

VENTRILOQUISM

AND

KINDRED ARTS,

BY

FRED RUSSELL

(Of the Palace Theatre, Alhambra, Crystal Palace, &c., &c.)

AN

Historical and Practical Treatise,

GIVING

EXPLICIT AND RELIABLE DIRECTIONS,

WHEREBY THE WHOLE ART OF

DISTANT VOICE ILLUSION,

→⇒· FIGURE + WORKING, ·⇐←

AND VOCAL MIMICRY

MAY BE ACQUIRED.

With Instructions how to manipulate Ventriloquial Figures; to Imitate the Phonograph, Musical Instruments and Animals; to give a Ventriloquial Entertainment; Remarks on Music-Hall, Concert, "Smoker," and Drawing-room Engagements; Humorous Dialogue for Figures; and an Original Ventriloquial and Mimetic Sketch entitled: "Clara's Babies."

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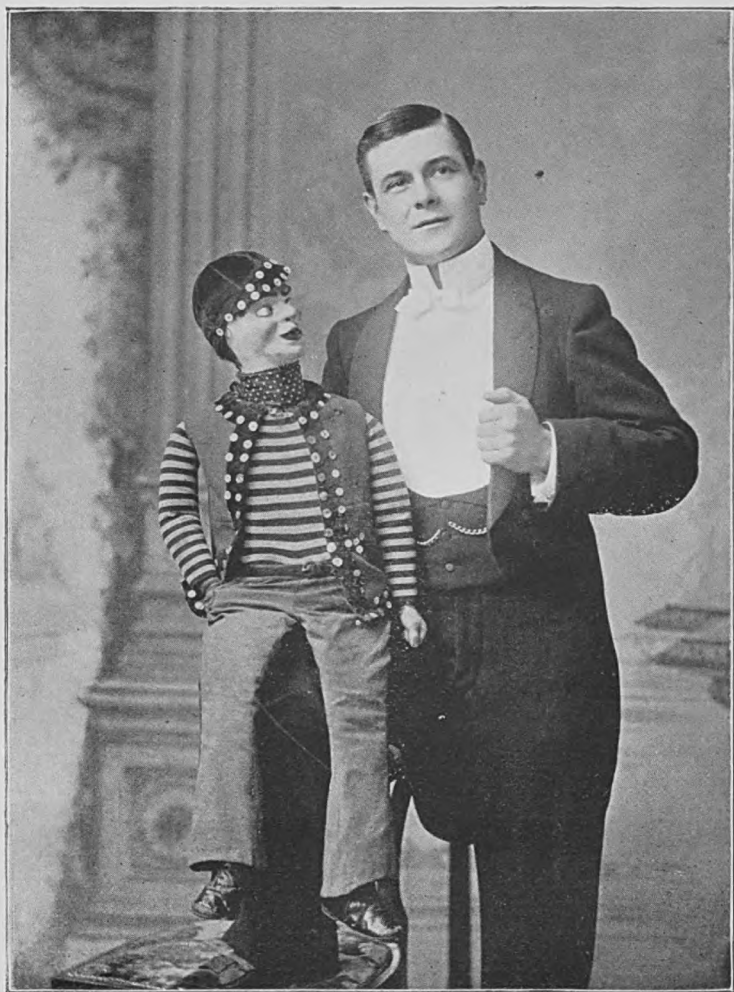
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RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
TO
CHARLES MORTON, Esq.





Faithfully Yours
Fred. Russell



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MR. FRED RUSSELL AND "COSTER JOE."

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Mr. FRED RUSSELL.

(Extracted from the "Professional World" and "Encore.")

" But few entertainers have made such rapid strides in public
 " favour as the popular Ventriloquist and Mimic so widely known
 " under the *nom de theatre* of Fred Russell. Born in 1862, Mr.
 " Russell was educated for the journalistic profession, and is a
 " member of the Institute of Journalists. When only about 20
 " years of age, he was concerned in the establishment of a news-
 " paper at Walthamstow; but youth and inexperience told the
 " inevitable tale, and in less than a year the money invested had
 " reached vanishing point. After short engagements on minor
 " journals, he became associated with the *Hackney and Kingsland*
 " *Gazette*, an influential North London newspaper; but in the
 " meantime, he had cultivated the mimetic gifts with which nature
 " has so liberally endowed him, and was induced about ten years
 " ago to give a public exhibition of the remarkable powers of
 " Ventriloquism which he had so often exercised to the delight of
 " his friends in private, and he at once "caught on." When Mr.
 " Chevalier appeared as a coster delineator, Mr. Russell brought out
 " a wonderfully life-like model of the comedian (the famous
 " 'Coster Joe'), and the cleverness with which this automaton
 " was voiced and worked brought the performer to the front at a
 " bound, so that in a very short time his concert connection
 " assumed gigantic proportions. He still maintained his associa-
 " tion with journalism, however, and in 1894, when Mr. Henry
 " Browne, the editor of the "*Gazette*," died, the Proprietors had
 " sufficient confidence in Mr. Russell to offer him the post, which
 " he accepted. But the double life—newspaper work in the day

"time and entertaining at night—told upon his health to such
 "an extent that it became imperative to give up one or the other.
 "Early in 1896, Mr. Charles Morton saw him at a concert, and at
 "once offered an engagement at the Palace Theatre. Mr. Russell
 "thought the matter out, and came to the conclusion that if such
 "a keen judge as Mr. Morton considered he was worth anything,
 "it would be foolish to let the offer go by. He confesses to having
 "'faced the music' at the Palace on the first night in fear and
 "trembling, for he received no assistance from mechanical
 "appliances except his one little figure, "Coster Joe;" but the
 "success attained exceeded his fondest anticipations. The
 "result of the experiment was that Mr. Russell gave up news-
 "paper work, and took permanently to the "halls." Indeed, he
 "became such a favourite at the Palace Theatre, that, within a
 "period of twenty months from his first appearance, he gave some
 "400 performances there—a record in music-hall annals. Mr.
 "Russell has endeavoured—and successfully—to raise the tone of
 "the ventriloquial art above the generally accepted standard.
 "The automata he uses are marvels of mechanical skill, and his
 "dialogues are really witty. He is very quick in turning to
 "account incidents occurring amongst the audience, and such
 "impromptu "wheezes" are always most acceptable. Possessing
 "an excellent and well-trained voice, a great feature is made of
 "the songs he introduces. At the Crystal Palace he was
 "especially successful. It was there he first introduced the feat
 "of singing a soprano song through the medium of a life-size lady
 "figure, and at the same time playing a violoncello obbligato—a
 "performance the extreme difficulty of which it is hard to
 "appreciate. Unlike some of his *confreres*, Mr. Russell does not
 "claim to be the only Ventriloquist on the face of the globe
 "worthy of the name, or to have performed before all the crowned
 "heads of Europe, Asia and Africa, although he has had the
 "honour of appearing before members of the Royal Family on
 "several occasions. This modesty is quite refreshing after one's
 "experience of the general run of performers in this line, who, on
 "their own showing, are either 'Kings,' 'Princes,' 'Captains,'
 "'Lieutenants,' or 'Professors.' Mr. Russell does not wear the
 "ferocious moustache usually associated with Ventriloquists, but
 "dispenses altogether with this useful means of concealing the
 "movements of the lips, and appears before his audience clean-
 "shaven, giving his entertainment, as he says, in a 'bare-face'
 "manner."

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

WHO has not listened with delight to the exhibition of a skilful Ventriloquist whilst he reproduces, in a manner as humorous as may be, the vocal peculiarities of all sorts and conditions of men and women, birds and beasts; voices far away, under the floor, in cupboards, in boxes; the crowing of cocks, and the cackling of the barn-door king's female "sisters, cousins and aunts"; the barking of the house dog, the yapping of the terrier, the catawauling of the midnight marauder, the hum of the bee and bluebottle, the quack of the duck, the bleating of sheep, and the wail of the Hibernian lamb? Who has not laughed as loudly as the attendant "nigger" at Cole's rude "old man"? Who has not admired the mechanical genius involved in the construction of the automata used by Travis or Clemart, and the skill with which the "figures" are manipulated and apparently endowed with speech? And who has not felt a burning desire to know how all these seeming wonders are brought about?

Having regard to the great popularity of Ventriloquial entertainments, it is somewhat remarkable that the exponents of this fascinating Art are not counted by thousands, instead of by tens. There is no lack of literature dealing with the subject, for whilst many of the so-called "guides" issued are merely pamphlets of the catch-penny order, several excellent works have been published by Maccabe, Hardy, Ganthony, Lockyer, Lee, Compton, and others. Nevertheless, my friends have so often urged upon me that there is still room for a comprehensive practical manual by a practical man, whose position before the public

would be likely to give his words weight, that I have undertaken to set down here the results of my own experience and research, in the hope that I may be of service to the "earnest seeker after truth," and to the advancement of the Art. As I am by no means the first to "give the game away," I offer no apology to my brother practitioners; competition should nerve us to greater effort, and we must remember there is always plenty of room at the top.

I propose to treat the subject historically, theoretically and practically. The reader will find incorporated in the succeeding pages most of that which is best and to the point in the writings of those who have had better opportunities than I of acquiring information with regard to the history of Ventriloquism; whilst the practical observations—by far the most important of the three heads—are based on the experience gained during the ten years I have had the honour to be an exponent of Ventriloquism in each of its several branches. The student will not be required to wade through an ocean of words by a literary "hack," or tyro in the Art; but will have the advantage of the experience of a practical man, who in all modesty ventures to assert that he has gained public approval as an Entertainer, and who "speaketh that which he doth know."

FRED RUSSELL.

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LONDON, N.E.

June, 1898.



HISTORICAL.

Referring first to the History of Ventriloquism, it is well I should state at the very outset that in treating a subject of such comparative obscurity it is impossible for me to accept responsibility for the absolute truth of every anecdote related. In collecting matter for this part of the book I have come across several 'yarns,' which are so wildly improbable that I have excluded them altogether. Indeed, most of the stories relating to the feats of Ventriloquists have been more or less coloured by the narrators, and, being told over and over again, have not lost anything in the process. It is quite clear that Mr. Cockton, the Author of "Valentine Vox," had heard many of these yarns, for incidents almost identical in character and detail are to be found in his diverting novel. I have done all in my power, by comparing the different accounts given by contemporary writers, to ensure the accuracy of every statement made. At any rate, I have studiously refrained from heightening the colours myself, and propose to append to most of the anecdotes my own opinion as to the probability or possibility of the incidents occurring as related. Further, it must be borne in mind that in this historical record I am not attempting to deal with the rank and file, but only with those Ventriloquists who achieved celebrity in their day.

