wrist. He will then be unlinked from the volunteer, and if a little care is used, the latter will not know that anything has happened.

Performer now unbuttons his vest, reaches up and seizes it by the collar at the back of the neck and pulls it completely over his head. This will bring it in front with the tapes passing through the arm-holes. He should then draw the entire vest through one of the arm-holes, as if turning it inside out, and it will then be in a position to slip on with the front to the back. By stepping through the hanging tape the hands are brought to the back so that the vest can be buttoned. It is now only necessary to step back through the hanging tape and renew the link in exactly the same way that the unlinking was accomplished. Then give the bell and horn a final inning and call for lights. Of course everything will be found same as before, except that performer's vest is "hind-side afore," and the volunteer will be as much "in the dark" as the others.

## **SACK ESCAPES.**

It is somewhat surprising that sack escapes, with their endless possibilities of mystification, have been so neglected by entertainers. Even the Escape Artists have not given this class of work the prominence it deserves, while writers on Magic have devoted very little space to it.

In view of these facts I have decided to include a number of sack tricks, feeling confident that any of my readers who give them a try-out will be amply repaid for the little trouble involved.

First let me say that an assistant is always desirable when working sacks, for, while not absolutely necessary in every case, still, when tied up in a sack one feels much safer when there is someone outside to guard against accident or a too inquisitive committee.

For nearly all escapes a sack, forty inches wide and seven feet long, is best; plenty of elbow-room being a necessary consideration.

The material depends somewhat on the taste of the performer as well as the particular trick used. For nearly all escapes, however, rather light-weight burlap, which has been washed to render it soft, is best. This is semi-transparent from the inside, and, after a little practice, ordinary articles can be handled through it almost as easily as with the bare hands. This is always mystifying and convincing, and it gives a little extra time without losing the interest of the audience.

### **AN EASY SACK ESCAPE.**

This is an old form of sack escape, but in good hands it can still be made effective.

A sack of rather thin material is used and a duplicate is concealed in the back of performer's coat, with the mouth of the sack just inside the collar of the coat.

After the visible sack has been examined the performer steps into it and the assistant pulls it up around him. When the mouth of this sack is opposite the neck, assistant gets hold of the duplicate and brings both up together above the performer's head. As he gathers them in his hand he pulls the inside one

about six inches above the other, winds a handkerchief twice around them, and ties it as tightly as possible. This holds the two sacks together and conceals the point of juncture. Then have the committee tie the bag with a stout cord just ABOVE the handkerchief and seal the knots. This really only secures the mouth of the inside sack, and after the performer has been placed in the cabinet he has only to pull the neck of the outside one from under the handkerchief, step out and secrete this one under his coat. Then he can walk out of the cabinet with the other over his arm still tied with the handkerchief and the sealed cord.

### **THE BROOMSTICK ESCAPE.**

A sack escape that I have found to be very satisfactory and not at all difficult, is achieved by means of a short piece of broomstick covered with the same material of which the sack is made, and which is easily concealed about the person.

As the assistant gathers the mouth of the sack for tying above the head of the performer, the latter pushes this fake up into the opening, and the hem of the sack is gathered around it and securely tied by the committee.

As soon as the cabinet is closed the broomstick is withdrawn and thus sufficiently slack is obtained to make it possible to work the hem out of the encircling cords. After the escape is made the performer can easily work the hem back into the cords again, and all will appear to be secure as at first.

A trial will prove that this escape is much more effective than this meager description makes it appear.

### **LOCK AND CHAIN SACK ESCAPE.**

EFFECT.—The performer is placed in an unprepared sack and the mouth is secured by winding a dog chain several times round it and fastening with a padlock, the key-hole being sealed.

For this escape almost any style of spirit lock may be used. The one opening with a hat pin being the easiest. It is best to have several locks of different shapes, giving the committee a choice.

Nearly all forms of the spirit lock are opened by means of some small fake that can be worked through an ordinary burlap sack almost as easily as with

the bare hands; that is to say, the meshes of the burlap can be enlarged sufficiently to push the fake through and then it is no more difficult to handle it from the inside than it would be if the hands were enclosed in thin mittens.

Fakes to spring any of the locks submitted to the committee should be concealed on the performer's body, and, as the sack is semi-transparent from the inside, he can see which lock is chosen and have the proper fake ready for immediate use.

The escape needs no explanation; all that is necessary is to spring the lock, unwind the chain with as little noise as possible—being careful not to let the chain drop on the floor—and step out of the sack.

After the escape is made the chain should be put in place again and locked as before.

Any padlock that is so constructed that it can be opened when the key-hole is sealed is known to the profession as a spirit lock, as the sealing furnishes sufficient "proof" that it cannot be unlocked except by the spirits.

Many perfectly honest locks are so faultily constructed that the snap-bolt may be pushed back by a sharp instrument introduced into the opening at the side of the shackle, and even when this opening is completely filled by the shackle it can be sufficiently enlarged by filing to allow for the passage of the fake.

Some locks that cannot be worked by the above method may be sprung by giving them a sharp blow on the floor and thus jarring back the bolt.

In addition to these there are a number of designs of spirit locks that can be readily opened by those in the secret, as they are made for the purpose. These can be purchased from the regular dealers in magical apparatus.

### **THE SPIRIT SACK.**

This is a supposed restraint rather than an escape, and it is used in spirit cabinet work only.

EFFECT.—The medium is placed in an unprepared sack, which has a stout cord, sometimes called a puckering string, running through a hem at the top.

The sack is closed by drawing the cord as tight as possible, tying with several hard knots, sealing the knots, and cutting off the remaining ends of the cord about three inches from the knots.

