

tricks." That is true, provided it is borne in mind that the tricks must not only be *done* but must also be *presented* or *acted* properly. Good presentation can only be acquired by actual performance before an audience, even if it is composed only of your home circle. Confidence in yourself is the main thing. If you know that you can do the trick without any possible hitch, then you can devote your whole attention to "putting across" the fairy tales which you are telling. To help you in gaining this confidence, we shall from time to time explain tricks which practically work themselves—self-workers, as they are called.

The art of interspersing these self-workers with tricks that call for skill is an important principle of card magic. The most eminent magicians use self-workers; but they use only the good ones, never those which call for endless dealing of cards or obvious mathematical principles. Some of the good self-workers are gems of subtlety and misdirection. Some of them depend on faults of observation on the part of the spectators; many depend on the inability of most people to understand properly what is being done.

The trick that follows is one of the latter kind and, when you have performed it, you will be astonished at the effect it causes. It is called:

A Poker Player's Picnic

Taking a pack of cards which has been thoroughly shuffled, a spectator cuts it into four piles. Turning the top card of each packet himself, he finds that he has actually cut to the four aces.

Preparation. If you make this your first trick, you must beforehand place the four aces on the top of the pack. If you wish to do it following other tricks, or with a borrowed deck, then you must get the aces to the top secretly. *Never* attempt to do that furtively. Run over the faces of the cards, holding them so that no one else can see them and at the same time saying, "I suppose these are ordinary cards?" Watch for an ace, cut the deck to bring it to the bottom as you look up and say, "Is there a joker in the pack? If so, I don't want that card."

Continue running through the cards; each time you find an

ace separate your hands just enough to be able to push it to the bottom with the left thumb as you glance at the spectators and make some casual remark. If there is a joker, discard it.

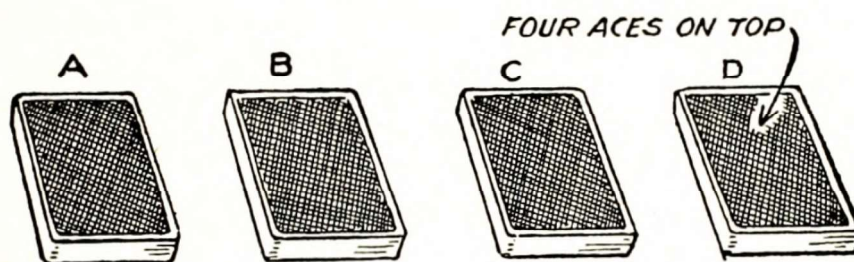
If you do the work openly and casually, to the onlookers you are merely toying with the cards and your actions pass without special notice.

Procedure. The steps are as follows:

1. If you are beginning with this trick and you have the aces at the top of the pack, well and good. If, however, you have had to sort them to the bottom as we have just explained, then you turn the pack face downwards and make an ordinary overhand shuffle. When you reach the last half-dozen cards run them—that is to say, pull them off with the left thumb one by one, thus bringing the four aces to the top.

2. Execute the overhand shuffle control, retaining top stock (see page 10), again leaving the aces on the top.

3. Offer to demonstrate how gamblers cheat at cards and comment casually that their skill is greatly overrated. “As a matter of fact,” you say, “almost anyone can duplicate their feats with very little practice.” Single out one of the spectators. “You look as though you might be a good poker player. Will you help me?”



POKER PLAYER'S PICNIC

Fig. 9

4. Place the pack before your assistant and request him to cut it into four packets about equal. He does this, and for the purpose of our explanation we shall call these packets A, B, C, and D, the four aces being the four cards at the top of D (Fig. 9).

5. Instruct him to pick up A, remove three cards from the top of the packet and place them at the bottom, then deal one card from the top onto each of the other three packets.

6. Have him take B and repeat exactly the same process, putting three cards to the bottom and dealing one card on each of the other three packets. Have him do the same with C and D. (Follow this procedure with the cards and you will at once see that the three cards that are placed one by one on D are finally moved to the bottom of that packet, and then three aces are placed on top of each of the other packets quite unwittingly by the spectator himself.)

7. Recapitulate what has been done. "You will recall that you yourself cut the cards and that I did not touch them at any time. I picked you for this demonstration because you have a poker face. Let's see if I judged you correctly—let's look at the cards at which you cut." At your direction, the assistant turns over the top card of each packet and to his astonishment finds each card to be an ace.

Note particularly that at the end of the trick you emphasize that the *assistant cut the cards*, but do not mention that he also moved cards about. You do this deliberately because you want him to forget about this part of the trick. The average person has great difficulty in recalling the details of any fairly complex action. Capitalize on this weakness by stressing a part of what he did and suppressing another part. This expedient is often used in magic. You will be amazed, sometimes, to hear the assistant describe the trick and state that he *shuffled* the cards and then cut to the four aces, which he certainly did not do. This unconscious distortion will enhance your reputation and at the same time bring you considerable secret amusement.

A Pocket Discovery

A card having been freely selected by a spectator, noted and replaced in the deck, the pack is shuffled and then placed in a spectator's pocket. Any number having been chosen, the magician draws cards from the pocket singly and produces the selected card at the number chosen.

1. Begin by handing the pack to a spectator and asking him to shuffle it and while doing so to think of any card. When he has done that, instruct him to take that card out of the pack