Ventriloquism, if not actually as "old as the hills," is unquestionably a very ancient Art. It can be traced back 3,000 years, and was utilized by the expert among our early forefathers for purposes altogether different and more reprehensible than its professors would dream of now. Where ignorance or superstition reigned almost supreme, the man who had mastered the secrets of Ventriloquism had an excellent chance of acquiring an abundance of this world's goods, to say nothing of "kudos," which was almost as valuable in those days, at the expense of people not so wide awake as himself.

It is generally conceded that the various kinds of "divination" exercised by the ancients, and which were stated by the spiritual pastors and masters to be by a "familiar spirit," were really effected by means of Ventriloquism. The Mosaic Law, delivered 1,500 years before the Christian era, expressly forbade the consultation of those having "familiar spirits." In Leviticus xx, 27, we read: "A man or woman that hath a familiar spirit, or that is a wizard, shall surely be put to death;" and Isaiah xxix, 4, clearly indicates what was understood by a familiar spirit: "And thou shalt be brought down and shalt speak out of the ground, and thy speech shall be low out of the dust, and thy voice shall be as of one that hath a familiar spirit, out of the ground, and thy speech shall whisper out of the dust."

As I have just remarked, the Ventriloquist's power over ignorant and superstitious people is very great, and this is demonstrated by an occurrence reported from Ashantee as recently as the year 1886. A member of one of the warlike tribes of the neighbourhood died under circumstances of a mysterious character, and as he was a person of some importance, a sort of "crowner's quest" was held to ascertain the cause and manner of his death. In place of the usual baker's dozen of "good men and true" who sit on the body in this country, all the tribesmen were summoned

to meet in the largest hut in the village. In the centre of this hut was placed a roughly carved wooden doll, the outward and visible sign of some native god, all aglow with bright beads and mystical ornaments. Into the hut the people were ushered, and the attendant fetishman, or priest, who stationed himself in the immediate vicinity of the doll, began the usual violent exercises which accompany all religious ceremonies in that part of the world. When the feelings of the people had been sufficiently worked upon, the priest commenced to address the doll, and, strange to relate, the doll replied to him. The priest first asked if the funeral had been carried out to the satisfaction of the deceased, and received from the mouth of the doll a reply in the affirmative. Then, amidst profound silence, the fetishman demanded the name of the murderer, and one by one each man present was called, but for a long time no sound emanated from the figure. At last the name of one who had incurred the enmity of the priest on account of his refusal to pay "tithe," or its equivalent, was called, and to his name the priest caused the doll to say "Yes." The savages, in the belief that the idol had spoken truly, tortured and killed the unfortunate native, notwithstanding his protestations of innocence. It is quite possible that this story may be true, for the priest, if only a moderately clever Ventriloquist, could easily do all that was necessary to deceive these ignorant savages.

At another point on the West African Coast an invisible god called Umo is worshipped to this day. The priest stands apart from the people, and the worshippers lay their gifts at his feet, asking him to question the god on any matter in which they are interested. Having collected all the offerings, the priest stands perfectly rigid for a moment or two, then exhibits signs of agitation and informs the worshippers that the god is approaching. After another brief interval a voice is heard apparently coming from the ground beneath the priest's feet. This, he informs the people, is the voice of Umo, and replies are elicited to all

the questions asked. It is hardly necessary to say that Umo has no existence beyond the priest who puts the questions, and, by the exercise of his Ventriloquial powers, also furnishes the replies—another very simple matter to the expert.

Changing the scene from tropical climes to the Arctic region, Captain Lyon, a traveller of repute, informs us that whilst sojourning with the Eskimos at I'glulick, he became acquainted with a native medicine-man rejoicing in the cognomen of Zoolemar, a person of considerable intelligence, who was looked up to by the tribe as one endowed with supernatural power. Captain Lyon cultivated this gentleman's good opinion, and was invited to attend a *séance* at which Zoolemar intended to consult Tornga, his patron saint. After the manner of modern spiritualists, all light was excluded from the room in which the manifestation took place, and the man began chanting to his wife with great rapidity. Anon he commenced to dance and sing, finally appealing to Tornga to manifest himself. Presently the priest's voice dropped to a whisper, and then ceased altogether. Again the whisper was heard accompanied by another voice giving vent to a strange mixture of groans and shouts. The volume of sound gradually increased, conveying the impression that the voices were approaching; then they receded again, fading away to a whisper, which was finally cut short by the natural voice of Zoolemar. This illusion can be produced by any Ventriloquist of ordinary ability.

In his book on Ventriloquism published in 1772, Mgr. l'Abbe la Chapelle, Censor-royal at Paris, tells us that the responses of the Greek and Roman Oracles in reality emanated from the priests in close attendance. Apollonius Tyanæus, a philosopher born at Tyana, the capital of Cappadocia, a few years before Christ, professed to work miracles, and is said to have gained some of his most startling effects by addressing himself, ventriloquially of course, from the branches of a tree. The ancient Greeks believed in what is called gastro-

mancy, the priest replying to questions put to him without moving his lips, so that the enquirer was led to believe that a "Minister of the interior," was actually enlightening him from the region of the priest's diaphragm.

According to Professor Lee, to whose excellent work on the history of the Art I am indebted for much that is set forth here, Ventriloquism appears to have been a greater source of danger to its professors in the Middle Ages than to anyone else, for it is recorded that many persons who practiced it were accused of witch-craft, and put to death in consequence. Early in the Seventeenth Century, however, people became wiser, or at least more tolerant, and permitted themselves to be amused by that which had before filled them with superstitious awe.

Louis Brabant, valet to Francis I, King of France, is the first Ventriloquist of whom we have any definite knowledge, and, according to all accounts, he was a wonderfully expert operator. It is related of him that by the exercise of his ventriloquial powers he obtained a very desirable wife, although he had failed to satisfy the lady's parents as to his fitness to become their son-in-law by the ordinary methods of procedure in these matters. The story, which must be taken with a liberal allowance of salt, runs to this effect. Shortly after Brabant's offer of marriage had been declined, the father of his inamorata died, and the love-sick swain paid a visit of condolence to the widow. Whilst he was engaged in conversation with her a mysterious voice was heard, which she professed to recognise as that of her deceased husband, commanding her to agree to the marriage; and the lady, alarmed beyond measure, gave her consent. But there remained another obstacle in the way. Brabant was not over-burdened with cash, and, like many another desirous of entering the bonds of matrimony, he had not the wherewithal to purchase the necessary incidentals to housekeeping. Setting his wits to work, he bethought him of an old miser named Comu,

living at Lyons ; and having on some pretext or other obtained an interview with this person, the Ventriloquist led the miser on to talk of ghostly visitations, and such like inspiring subjects. During a lull in the conversation Comu's deceased father's voice was heard commanding the miser to give Brabant such a sum of money as would enable him to redeem certain Christians held in Turkish bondage, so that the poor man's soul might be released from purgatory. Comu was further threatened with eternal damnation if he did not comply ; but nevertheless he was proof against the Ventriloquist's wiles until a second visit had been paid by Brabant, and then he capitulated, handing over a good round sum, with which Brabant discharged the liabilities of the marriage ceremony, set up housekeeping, and, presumably, lived happily ever after. The story goes that when the miser was told of the trick, he died of vexation. It is to be hoped this recital will not lead any young man, who with the proverbial rashness of youth contemplates matrimony although in a state of impecuniosity, to adopt the same means of attaining his object, for such an attempt would surely end in his retirement to the quiet and seclusion of one of Her Majesty's gaols for a term of years. It is just possible that Brabant, by judiciously leading up to the incidents, might have done all that he was credited with, but I doubt it.

In the by-gone days with which we are now dealing, Ventriloquists were called "whisperers," and Charles I. had attached to his Court one Henry King, a native of Oxford, who was styled "The King's Whisperer." He once entertained the English Court with a most realistic representation of the slaughtering of a sheep, with no adventitious aid beyond that of a screen, from behind which could be heard the cries of the animal, the sharpening of the knife, the quarrelling of the butchers, and the barking of a dog. This is said to have caused the utmost astonishment to those present.

Cardinal Richelieu, the proud, ambitious, and unscrupulous statesman of France, who died in 1642, is

said to have pressed a Ventriloquist into his service to help him in one of his many political difficulties. A Provincial Clergyman, whose presence in Paris interfered with the Cardinal's schemes, had to be got rid of somehow, and it was hardly desirable that he should be put in durance vile, if other means could be adopted. Richelieu, whilst listening to the performance of a Ventriloquist, conceived the idea of frightening the Clergyman away, and so called upon him, accompanied by the "Whisperer." Whilst they were conversing beside the fire-place, a mysterious voice bade the worthy man return to his diocese, as his life would be in peril did he remain at Court. He took the hint and his departure, and thereby probably saved his head.

Except for vague reports of the doings of a female "whisperer" named Jacobi, who astonished the natives at Haarlem, the capital of the province of North Holland, about 1680, we have a long interval of silence in respect to the Art and its professors; and the next exponent we hear of is a blacksmith named Honeyman, who resided in London, and commenced operations in the early part of the eighteenth century. Honeyman, who was nick-named "the talking smith," was a great practical joker, and it is said that one of his so-called jokes caused the death of one Thomas Britton. This Britton was a collector of manuscripts, and a musician of considerable ability. He frequently gave musical parties at his residence in Clerkenwell. Honeyman, who attended one of these assemblies, conceived the idea of frightening the musician, who was known to be of a very nervous temperament. The subject of spectres having been introduced in the conversation and Britton's nervous system shaken by wild stories of ghosts, Honeyman caused a voice to be heard calling upon the musician to prepare, as death awaited him. This so frightened Britton that he lost his reason and died soon after, in the year 1714. He was buried in Clerkenwell Churchyard, and the circumstances of his death are

referred to in one of the poems of Matthew Prior. Honeyman survived his victim ten years.

About 1750 Ventriloquism became very popular, and its most noted English exponents at this period were Macleroy and Moore. Twenty years later two Continental Ventriloquists created sensations in Paris and Vienna respectively by reason of their extraordinary powers. The Austrian representative, Baron Mengen, was the first to make use of a "figure" to illustrate the Art, and his humorous conversations with a wooden doll gained for him a great measure of popularity. He was also very expert in the imitation of animals, and is said to have been the first to reveal the secrets of Ventriloquism, which had been hitherto very jealously guarded by its professors.