The medium is then placed in the cabinet and as soon as the curtains are drawn the manifestations begin with bells, tambourines, horns, and all the noise producers usual in the cabinet séance. When the medium calls for "lights," the curtains are quickly opened by the lecturer—or assistant—and a bell or tambourine comes flying out, but the committee find the medium still secure in the sack and the seals unbroken.

A series of "tests" follow, and at the end of the séance the lecturer cuts the cord close to the knot and passes it for examination. It will be found that the length of the cord is just sufficient to encircle the puckered mouth of the sack, and that the seals are still intact.

EXPLANATION.—The sack may be of any material and need not be as wide as those used for escapes. The bottom should be seamless and the side seams should be double stitched, to prove beyond a doubt that they cannot be opened. One of these seams should run up to within a little more than an inch of the top—before the hem is turned—and the other to within a little over two inches; then when the hem is turned its ends will be open for the passage of the cord and the top of the other seam will appear to be completely stitched up, but in reality there is a slit on the inside extending from the bottom of the hem nearly to the top. The hem should be an inch wide and this slit about three-fourths of an inch long.

A strong cord, three or four feet longer than the circumference of the sack, is threaded through the hem, leaving the hanging ends of about equal length.

No other preparation is necessary except that the medium should be supplied with a sharp knife.

When the medium steps into the sack he should face toward the seam that has the slit and the lecturer should "assist" him in pulling up the sack about him. When his hands are sufficiently hidden he should slip a finger through the slit and hook it over the cord, draw out a loop, slip it over the unbuttoned lowest button of his vest, and immediately button it. (Some use a stiff hook sewn to the waistband of the trousers.) The lecturer then pulls the sack up over the medium's head and asks the committee to draw the cord as tight as

possible, tie and seal the knots, and then cut off the hanging ends a few inches from the knots.

As soon as the cabinet is closed the medium has only to free the loop and the top of the sack can be instantly opened and all sorts of manifestations produced, as the entire body is free. If necessary he can get entirely out of the sack and back in again in a few seconds.

Just before calling for lights the first time, he can hold a bell or tambourine **THROUGH THE SACK** with one hand and keep it jingling, while he pulls down the cord and closes the top with the other; tossing the instrument to the front as the curtains are opened.

At the close of the séance the medium cuts the cord that extends from the **LEFT-HAND** side of the knot, leaving an end projecting from the slit that is long enough to reach around the right-hand side. While doing this he must keep a firm grip on the cord at the slip, so that the top may not open prematurely, and when the lecturer cuts at the right-hand side of the knot and pulls the cord out of the hem, the medium pulls out the other piece and pockets it while getting out of the sack. This will be easy, as the interest of all will centre on the knotted piece which the lecturer passes for examination. The sack may then be freely examined also.

### **DOUBLE SACK CHALLENGE ESCAPE.**

This is one of the most effective sack escapes that I have ever used, and, while it presents some difficulties at times, in the majority of cases the release is certain and comparatively speedy.

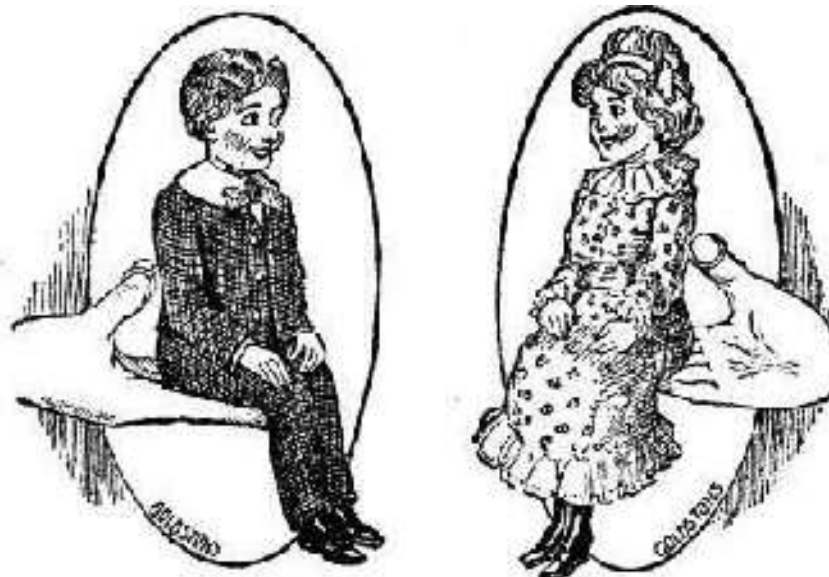
Two unprepared sacks, about forty inches wide and eighteen inches longer than the height of the performer, are thoroughly examined, and he steps into either of them and the committee tie the top securely. The second sack is then drawn **DOWN** outside the other, the performer lies down on the floor and the sack is tied at the bottom. In this "helpless" condition he is placed in the cabinet, from which he shortly walks forth with the sack on his arm.

**THE ESCAPE.**—The sacks should be made of burlap, which has been worked soft, and cords should be of the size of thin sash cord, rather stiff, and only about enough to encircle the closed mouth of the sack twice and allow for a double knot.

As soon as the cabinet is closed the performer reaches up and unties the knots at the tip of the INSIDE sack. This sounds impossible, but through a single-thickness of soft burlap the knots can be untied practically as easily as with the bare hands. First get the knots between the palms of the hands, which have been moistened with saliva, and roll them back and forth a few times, thus loosening the knots somewhat, and they can then be untied without much difficulty. Then push the sack down so that the knots at the bottom may be reached through a single thickness, and treat these in the same way.

Unless the original knots were too complicated retie the two backs, one inside the other, which will give your audience a real problem to solve.

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