The Parisian Ventriloquist, whose name was St. Gille, followed the occupation of a grocer at St. Germain-en-Laye, until he discovered that fame and fortune awaited him as a public entertainer. From the descriptions given of this artiste's performance by Mgr. l'Abbé la Chapelle (who was the authority of the day on Ventriloquism and Ventriloquists) he appears to have brought the art of voice-throwing to the highest pitch of excellence. He was able to deceive even such a 'cute observer as the Abbé himself, and in the presence of a Board of Commissioners of the Royal Academy of Sciences, he did some wonderful things. "Voice-throwing" was St. Gille's speciality, and in order to convince the Commissioners of his ability to deceive, a semi-public test was arranged. A story was purposely circulated that spirit voices had been heard in the neighbourhood, and that a commission had been appointed to investigate the matter. All those who attended the "investigation" were informed of the real facts of the case with the exception of one lady, and she was kept in ignorance in order to test the stength of the illusion upon her. The investigators arranged a sort of picnic, and whilst they were lunching, the lady in question was called by name apparently from several

different directions. The illusion was kept up for a considerable time, and the lady was absolutely convinced that she had been spoken to by a "spirit." This anecdote is well authenticated, and taking into account all the circumstances—and especially that the lady *expected* to hear a "spirit voice"—there is no reason to doubt its accuracy.

In the memoirs of the Empress Josephine there is to be found mentioned one Thiemet, a Ventriloquist and facial artiste, said to have been a great favourite with the Emperor Napoleon. He visited London in 1786.

James Burns, an Irishman, attained great popularity in the North of England about 1790. He usually performed with a wooden doll, but was also an expert "Distant Voice" Ventriloquist and Imitator of Musical Instruments. Among other stories told of this person is one which relates to a visit he is said to have paid to the Sheffield Fish Market, where he astonished the stall attendants by making the fish talk. This is, of course, all nonsense. Indeed, most of the yarns connected with this performer are of a decidedly "fishy" order. For instance, it is said that he was once present whilst a servant girl was preparing a salmon for table. As the girl was about to decapitate it, Burns caused the fish to cry "Don't cut my head off," which so frightened the servant that she threw down the knife and fled. All I have to say in this connection is that the girl must have been a perfect idiot to be so easily deceived, or the original narrator a most accomplished perverter of the truth.

Sugg, another famous Ventriloquist, was a contemporary of Burns, and practised the Art for many years. He died in 1831, having attained the age of 80 years. Sugg was a man of considerable resource, as will be gathered from the following story. He had arranged to give a series of entertainments in one of the suburbs of London, but the good folks of the neighbour-

hood being "rather backward a comin' forward," as the showman says, the Ventriloquist decided to try a sensation as a means of advertisement. He dressed a doll in baby clothes, and at the busiest hour of the day ran through the streets, the "child" in his arms apparently screaming lustily. Stopping at a baker's shop Sugg entered, seemingly with the intention of purchasing a cake for the infant. The crying still continued, however, and Sugg, apparently at his witsend, rushed through the shop into the bakehouse at the rear, and threw the doll into the furnace. He was at once arrested, and taken before a magistrate, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he convinced "his worship" it was all a joke and not a murder. Sugg is said to have greatly astonished his companions whilst travelling on a coach in the West of England by imitating the cries of a child apparently caught in the wheels. This story is incorporated in "Valentine Vox."

Fitz James, "Val," and Professor Charles all ministered to the amusement and astonishment of our great grandfathers at the beginning of the present century. Fitz James combined facial business with Ventriloquism, and "Val" was a conjurer of high repute. Professor Charles was the originator of the "experiment"—also incorporated in "Valentine Vox"—of imitating the cries of a supposed drowning man, and he thereby caused great delay in the progress of a vessel carrying him to America.

About 1820 two Continental Ventriloquists became known to fame—one a Swiss doctor named Compti, and the other a famous Frenchman, Mons. Nicholas Marie Alexandre, generally conceded to be the finest Ventriloquist who, up to that time, had appeared in public. One of his critics, Mr. Moncrieff, writes: "Alexandre's quick transitions of voice are wonderful, and it appears almost impossible to the audience that so great a variety of voices in tone and apparent distance should all proceed from the same person." Alexandre

came to London in 1823, and gave his entertainment at the Argyll Rooms. He quickly became a great public favourite here, and was patronised by Royalty. Many anecdotes are related in connection with Alexandre. He is the original hero of the story, claimed by a large number of Ventriloquists since, of having caused a stoppage of traffic in the Strand at midday—a thing we are quite used to now, but which was not so common in his day. The story goes that Alexandre, being called upon by one of his friends to give an example of his powers, caused a cry to be heard apparently proceeding from the centre of a load of hay being carted along the thoroughfare. A crowd assembled, and, notwithstanding the protests of the man in charge of the cart, commenced to unload the hay. As they proceeded the cries became more urgent, but when the cart was empty nobody could be found. It is just possible that one or two simple minded folk *thought* they heard a man's cries under the load of hay, and communicated their suspicions to the crowd, who would very willingly lend a hand in the work of destruction.

Alexandre's success led to a boom in Ventriloquism, and the number of professors increased by leaps and bounds. His most notable successors were W. Nightingale who lived until 1840; Jacobs, a very clever Ventriloquist and Mimic, flourishing in the early fifties; Law, Askins, Sutton, Gallagher, Fritz Renard, and Joel. Macmillan also attained front rank, and gave his entertainment principally at Mechanics' Institutes, occupying the stage for a full hour with distant voice illusions and mimicry, and having no accessories in the way of dolls or stage properties. Thurton, the monologue entertainer, was also a Ventriloquist. His "Odd Folks," however, were not ventriloquial figures, as some may think, but character impersonations.

Many now living can remember the performance of Mr. W. E. Love, a great "distant voice" Ventriloquist. One of his press notices reads: "Mr. Love's performance is not a whit behind that of

any of his most celebrated predecessors. His assumptions of character, and his rapid change from one to another, seem almost miraculous. He detects the comic in everything, and all his characters are marked by that strong individuality which makes them never weary. Nothing pleased us more, however, than his piece of pure ventriloquial acting, in which he dispels the singing spirit of the roof; it is perfectly inimitable. In his own way, Mr. Love is unquestionably a genius."

A good story is told of Love, which is worth repeating. He was performing at the Assembly Rooms, Grimsby, but had not gone far with his entertainment when he was interrupted by the most dismal yells and howlings from above. The proceedings were stopped, and enquiries made, from which it was gathered that in that part of the entertainment when, by means of his powers of vocal deception, Mr. Love caused an invisible person to be heard singing on the roof, a native of an adjoining village, who had been induced to patronise the entertainment, and who had never before witnessed a similar performance, felt convinced that the performer had a confederate. Being well acquainted with the house, he slipped out unperceived, and ascended by the back stairs to the roof of the building, with the firm determination of opening the eyes of the audience, and exposing the confederate of the performer. At this juncture, two other wiseacres in the company entertained exactly the same opinion, and, accordingly, followed the steps of him who had first made his exit from the apartment. Arrived at the summit of the garret stairs, they found the trap-door wide open—this they thought looked suspicious; but, on ascending to the tiles they discovered the first mentioned Paul Pry in the act of reconnoitering, with his head placed close to the chimney pot. Doubt was now out of the question; they therefore commenced belabouring their unsuspecting victim with such vigour that had not his wailings brought some of the people connected with the establishment to his assistance, the consequences might have

been serious. Mr. Love died on the 16th March, 1867, at the age of 62 years.

Now we arrive at what may be termed the "figure" era. Prior to 1860, Ventriloquists seldom availed themselves of the assistance of mechanical dolls to illustrate the Art, but, for the most part, were content to amuse and astonish with distant voice illusions and polyphonism. Mr. Le Mare, of Manchester, who I imagine knows as much of Ventriloquists practicing during the past 40 years as any man living, tells me that the first person he remembers to make use of figures was Professor James, who "busked" on the Liverpool steam-packets about 35 years ago, with two little dolls which he called Tommy and Joe. Mr. E. D. Davies introduced these characters to the music-hall public a little later on, and was wonderfully successful. Mr. Davies, whom I had the pleasure of hearing when he visited London about 10 years ago, was an expert performer. He was but seldom seen in the Metropolis during recent years, but travelled a great deal in America and in Australia, where he died a short time ago. Then Charles Young came to the front with five or six mechanical heads supported on sticks after the manner of the cocoa-nut shies; but it was Lieutenant Cole who first conceived and carried out the idea of working with a group of life-size figures. He in turn was followed by Professor Peter Grant, a capital performer, who afterwards eschewed the family group, and introduced a set of figures representing a "Breach of Promise" trial; "Jester," Wynn-Howard, and Travis. I must not omit to mention Frank Mordaunt, who, 20 years ago, had a great reputation in the Provinces. He gave a most artistic show, seldom using more than two figures. Mordaunt died 8 or 10 years ago; but Professor Grant is still with us, and, I believe, still performs.

This brings the history well down to our own time, and in speaking of living Ventriloquists the place of honour must be accorded to that prince of performers, Mr. Frederic Maccabe. I believe Mr. Maccabe is

now past the stage of active service, and is travelling abroad for the benefit of his health; but in my humble judgment he was, in his day, the best Ventriloquist and finest all-round Entertainer I ever had the pleasure of listening to—and I have listened to nearly all who have visited the Metropolis during the past 20 years. Maccabe's entertainment, as most of my readers are aware, was complete in itself, lasting two hours. "Begone, Dull Care" was the very appropriate title. He impersonated a number of most amusing characters, finishing with a burlesque-melodrama called "Vanquished Villainy, or Virtue Victorious," in which he played the entire cast of five or six characters, changing his costumes with such rapidity that he almost seemed to be on the stage in two places at once. Maccabe's exposition of Ventriloquism was usually introduced in his Railway Porter sketch; but occasionally he would drop the character and give an example of what is popularly known as voice-throwing, which was unique in my experience. When the Fregoli-Biondi boom was in full swing, I remember speaking to Mr. Charles Morton, at the Palace Theatre, and suggesting that he should try and induce Maccabe to come to London, and show what an Englishman could do. Mr. Morton was of opinion that Maccabe was too far advanced in years to enter the lists against the younger men; but I really believe that, old as he is, if Maccabe could have been induced to give his "Vanquished Villainy" sketch, he would have swept the board, for in the matter of rapidity and completeness in change of costume and character, not to speak of the intelligibility of his plot, Maccabe's entertainment was far ahead of anything yet done by the foreign protean artistes who have appeared in London lately, clever as those gentlemen undoubtedly are.

Mr. Maccabe is the author of an excellent work on the Art of Ventriloquism, in which he relates the following incident in his own experience, as an illustration that Ventriloquism may be of service at times to those who know how to exercise it:—"When I was a boy of

some fourteen years of age, I remember especially that on one occasion, in my father's house, after enjoying myself well, boy like, at an evening party given by him, I went to bed after the company had broken up, and could not, for the life of me, fall asleep. As I lay in bed, tossing about, I became gradually convinced that something very unusual was going on below stairs, for I distinctly heard footsteps, now here, now there, until I got at last into such anxiety and fear that I could not remain motionless any longer. Getting out of bed, I felt an irresistible impulse to get nearer to the place where the thieves were, for such I afterwards found them to be. Having crawled down stealthily by myself, I put in force in earnest what I had been already practising, and began a conversation, raising as much of a hullaballo as I could of several voices: "Here they are! Bring a light! bring a light! There they go! Shoot them! shoot them!" The thieves were so taken back at being so suddenly discovered that they immediately decamped, and as the row I made raised the house, I recollect well, as the light appeared, seeing one slouching villain hurrying past a door encumbered with the end of a table cloth which was being dragged after him."

Some years ago, Mr. Maccabe was on board a Mississippi river steamboat, and forming an acquaintance with the engineer he was allowed the freedom of the engine-room. He took a seat in a corner, and pulling his hat down over his eyes appeared lost in a brown study. Presently a certain part of the machinery began to squeak. The engineer oiled it and went about his duties. In the course of a few seconds the squeaking was heard again, and the engineer again lubricated the spindle. He returned to his post, but only a few minutes elapsed before the same old spindle was squeaking louder than ever. "Great Jupiter" the engineer yelled, "the thing's bewitched." More oil was administered; but the engineer began to smell a rat. Pretty soon the spindle squeaked again, and slipping up behind Maccabe, the engineer squirted about half-

a-pint of oil down the joker's back. "There," said he, "I guess that spindle won't squeak any more."

It is not generally known that Mr. J. L. Toole, the celebrated comedian is a Ventriloquist ; but he has considerable talent in this direction. A characteristic "American" story is told of Toole in the *New York Evening News*, as follows:—Toole had been amusing a private party with Ventriloquial illustrations, when a journalist present complimented him somewhat ironically on what he called his "little society talents." "These same little talents," replied Toole "have sometimes a great utility in life. Let me give you a simple illustration. Some years ago, I was passing one evening through Drury Lane, on my way to the Gaiety Theatre, where I was at that time playing, when my attention was suddenly attracted by a pathetic voice imploring for charity. Turning round I saw that the voice proceeded from a cripple, whose white hair and beard and cracked voice, indicated clearly that the beggar was an old man. I was about to give him half-a-crown, when it struck me that I should be doing well to enquire into the genuineness of the case, so I asked him where he lived. 'Not far from here, sir' the beggar replied, 'I will take you if you like.' 'Very well! go ahead; I will follow,' I answered. The beggar started off on his crutches, dragging after him two stumps of legs, and, with a hundred protestations of gratitude made in a warm and fervent tone, he manœuvred rapidly along the muddy and slippery sidewalk of Drury Lane. We crossed Covent Garden Market and Long Acre, and entered that hideous quarter which you all know—Seven Dials. The adventure commenced to only half-way please me. 'Are we far from your room still?' I asked, catching up with the beggar, 'I haven't much time to spare.' As I spoke I drew out my watch, an excellent chronometer of Dent's, of considerable value. Looking suddenly up I surprised an ugly, covetous glance beneath the beggar's bushy eyebrows. 'Oh, oh!' I said to myself, 'that's a mighty young eye for an old man.' My suspicions

returned with triple force; but I determined to push the adventure to its end, and more so as my companion now turned to me and said in his cracked, faltering tones: 'Here is my home, gentleman!' He slipped through the half-open door of a dilapidated building and started up a rickety staircase. At the third story the old beggar stopped; I heard him feeling about in the dark, and then came the sound of a key turning in a lock. 'One moment, my good gentleman,' said the trembling voice; 'I will light a candle.' Some seconds passed; then the dismal glimmer of a tallow candle lit up a room which struck me as tolerably spacious. The beggar had slipped behind me, and I now heard the sharp click of the key in the lock. I had expected to find a sordid, miserable hole, fitted out with a broken stool and a bundle of straw in the corner for a bed; instead of which the room was furnished with a certain degree of luxury, and the floor was covered with rich carpet. 'What does this mean?' I asked in stupor. 'You have deceived me!' I turned towards the door. The old man had vanished; a man in the vigour of life, a white wig in his hand, his face covered with pencilled wrinkles, looked up at me and laughed. 'You look surprised,' he said, in a mocking tone. 'There are miracles still in our days, you see. My good legs have come back to me, and my crutches—look there!' He pointed towards the corner near the door. 'Well, what do you want of me?' I asked, resolutely enough. 'I want you to lend me your watch,' impudently answered the man. 'Mine happens to be at the jeweller's just now, and yours looks like a tolerably good one,' and with that he drew a revolver from his pocket. I drew back. Indignation and anger at letting myself into such an absurd trap almost suffocated me; but what could I do against this armed man? All at once an idea occurred to me, and exercising my Ventriloquial powers I cried in a gruff voice, proceeding apparently from behind the robber "Imp of Satan! I'll catch you yet." Instinctively the man turned round. I seized the opportunity to rush upon him and snatch the revolver from his hands. 'My turn now,' said I, holding the

revolver under his nose. 'Open that door this instant or I will blow out your brains.' The robber looked at me with a stupid air. He was a resolute fellow without a doubt, but the revolver and the mysterious voice together were too much for him. Growling savagely like a bull dog he opened the door and slammed it savagely after me. Feeling my way along I found the staircase, and with some difficulty gained the street. I directed my steps at once towards the Strand. I arrived a half-hour late at my theatre, where reigned the greatest inquietude at my non-appearance. I kept the revolver as a 'tribute of war.' "And you see," continued Toole, "how my 'little talent' of Ventriloquism that night helped me out of an ugly scrape."

As I have said, this story is told by an American journalist, and is distinctly "American." Mr. Toole himself, I believe, does not vouch for the accuracy of the story.

The best known Ventriloquist now performing is undoubtedly Lieutenant Walter Cole, who, during the past 30 years, has given his delightful entertainment with his "Merry Folks" in every part of England, Scotland and Ireland. Cole has also visited Paris, Baden, Berlin, Vienna, and other Continental Cities, for he speaks French and German perfectly. His name is almost a household word, and one can hardly mention Ventriloquism without, by a natural association of ideas, calling to mind the name of Cole. Lieutenant Cole was, I believe, a conjurer before he became a Ventriloquist, and in his early days worked the Provincial "smalls" with two little knee dolls. As I have already stated, he was the first to adopt the idea of a group of life-size models, which was quite a novelty when he appeared in London in 1870, giving his entertainment in conjunction with Hermann the conjurer at the Egyptian Hall. Cole made very rapid progress in public favour, and soon reached the top-most branches of the Ventriloquial tree, a position he has maintained ever since, notwithstanding that the number of his rivals

and imitators is legion. The majority of Ventriloquists have modelled their entertainments on the lines of Cole's "group." He is a splendid "distant voice" Ventriloquist, and imitator of street cries, &c., and a born humorist.

Lieutenant Frank Travis, Cole's most prominent rival as a figure worker, also gives a clever show, combining humorous dialogue with effective mechanical devices. Travis works on the "group" principle, but gets away as much as possible from the everlasting "old man" and "old woman." That gouty doctor of his is a most artistic character, and so admirably modelled, voiced, and true to nature in every respect, that it is difficult to believe the old gentleman is not alive.

John Le Hay, the clever and versatile actor, is a Ventriloquist of the first rank, and if it were worth his while to give up the regular stage and confine himself entirely to Ventriloquism, he would never lack engagements. As it is, the genial John augments his income very considerably by giving his entertainment in the "halls of the aristocracy." The First Gentleman in Europe thinks a lot of him, and the Rothschilds admire him immensely. He usually performs with two figures, old man and woman, and his entertainment is full of humour, impromptu "gags" being his strong point.

Fred W. Millis, the Australian Ventriloquist, who has been with us so many years now that he has become acclimatised, also stands well forward in the front row. He has some excellent figures, and is a capital showman, making a speciality of introducing local jokes through the medium of his Irish friend Terrance O'Reilly. He is exceedingly popular in the Provinces, and, socially, a very decent fellow indeed, with an entire absence of the "side" which makes so many of his contemporaries objectionable. He is a great favourite with the members of the "profession," of which he is an ornament.

W. H. Clemart, who hails from Manchester, is a Ventriloquist working on somewhat original lines. He believes in the association of his figures one with another, and does not care to have a "dummy" on the stage without some reason for its being there. "On the Sands," his speciality, represents a family party enjoying a holiday at the seaside. He has some very fine mechanical figures, the old man and the walking nurse girl being especially good. Clemart has recently produced another show of a similar character called "On the Benches," combining humorous dialogue with admirable mechanical effects, which make the "turn" a very popular one.

Amongst other performers now before the public who have attained a large measure of popularity, are Mr. Fred. Neiman, with his Ventriloquial Christy Minstrels, a funny show; Vento, with his comedy "The Squire of Haslemere;" Captain Slingsby, whose interrupted letter illusion is one of the best things of its kind I have seen; "Vox," Horace White, Bendon, Hutchinson, Captain Holt, Dreams, &c. There are, I believe, two Lady Ventriloquists in England now, Mdles. Rosa and Zilla, but as I have not seen either I am unable to offer an opinion as to the merit of their performances.

The chief exponent of the Art in America at the present time is Mr. A. O. Duncan, who works on the ordinary lines with a group of figures. He is a very expert performer, and makes a great point of introducing local gags, as Millis does here. Harry Kennedy, the author of "Say Au Revoir," and other popular songs, who died a few years ago, was a very successful American performer, and had a fine show, the manipulation of his figures being something quite out of the common. His entertainment "The Ventriloquist's Dream," was a clever production.

My experience of Continental Ventriloquists is limited to the performers visiting London within the

past few years, and certainly those I have seen do not give one the impression that the Art has been cultivated to any great extent, or with overpowering success, by our neighbours. We are told that the Germans and the French are beating us in everything, but in this respect they are certainly a long way behind yet. So far as I have seen, with one exception, the Continental Ventriloquists who have visited these shores are not Ventriloquists at all, but simply figure workers. The exception is the gentleman calling himself Leo, and he, strangely enough, is not a foreigner. He is an Englishman or an American—the latter for choice. But I understand Leo has resided in Paris for a long time, and has become quite a favourite with the Parisian public. He performs with a large number of well-constructed figures, all fixed on a platform and worked from a kind of signal-box arrangement behind the "old man."

Charles Prelle, a German, was at the Empire, Leicester Square, last year, and gave a novel act. He had a troupe of dogs wearing masks representing people. These masks were fitted with mouth movements, and the animals were supposed to speak. Prelle can hardly be called a Ventriloquist, however.

Nobel, who was playing at the Alhambra at Christmas, depends almost entirely upon his mechanical contrivances, Ventriloquism being quite a secondary consideration in his performance. His "props" are good, however, and he was handicapped by not being able to speak the language.

Quite recently a very laudatory paragraph by my friend "Carados" in the "*Referee*" caused me to pay a visit to the Empire, to see a German Ventriloquist named Segommer. The paragraph led me to expect great things, and, although from a strictly Ventriloquial point of view the show was not above the average, I was not altogether disappointed. Mimicry is undoubtedly Segommer's forte, and in this respect I have

never heard his performance excelled. He carries a tremendous lot of "props," his set representing a Tyrolean farm-yard, well stocked with dogs, pigs, cattle, &c. By means of rapid changes of costume the performer represents a number of characters, substituting a figure for the character as he changes to another. His Ventriloquial—or rather colloquial—efforts are not, as I have said, above the average; for although the figures are exceedingly well-worked and the voices distinct, the movements of the performer's mouth are observable at a distance, and this to some extent spoils the illusion. But when Segommer imitates the xylophone, lions, tigers, pigs, dogs, a Salvation Army band, &c., &c., he scores tremendously.

Other prominent Continental Performers are, Gustave Lund, a Dane, and a very expert manipulator of mechanical figures; Blanc, a clever German; Karro, the Hungarian Ventriloquist; and O'Kill, one of the leading exponents in France, but who, I believe, is an Irishman.

With these few observations on the performances of living professors of the Art, I bring my remarks on Ventriloquists, ancient and modern, to a close. I do not pretend that I have made reference to every Ventriloquist whose genius has served to amuse and astonish the public of this or the by-gone ages, but I do not think many who have attained any great degree of prominence have escaped, and I have made the record as complete as the material at hand would allow.

THEORETICAL.

VENTRILOQUISM—What it is, and What it can do.

The chances are that a person entering into conversation with a performer on the subject of Ventriloquism, will immediately propound the question "Is it a gift?" You, gentle reader, and I are entering upon such a conversation I assume, and I will at once proceed to answer as best I can the query which, if you are investigating this matter for the first time, will naturally be uppermost in your thoughts. Ventriloquism is NOT a gift in the ordinary acceptation of the term; that is to say, one's ability to Ventriloquise does not depend upon any peculiar conformation of the vocal organs. There are thousands and thousands of persons who look upon Ventriloquism as something quite beyond the power of ordinary mortals, but who, if they only knew how to set about it, would make splendid performers; yet on the other hand there are thousands who, if they were to try until the crack of doom, would never get beyond the "indifferent" stage. Natural qualifications are necessary to attain any measure of proficiency in Ventriloquism as in anything else. One must have sound lungs, a correct ear, strength and flexibility in the throat; the skill to imitate, which really depends upon a correct ear and sound vocal organs; histrionic ability, for the judgment of the audience must be deceived as well as the ear, and therefore the ability to lead peoples' judgment astray without seeming to do so is a great factor in determining whether a person will be

a successful Ventriloquist or not. Professional Ventriloquists, not unnaturally I think, considering that the object is to keep rivals out of the field as long as possible, have been known to foster the notion that Ventriloquism is a gift, either by a direct statement to that effect, or by mysterious hints as to the difficulty and danger of "throwing" the voice. Indeed, in an interview published not long ago, a well-known Ventriloquist, who is still before the public, says: "Ventriloquism really consists of a peculiar formation of the muscles of the throat. It is a gift. If a man is not born a Ventriloquist he will never become one. I really speak down in my stomach. This closes the muscles and so they are compressed tighter, and the effect is to produce a 'far away' voice. The lower my voice descends, the greater is the pressure against the muscles, and the sound becomes more distant still. Being in possession of this gift, the art is to learn how to regulate the sound, to acquire the habit of producing the different voices you wish to obtain, and above all to know where your voice is going to pitch." I don't like to say this is all nonsense, but it really is. There is no such extraordinary product of nature as a "born Ventriloquist." Whilst some have a greater natural aptitude for its acquisition than others, it is nevertheless a fact that Ventriloquism is an acquired Art, and that almost everyone possessed of normal vocal organs, a good ear, unlimited perseverance, and a modicum of "cheek," can become an exponent of this truly fascinating Art, if only in a limited degree.

Having disposed of this question, I hope to the satisfaction of the reader, we will proceed to investigate what Ventriloquism really is. In Gregory's Dictionary of Arts and Sciences, we are told "Ventriloquism is an Art by which certain persons can so modify the voice as to make it appear to the audience to proceed from any distance. An exquisite delicacy of ear perceives every difference which change of place produces in the same sounds. Possessed of such an ear, and a sufficient command over the organs of speech to produce a sound

in all respects similar to another proceeding from any distant object to the audience, the sound which the Ventriloquist utters must appear to proceed from that object. There can be no doubt that, by a peculiar modification of the organs of speech, a sound of any kind can be produced which in faintness, tone, body, and, in short, every other sensible quality, perfectly resembles a sound delivered say from the roof of a house opposite; the ear will naturally, without examination, refer it to that situation and distance; the sound which the person hears being only a sign which he has from his infancy been constantly accustomed by experience to associate with the idea of a person speaking from a housetop." Here we have the whole thing in a nut-shell.

Sir David Brewster, the eminent natural philosopher and writer, distinguished for his numerous and varied contributions to scientific literature, says in his "Letters on Natural Magic": "The influence over the human mind which the Ventriloquist derives from the skilful practice of his Art is greater than that which is exercised by any other species of conjurer. The ordinary magician requires his theatre, his accomplices, and the instruments of his art, and he enjoys but a local sovereignty within the precincts of his own magic circle. The Ventriloquist, on the contrary, has the supernatural always at his command; in the open fields as well as in the crowded city; in the private apartment as well as in the public hall. He can summon up innumerable spirits, and though the persons of his fictitious dialogue are not visible to the eye, yet they are as surely present to the imagination of the audience as if they had been shadowed forth in the silence of spectral form." Mr. Frederic Maccabe seems to think that Sir David has somewhat exaggerated the Ventriloquist's power, for he says: "All the illusions of Ventriloquism depend very much on the imagination of the hearers. The power of imitating sound is only part of the Art. The effect of Ventriloquism is a creation of the imagination produced by a deception of the ear and the eyes. The attention of the hearer must be caught

by little indescribable actions and tricks of manner, and directed to the spot from whence the sound is supposed to proceed. The effect to be produced must be suggested to the mind at the moment that the sound is imitated, and the imagination of the audience thus made to help on the illusion. Though a man may possess all the physical requirements for Ventriloquism, namely: a power of imitating sounds, and abnormal strength in the larynx, the tonsils, and the abdominal muscles, he would no more be a Ventriloquist than with the possession of paint and brushes, he would be a painter. These physical requisites are possessed by most people in a greater or less degree, and are capable of development; but the power of catching and directing the attention, of suggesting to the mind of the audience by almost imperceptible gestures, of exciting their imagination without appearing to act—these are requisites not easily acquired."

The opinion of experts is somewhat divided as to whether or not the term "Ventriloquism" is a misnomer. It is derived from the Latin words *venter* and *loquor*, which mean literally to speak from the stomach, but of course there are no organs of speech in that part of man's anatomy. The Germans have it *das bauchreden*—belly speaking. Sir David Brewster, however, says Ventriloquism loses its distinctive character if its imitations are not produced by a voice from the stomach. He agrees that the voice does not actually come from that region, but when the Ventriloquist utters sounds from the larynx without moving the muscles of his face, he gives the sounds strength by a powerful action of the abdominal muscles. Hence he speaks by means of his stomach, although the throat is the real source from which the sound proceeds. Mr. Maccabe coincides, and maintains it is correct to say that although the voice does not actually come from the stomach, the abdominal muscles play an important part in bringing about the illusion. I think the student will agree with these opinions after he has practised awhile. My own experience certainly is that there is a

contraction of the abdominal muscles in forcing certain of the ventriloquial sounds.

In an interesting article on Ventriloquism which appeared in the "*Scientific American*" the writer says: "Ventriloquism bears the same relation to other phenomena of sound that perspective does to optical phenomena. The art of perspective consists in portraying upon a flat surface the appearance of objects at a distance from it, so that the same effect shall be produced upon the eye by the picture as would be produced by the objects themselves. In order to do this, the form, tints, and shadows are reproduced, not as they really are, but as they are modified by position and distance. Or it may be said to consist in making and arranging a group of objects so that when *viewed* at a given distance they shall produce the same optical effect produced by another set of objects arranged in different positions and at different distances. Ventriloquism consists in making and arranging sounds so that when *heard* at a given distance, they shall produce the same effect upon the ear that another set of sounds produce arranged in different positions and at different distances. The tones produced by the vibrations of the vocal chords may be modified so greatly in pitch and quality that many sounds differing widely from the tones used in speech and in singing may be imitated. Sounds from a distance are of course weakened, and they also have another quality which may be compared to the indistinctness of outline in objects seen at a distance. As the colours of objects are partially obscured by the colour of the medium through which they are viewed, so sounds coming from remote places are partially obscured by the sounds which pervade even the stillest atmosphere. In proportion, as the fine ear of the Ventriloquist can appreciate these modifications, will be his success in imitating distant sounds. For as to see correctly is the first essential to success in drawing, so is hearing correctly the first essential in Ventriloquism."

The word Ventriloquism, as popularly understood, covers the entire range of vocal illusion; but in reality

there are three divisions, viz: Ventriloquism proper, Colloquism and Polyphonism.

VENTRILOQUISM PROPER is the imitation of sounds as they appear when heard from a distance—the technical term is “Distant Voice”—and is brought into play by the performer when he holds a conversation with a man on the roof, or in the cellar. It is also used when imitating the cry of a boy in a box, the muffled sound in this case being almost identical with the distant voice. The Ventriloquist cannot “throw” his voice. Even in these days of universal Board Schools and Higher Education, it is a remarkable fact that the majority of people believe the Ventriloquist really “throws” his voice; that is to say, can make his voice explode at a distant spot without any sound being perceptible in the intervening space between the Ventriloquist and the place where the sound appears. A moment’s consideration would be sufficient to convince any intelligent person of the impossibility of this, but people do not give it that consideration. They accept the general idea that it is so, without enquiry. The uninitiated will say “Oh, but I heard Mr. So-and-so throw his voice to the roof.” No; you only thought you did. You were deceived, but the deception practised upon you by the skilful Ventriloquist was so true to nature in every respect, that you could not tell the difference between the effect produced by the performer, and the sound which would have been heard had a person really called out from the spot. The Ventriloquist imitates the sound as it would fall upon the ear if a man had called from the roof, say, and indicates by some little action, or by a plain statement, that the voice is coming from the roof. The audience naturally expect to hear a voice from the roof, and so are deceived. If the performer omitted to indicate the spot from which the voice is supposed to proceed, his hearers could not locate the sound. It would appear to them that a voice was calling from somewhere, but without a guide as to its direction they would be at a loss; and hence the ear is

deceived quite as much as the voice is disguised. I shall deal with these points more minutely later on.

The impression that a Ventriloquist can "throw" his voice has been fostered by Cockton's clever book "Valentine Vox." A very large proportion of those who take up the study of Ventriloquism are led to do so by reading this most entertaining novel. I am sorry to play the part of the wet blanket, but truth compels me to state that nine out of ten of the feats Valentine Vox is said to have performed are outside the range of possibility—quite beyond the power of the most accomplished Ventriloquist who ever lived or is likely to. And for this reason: that it is almost impossible for folks to be deceived by a Ventriloquist unless they are aware of the nature of the illusion. This may sound paradoxical, but it is a fact. People go to see a Ventriloquist and they appreciate his illusions because they expect to be deceived, and so they help him to deceive them. The man who could walk about the streets throwing his voice here, there, and everywhere, without anyone being cognizant of the fact that he was doing it, is an unknown quality, and has not yet graced this earth with his presence. Whether Cockton himself, when he wrote "Valentine Vox," really believed it possible that such feats could be accomplished as are placed to the credit of his hero, it is hard to say. In Cockton's day Ventriloquism was little understood and much misunderstood. He may have heard some of the expert professors of that time, and, without analysing the matter, arrived at the conclusion that such illusions as he describes were possible. In his preface he commits himself to this statement: "The power of an accomplished Ventriloquist is well known to be unlimited. There is no scene in life in which that power is incapable of being developed; it gives its possessor a command over the actions, the feelings, the passions of men, while its efficacy in loading with ridicule every prejudice and every project of which the tendency is pernicious cannot fail to be perceived at a glance." I beg very respectfully to

say that Ventriloquism can do nothing of the kind; and so far from the power of the Ventriloquist being unlimited, it is very limited indeed. His statement is calculated to make one think that Cockton himself believed the Ventriloquist capable of accomplishing all he describes; yet on the other hand it is difficult to conceive that a man who had so carefully and exhaustively inquired into the Lunacy Laws, in order to ensure the main part of his book being quite accurate, would "give himself away," so to speak, by displaying ignorance in the other matter. His book is of course, a romance; but, I take it, his preface was not intended to be romance also. However this may be, the reader can rest assured that if he has taken up the study of Ventriloquism with the object of rivaling the feats attributed to Valentine Vox, he is wasting his time in an effort to do that which is impossible.

COLLOQUISM is the imitation of the human voice without any distant effect, and is brought into play when the entertainer apparently holds a conversation with one or more mechanical dolls. From this statement it will be gathered that most of the performers now before the public have really no right whatever to be called Ventriloquists; they are Colloquists and Colloquists only, for the professional now-a-days seldom attempts the higher branches of the Art, but is content to gain what laurels he can by carrying on a dialogue, more or less humorous, with a group of figures. Take my own case, for instance. Judged by the "show" I am now giving in public, and which I have given for some years past, it is incorrect to call me a Ventriloquist. I use one figure only, "Coster Joe," and my "turn" consists of a dialogue with this figure, a recitation with interruptions from Joe, and a duet between us. Except at one point in the duet where I usually introduce a little distant-voice effect, it is Colloquism all through. And there is no doubt these so-called Ventriloquial Entertainments which are made up of humorous dialogue with dolls, appeal to the general public with greater force than would an exhibition of Ventriloquism

pure and simple. My experience is that, as a rule, people who visit places of amusement have a higher admiration for the man who is funny, than for the man who is clever. For the purpose of this argument I call the "pure" Ventriloquist the clever man, and the Colloquist the "funny" man. When I first "came out" my entertainment consisted principally of genuine Ventriloquial effects—distant voices, distant street cries, and the like—but I was not long in discovering that the item most relished by the audience in nearly every case was the dialogue with the group of figures with which I closed the show. I did not consider it my mission to try and educate the public taste, even had I been capable of doing so, which I was not. The public expressed a preference for a certain thing, and I endeavoured to give it them, especially as it was easier for me. Then "Coster Joe" appeared on the scene, and I found it was quite possible to extract as much laughter from his vagaries as from half-a-dozen figures; so I eschewed the group, brought the show down to "Coster Joe" only, and now, except at private parties where the entertainment has to be drawn out and a little of everything is required, or where I am specially requested to introduce distant voices, I am content to rely on "Joe" for my effects and my bread and butter. According to the entertainments they are now giving, nearly all the prominent Ventriloquists are in the same boat as myself, and should be called Colloquists, although I have no doubt most of them could give a legitimate "voice-throwing" Ventriloquial turn if they so desired, or if they did not know from experience that it is much more profitable to use figures, which make people laugh. That is what the theatre-going public want now-a-days—a good laugh. There are so many "clever" people in various walks of life that folks get a little tired of these prodigies; they will never tire of the man who excites genuine laughter. Nevertheless, whichever branch of the Art we practice, we shall still all be classed as Ventriloquists. During my recent Provincial tour, I described myself in the bill-matter I sent to one of the halls as a

“Colloquial humorist.” I don’t exactly know what impression the Manager gathered from that description; he may have imagined I was a new variety of comic singer or knockabout artiste ; but he evidently had no thirst for novelty, for he wrote that he had engaged me as a Ventriloquist, and should expect me to give a Ventriloquial entertainment.

POLYPHONISM is really mimicry—the art of imitating various sounds, such as the cries of animals and birds, musical instruments, &c., without attempting to deceive the listener as to their direction. Polyphonism differs from Ventriloquism in that it is imitation without illusion. The Ventriloquist aims at deception; the sound he produces is not supposed to originate with him, but to come from some distant spot. The Polyphonist, on the contrary, simply imitates. There are two classes of mimicry now in vogue. The first has its representatives in such clever people as Miss Cissie Loftus, Miss Marie Dainton, Mr. Harry Tate, Mr. Syd May, Mr. George Kenway, Mr. Algernon Newark, Mr. George Robins and Mr. Arthur Faber, whose performances consist of the imitation of the vocal and other peculiarities of prominent actors, singers, and music hall artistes. The leading lights of the other class—the true Polyphonists—are Mr. Harry Carsdale, Mr. Harry Atkinson, Mons. O’Gust, and Segommer, who imitate the denizens of the farm-yard, musical instruments, sawing, &c. With the former class I have no concern. It is quite impossible to give instructions which would enable people to mimic our great actors and singers, for I regard such artistes as Miss Loftus and Mr. Tate, for instance, as gifted in the truest sense of the word. With respect to the other class the case is different, however, and I hope to be of service to those whose ambition in this direction does not go beyond the imitation of ordinary sounds, musical instruments and animals.

Having explained to the best of my ability what Ventriloquism really is, and what can and cannot be

accomplished by the expert performer, we will proceed to discuss the methods by means of which the various illusions are brought about.



PRACTICAL.

VENTRILLOQUISM IN PRACTICE.

Now we come to deal with the practical side of our subject. It is an exceedingly difficult matter to expound in print everything connected with the Art ; there are so many technicalities which could be explained so much better *viva voce*, but I hope to avoid confusing the issues by endeavouring to convey my meaning in as few words as possible, so that the student may not be put to any trouble in picking out the points which are essential to his advancement ; and I have no doubt that if he has ordinary understanding he will experience but little difficulty in obtaining a clear knowledge of the Art and its mysteries. It may be that some, eager to become full-blown Ventriloquists all at once, will feel inclined to skip the preceding pages, and plunge into the "instructions" with all their pre-conceived notions of what the Ventriloquist is capable, which may or may not be correct. I beg of you not to do anything of the kind. Read carefully what has been written, and especially the last chapter, in which I have tried to make clear the exact extent of the Ventriloquist's power. It may save you a lot of trouble later on. If you find you do not get on as fast as you anticipated, do not be discouraged. There is no royal road to success for the Ventriloquist any more than there is a short cut to the goal in other pursuits. Perseverance is the only means by which the tyro can hope to attain anything like perfection. It is quite futile to expect to reach a satisfactory result without constant effort and

unremitting practice. Given the quality of perseverance you may do much ; without it failure is certain.

THE ART OF BREATHING.

First of all you must master the art of breathing properly. Before any attempt is made to experimentalize with the voice, you must be able to control the breath so that you may hold it, without straining, for a considerable time. Almost everyone knows—or should know—that the proper way to breathe is not through the mouth, but through the nose. The air should be drawn in through the nose and the mouth kept shut, the lungs being inflated at each inspiration to their full extent. Stand erect, take a deep breath through the nostrils, retain it in the lungs as long as possible, and then let it out gradually, not through the nose, but through the mouth. If you practice this exercise daily and make a mental note of the number of seconds you retain the breath, you will find that after a few days you are able to hold it twice the length of time you could at the first attempt. You will appreciate the value of this power of retaining the breath later on, when you have to give off a long sentence in a Ventriloquial voice. Apart from Ventriloquism, however, this system of training the respiratory organs will be found beneficial to health. The mouth was never intended by Nature as the channel for drawing in the breath, and the habit—a very common one, I admit—lays the foundation for all manner of diseases of the lungs, for by drawing in the cold air direct we expose to undue strain the delicate membranes of the throat and the lungs. Breathe through the nose.

CONTROLLING THE FACIAL MUSCLES.

Having mastered the art of breathing, the next important preliminary step is learning to control the facial muscles, so that you may be able to talk not only without movement of the lips, but also with absolute

rigidity of countenance. Many an otherwise excellent Ventriloquial exhibition is completely spoiled through the movement of the operator's mouth being perceptible whilst he is voicing his dolls, or receiving an answer from Bill on the roof. Directly the Ventriloquist steps upon the stage everyone who has an opera-glass brings the instrument to bear on the performer's face; the slightest muscular movement is at once observed, and is certain to evoke adverse criticism. Audiences are inclined to regard this as a matter of vital importance, and many believe that the whole Art of Ventriloquism consists in the ability of the performer to speak without moving his lips. How often do we hear the remark as the Ventriloquist makes his bow and retires: "Splendid; I watched him all the time, and could not detect the slightest movement of his mouth;" or "Yes, very good; but I saw his mouth move twice." It is of the first importance, then, that no muscular movement should be observable. Although it requires a considerable amount of practice to enable one to talk freely and naturally without moving the lips or nerves of the face, it is by no means difficult to accomplish. The student should always practice before a looking-glass. Let him stand up, keep his mouth almost closed, so that the upper teeth just touch the lower lip, and watch closely that the expression of the face is a natural one. Some writers on the subject advocate the use of thin pieces of leather or wood placed between the double teeth at the back of the mouth, but I do not recommend adventitious aid of this or any other kind. The Ventriloquist has to do without it ultimately, and he may as well learn to do so at first, especially as it is by no means difficult, as I have already said. Be very careful that the expression assumed is a natural one, and that the face is in repose.

PRELIMINARY PRACTICE WITH THE ALPHABET.

Standing in front of the looking-glass, and keeping the mouth in the position recommended in the preceding

paragraph, the student may now commence to articulate, and he cannot do better than start as he did in the days of his childhood—with the alphabet. He must go right through the alphabet without moving his mouth. The vowels and most of the consonants will present no difficulty, but B, P, M, and, to a lesser extent, F, and V, will cause trouble. Perhaps I need hardly have classed F and V amongst the difficult letters, as the student will find he can readily sound these letters without moving his lips by an accentuated breath directed against the top teeth. It is not possible, however, to pronounce B, P, and M without some movement of the lips, and therefore these letters, and the words in which they should be expressed, must be “slurred,” or the sound of the letters and words imitated as closely as possible. After the student has had a little practice, he will find himself capable of doing this without the difference being distinguishable to any extent beyond a very circumscribed area. B is very awkward to dispose of, but you can substitute the letter which most resembles it in sound according to the word used, and so make it pass muster. For instance, boat would be “vote,” beautiful “vutiful,” book “vook,” but “vut,” and so on. P is another caulker, and again the V or the F (really produced by a hard breath forced against the top teeth) must be used in its place. M, the last of the difficult letters, may be indicated by “ng” such as “ngan” for man. But the skilful Ventriloquist seldom has trouble in this direction, for he eliminates as much as possible from his dialogue all words which have these awkward letters accentuated in them. It is, of course, impossible to do so in every case, but where it is absolutely necessary to use them, the words can be “slurred” in the manner above indicated, and the student will find he is able to pronounce them so much like the original that the difference will be seldom, if ever, detected. Repeat the alphabet over and over again, for the object is two-fold: first to acquire the habit of talking without facial movement, and secondly to articulate plainly with the mouth still. Try it first of all by forcing the sound against the top

teeth, keeping the tongue as low down as possible. Then go through the exercise again, raising the tongue a little and forcing the sound towards the back-part of the roof of the mouth. You will find this enables you to repeat the alphabet in two quite distinct tones of voice. Next practice short sentences, always bearing in mind the B's, P's, and M's, and their equivalents. If it is imperative to give expression to a difficult sentence, it can be done in actual practice by turning the head aside and emitting the words from the corner of the mouth furthest from the audience; but suppose you have to utter such a sentence as this: "Mind that box" with your face towards the audience, then you would have to say "ngind that vox," and cheek it out. But as I have said, the skilful Ventriloquist will in the arrangement of his dialogue avoid such necessity by substituting another sentence much easier to express without facial movement. In order that the absence of words in which these awkward letters occur may not be noticed, make use of such words as much as possible when speaking in your natural voice.

SOUND.

To become a successful Ventriloquist, one must be able to appreciate sound as it falls on the ear, and this is not quite such a simple matter as it may appear. To imitate a sound correctly, the original must be thoroughly understood. Nature is of great assistance to the Ventriloquist in this respect, for everyone knows how difficult it is to locate the exact direction and distance of a sound. If a person calls to you in the street, for example, it is as likely as not that you will turn in the wrong direction to ascertain whence the sound came; and it is often impossible without minute examination to fix the precise spot at which a mouse is scratching in a room. It is the business of the Ventriloquist to imitate sounds, not as they are heard at their source, but as they appear when they reach the ear. Therefore you must study sound. This can best be done by getting a friend to go to one of the top

rooms of your house and hold a conversation with you ; or you may go to some open space and ask your friend to shout from a distance. Another good method is to visit a place where building operations are in progress, and listen to the workmen as they call to one another, paying particular attention to the sound as you hear it, and afterwards trying to imitate it as closely as possible. You need not trouble about the actual words, for the British workman is not always too particular in his choice of language. Supposing you are unable or unwilling to call in the assistance of a friend—and the embryo Ventriloquist, from shyness or some such reason, is generally desirous of conducting his preliminary practice quite privately—a very simple method of studying sound for the “distant” effect is to utter a short sentence in the natural voice, then place the fingers firmly over the ears and repeat the sentence, first in the same tone and then an octave higher; take the fingers away from the ears and imitate the sound you heard, and there you have a very good “distant” voice.

ACTION.

Action, again, is another important point to be studied. If you listen to the performance of a “distant-voice” Ventriloquist, you will observe that in introducing an illusion he will invariably indicate by some word or action the direction from which the voice is supposed to proceed. For example, if he is doing the “man on the roof,” he either tells you first of all that he is about to call to his friend on the roof, or he points to the spot. The audience therefore expect to hear a voice from the roof, and the Ventriloquist, correctly imitating the sound as it would appear if a man had in reality called from the spot indicated, and assisted by the imagination of those present, completes the illusion, and everyone is astonished. It is just the same in using figures. If there are three or four figures on the stage, the performer who knows his business will first address each one individually and receive a direct answer. The

audience see the mouth move and note the peculiar tone of voice in which that particular figure answers; then later on the figure can break in without being spoken to; but the audience, having marked the peculiarity of the voice, know which figure to refer the sound to, although they may not actually see the mouth move. Other things being equal, a good actor will make a much better Ventriloquist than one who is an indifferent actor, because he is able by little tricks and movements to govern the imagination of those who watch him. If the Ventriloquist were not able to give this very broad hint as to the direction of the sound, or if there was not something in the surroundings to indicate it, his performance would be a failure, for the audience left to themselves without any guide would be completely fogged. It is for this reason one is compelled to say that Cockton, in writing "Valentine Vox," wrote in ignorance of the Art.

THE "DISTANT" VOICE.

The student who has carefully read and digested the directions already given, should by this time understand the art of breathing, should be able to control the muscles of his face, and pronounce the alphabet and short sentences without moving his lips; he should also have acquired a knowledge of sound, and an appreciation of the importance of acting as applied to the Art. The next step is to master the three principal voices in Ventriloquism: the "distant" voice, the "middle" voice, and the "colloquial" voice. We will take the "distant" voice first; and I would observe here that I propose to give these directions in as few words as possible, for if they are plain and brief they are the more likely to be readily understood.

The "distant" voice is, as its name implies, the voice which is used when the performer desires to bring about the illusion of a person shouting from the roof of a house, or from some distant spot. Although there are several modifications, of which

more anon, all "distant" voices are practically the same, Now, try this: Call out in your natural voice "Hi!" prolonging it as much as you can, opening the mouth well. Then close the mouth, letting the top teeth just touch the inside of the lower lip and call out "Hi!" again one octave above, but keeping the sound at the back of the throat, turning the tongue toward the roof of the mouth, and slightly contracting the abdominal muscles. You will find the sound emitted is exactly the same as if a person had answered your call from a distance. There you have the secret of the "distant" voice in a nut-shell, and to say much more is simply to confuse the issue. A person with any aptitude for this study will at once recognise that he has "got it," and will know he has only to practice sentences in the same way to obtain all that is requisite. Of course, you will not be perfect at first, but the very few words I have purposely used are really sufficient to indicate all that is necessary. Practice for a week or two, study sound, imitate it, and you will be all right.

The "distant" voice can be made to approach or recede. To bring the voice nearer the sound has to be gradually released from the back of the throat, and brought forward in the mouth. If the voice has to die away in the distance, you simply reverse this method.

THE "MIDDLE" VOICE.

The "middle" voice is only a modification of the "distant" voice, but it is sufficiently distinct to warrant being dealt with separately. It is the voice which is near by, which comes through some obstacle to the audience, such as from the other side of a door, or from a box on the stage, the lid of which is only partially closed. Before commencing the study of this voice you must thoroughly understand what it is you have to imitate; and here I would impress once more

the necessity of studying sound. When you have a clear and definite knowledge of the sound you are to imitate, produce it in the top part of the throat, keeping the breath well under control, so that you actually utter the sounds without breathing. If you maintain the same pitch and tone as that in which you address the "voice," you will get a deadened, muffled sound, exactly resembling a person speaking in a passage with a closed door intervening. If the voice is to come through a thicker substance, such as a wall for instance, raise the pitch a little, and make the sound fainter, because a person calling from an adjoining room would naturally speak louder than if he were only just outside the door, and the sound would be at a greater distance.

The "man in the cellar" illusion should also come under the head of this "middle" voice, rather than the "distant." Lower the pitch of the voice, getting the sound as far down the throat as you can. Draw the jaw back to make the cavity in the mouth as large as possible, and get a slight abdominal pressure in order to strengthen the tone, for the breath in this case also must be held back.

"COLLOQUIAL" VOICES.

In using Colloquial voices for the purpose of apparently endowing with speech a set of "figures," or for conversing with a suppositious person behind a screen, no attempt need be made to "throw" the voice. You will be astonished to find how simple a matter it is to change the tone of the voice. If you speak with the tongue well forward in the mouth the sound differs very materially from that which is heard when the tongue is placed further back. All the Colloquial voices, whatever character they may assume, are based on two—the "old man," and the "old lady," and when once these have been acquired the rest is

plain sailing. To make the contrast between his own voice and the voices of his creation as distinct as possible, the Ventriloquist should enunciate very clearly, and should pitch the Ventriloquial voice in a different key to his own.

THE OLD MAN.—The voice for the “old man” is usually obtained by rolling the tongue back so that the tip just touches the roof of the mouth, the Ventriloquist speaking in as deep a tone as he can conveniently assume. Emit the sound from that side of the mouth nearest the figure which is supposed to be talking, or to the screen behind which the man is apparently concealed. If you wish to imitate an Irishman or a Scotchman the voice is the same, except that the tone is altered for the sake of contrast, and the dialect imitated—even exaggerated—for Ventriloquial purposes.

THE BOY.—The cheeky boy’s voice is produced in the same way as the old man’s, except that it is pitched higher and the sound sent more in the direction of the nose.

THE OLD LADY.—Speak in a high key through the nose, always keeping before your mind the sound of a “Punch” call. This voice should be well accentuated, with a kind of complaining wail in it, for the old lady in Ventriloquism is usually of a very querulous disposition.

LITTLE GIRL.—The same as the old lady, except that it is pitched in a higher key, is not so full, and is brighter. To accentuate the difference between the old lady and the child, there should be incompleteness of expression, hesitation, and softness in the latter case. The old lady’s voice should be made harsh; but with the little girl an effort must be put forth to infuse a certain amount of sweetness into the childish tones,

BABY.—This voice is similar to the little girl’s, but is pitched still higher, and is forced more through the

nose. Study from Nature, and if you are anything of a mimic it won't take you very long to reproduce the sounds which made you a general nuisance in the earliest stages of your existence. Many Ventriloquists stop the baby's cries by giving it the bottle, or by placing in the mouth a "comforter." The sound incidental to this effect is obtained by the performer closing his lips firmly, and making as nearly as he can a "clucking" noise through the nose, which must gradually die away as baby is satisfied.

Other voices may be required, as every Ventriloquist has his own peculiarities; but those I have given form the stock-in-trade from which all others are manufactured, and if you master these you will have no difficulty, by altering the tone and pitch, to suit almost any character you may desire.



VENTRILLOQUIAL FIGURES.

Having reached this stage, you will probably be anxious to know something about Ventriloquial "figures," how they are made, how they are manipulated, and what they cost. Figures are to be obtained in infinite variety, from the humble "Talking hand" to the most elaborate mechanical sets which walk, smoke, drink, sit, stand, dance, and in fact are endowed with almost every attribute of the human race except speech, which deficiency it is the business of the Ventriloquist to make good.

The heads of Ventriloquial figures are made of *papier-mâché*. The jaw moves on a long hinge, jointed at the back of the neck in order to give the mouth a level drop, and is brought back by a spring, one end of which is fixed to the top of the head and the other to the hinge, just inside the mouth. The head is usually fixed to a small shaft with a lever about half-way down, to which is attached a string running up to the mouth, so that the performer, grasping the shaft and touching the lever with his thumb, is able to control the movements of the mouth. The small dolls have no shafts, but there is a hole at the back of the neck, into which the performer thrusts his thumb, and is able to make the mouth move by pressing the hinge. The better class of heads are fitted with a number of eccentric movements, such as eyes to turn and roll, and hair to fly up. I have a head, which I keep as a curiosity, for ornament and not for use, fitted with eight distinct movements. It can be made to smile, frown, and assume expressions of surprise, pain, and sorrow. The "smile" movement is the invention of my friend Mr. Clemart, and is very effective.

The bodies of Ventriloquial figures in the smaller and cheaper varieties are also made of *papier-mâché*. Large figures, however, which have to be fitted with mechanical movements, are partly constructed of wood. The back of the body is open, so that the performer can grasp the shaft of the head, which comes through the neck hole. The heads are not usually attached to the bodies, but can be taken out and placed inside the figures for convenience in travelling. The arms of a figure are sometimes made to move by a stick in continuation of the forearm, which is concealed by the coat, and worked by the performer, unseen. Legs of sitting figures can be moved in a similar way.

The cost of a Ventriloquial figure is anything between 30s. and £10, according to size and the number of movements with which it is fitted. Some of the elaborate automata used by professionals cost a great deal more than the higher sum I have mentioned, but these of course are "special orders." The cheap figures are very small, and of no use whatever for stage or platform purposes. The cheapest contrivance of all which partakes of the nature of a figure, is the "Talking hand," and this can be purchased for a few shillings.

The "Talking hand" is very useful to start with, and may serve the amateur to amuse his friends at home, and give him confidence before proceeding to greater lengths. It is of very little service for stage or platform purposes, although I have seen it utilized with good effect by Mr. Verne (of Bruce and Verne) at the Egyptian Hall. The "Talking hand" is really a glove, the back of which is painted to represent a face, and to which a short stuffed body is attached. The glove is put on the hand, and the thumb moved up and down to represent the working of the jaw. With a good dialogue a lot of fun can be extracted from this simple contrivance. The "Talking hand" is usually an old lady.

Then we have knee figures, so called because they are made to sit on the performer's knee. They are suit-

able for amateurs, and can be had in various characters, such as the old man and old lady, Tommy and Joey, boy and girl, nigger, soldier, sailor, Irishman, etc. They range from 24 inches to 40 inches in height, and can be fitted with moving mouths, moving eyes, heads to nod and turn, wigs to "waggle," and moving arms.

Next in order come the small standing figures, which have to be placed upon a table, the performer standing behind and working the movements by levers in the back of the figures. Then we come to the life-size variety, the old man and old lady seated on chairs, which are really packing cases in which the figures can be stowed away in very compact form for travelling. All the movements enumerated above are attached to these figures, and in addition the old man can kick out. Life-size figures to stand up, similar to those used by Lieutenant Cole, can also be obtained now.

The dancing nigger is an ingenious contrivance. He stands on a pedestal with a curtain at the back, behind which the performer, by grasping rods attached to the feet, but concealed by the curtain, can make the figure dance without enlightening the audience as to how it is done. The mouth works also, so that the figure can indulge in song as well as dance; the head throws back in laughing, and the pedestal forms a case for travelling, into which the figure and fittings pack. This is a useful adjunct to a group, because the mouth can be worked either close to or at a distance.

Some manufacturers undertake to supply novel groups of figures at so much per group, such as a police-court scene, the Ventriloquist to act as counsel, and the figures to represent the magistrate, prisoner, witnesses, and policemen; a sea scene, with a boat to rock, the performer playing the part of the boatman, accompanied on a voyage by a mixed gathering of "trippers," who submit themselves to the pleasures and perils of the ocean; a political candidate addressing a body of "figure" voters, who cross-examine the gentleman seek-

ing their suffrages; a farmhouse, with a "practical" door, window, etc., a country lad being seated on a stile, a girl in a swing, dog in a kennel, ducks, hens, pigs, etc., in addition to the farmer and his wife; a school, with the schoolmaster seated at his desk and a row of children on a form; and so on.

The complaint I have to make against the manufacturers of Ventriloquial figures is that as a general rule they turn out such terrible monstrosities, and shapeless masses of deformity. The answer, of course, is that the main consideration with people who buy their wares is cheapness, and that if the manufacturer is to make a profit he cannot give sufficient time to perfecting the figures at the prices people are generally willing to pay. Now, let me utter a word of warning here. The Ventriloquist who aims at permanent success must have good "props." The best is always the cheapest in the long run. Cheap and nasty figures go wrong in no time—probably at a very awkward moment—and you are compelled to purchase again, whereas if you pay a fair price to start with the article you acquire will, with care, last a long time; further, you have more confidence in yourself, born of the knowledge that whatever happens you can depend upon your figures.

Don't have monstrosities; let your figures look natural. I attribute a great deal of the favour shown me by the public to the fact that "Coster Joe" has such a natural appearance. He is shapeable, his limbs are correctly proportioned, and he looks like a real boy. His face was modelled according to my own ideas and instructions, and it was a long time before I could get the exact expression I wanted; but I feel amply repaid for the trouble and expense. Joe's head is abnormally thick—please take this in a literal sense—and he is fixed up with all the little improvements and strengthenings experience has suggested; but I have acquired the habit of knocking him about, and there is a great deal of realism in the blows he receives, so that, notwithstanding I always have the best obtainable, the

average life of a head with me is only 12 days—or rather nights—and considerably less than that in the busy season. As the heads cost very nearly £1 each, you will see that my habit of “slogging” Joe is a somewhat expensive one. I could make them last much longer I have no doubt, but directly I observe any tendency in the head to crack, or go wrong, I throw it aside, for one can never feel safe unless he knows the figure is in good trim. One night at the Palace Theatre I omitted to examine the fittings before going on the stage, and therefore failed to notice that the screws of the lever and neck hinge were loose. The result was that with an exceptionally heavy “clout” I knocked Joe’s head right off, and it rolled to the footlights. I was considerably astonished at the occurrence, as it was altogether unexpected, but had sufficient presence of mind to walk towards the head and cause it to upbraid me as it lay on the ground for my brutal conduct. By this means I got out of the difficulty very well; but if that accident had occurred to a beginner it would in all probability have completely upset him and ruined his show.

At the Alhambra only a few weeks ago, I was about half-way through my performance, when, in striking Joe, his left eye, which I suppose had been gradually loosened, was forced in, and fell through the head into the mouth, clogging the action of the jaw. I was compelled to stop and remove the eye from the mouth, and in doing so dropped it on the stage. Everybody saw this and also marked the absence of the eye, and the people shrieked. Joe immediately commenced to abuse me, and for the remainder of the time I was on the stage continually referred to the loss of his optic, bringing in some satirical remark with reference thereto whenever a favourable opportunity occurred. It went so well that if I could afford it I would knock his eye out every night. This sort of thing is not very embarrassing to an experienced performer; but in the case of a novice it would be a different matter. Therefore, I say again, have good figures.

POLYPHONISM.

If it is difficult to convey in print what one actually means when dealing with Ventriloquism, it is ten times harder to make one's self understood when writing of the imitation of animals, musical instruments, and ordinary sounds, because of the impossibility of "spelling" some sounds. In studying Polyphonism you must be, more than ever, guided by the ear. Read the following directions carefully, and then study the sounds from Nature. When the student has mastered the imitations, I would advise him to practice them Ventriloquially, for it adds very materially to a Ventriloquial entertainment if the performer can make a dog appear to bark as he runs away, the yelps getting fainter and fainter, or if he can imitate the other sounds at a distance as well as close by.

PHONOGRAPH.

One of the best imitations I know is that of the phonograph, and, so far, it has the advantage of not being hackneyed. It is exceedingly effective, and is certain to get a round of applause if at all well executed. The phonograph, as you probably know, gives forth a smothered, metallic sound, which you can produce in this way: Pinch the nostrils with the thumb and first finger, making a sort of cap with the hand, which is held over the mouth. Then speak or sing in a moderately high key, directing the sound through the nose, and holding the breath, and you will find you have a wonderfully correct imitation of "Edison's latest." The best way to show off this imitation is to sing a verse of a popular song, and at the end make a sound similar to that recommended in "sawing," and this will give the effect of the phonograph "running down."

SAWING.

Let the tongue rest against the bottom teeth, and make a sound as if you were trying to clear the roof of the mouth of phlegm ; then quickly bring the tip of the tongue to the palate and draw in the breath through the clenched teeth, making as much noise as possible. Of course you must imitate the action of sawing.

PLANING.

This is very simple. You have to make a sound which is best described by the letters "ush," with the accent on the "sh," cut short every time by pressing the tip of the tongue against the roof of the mouth. Different tones for heavy or light planes can be obtained by the action of the lips, which a moment's practice will reveal. Don't forget that you have to imitate the action of planing as well as the sound. O'Gust, when doing this, throws shavings about, which adds realism to the effort.

FRYING A CHOP.

A capital imitation of the sound made in frying a chop or steak can be produced by clenching the teeth, pressing the tongue against the upper row, and hissing, alternately opening and closing the lips, sometimes slowly, sometimes rapidly.

SODA-WATER.

An effective imitation of the opening of a bottle of soda-water or lemonade is the one I have adopted, and which, I think, is an improvement on the old method of drawing the cork and pouring out the liquid. You are supposed to hold in the left hand a "small soda" bottle, force in the stopper, pour the liquid into a glass and drink it off. Draw the lower lip over the bottom teeth, and press down the top teeth as firmly as you can without hurting yourself. Force the lip outward with an explosive "fizz," and the tip of the tongue will just pro-

trude between the teeth. Keep up a hissing sound whilst going through the action of pouring the soda-water into a glass, and then carry the glass to the mouth. The pressure of the edge of the glass against your lip will alter the sound, which you gradually reduce in volume as the liquid is supposed to disappear.

In connection with this imitation a funny incident recurs to my mind. I was once asked by a West End Concert Agent to give a gentleman instructions in Ventriloquism. I agreed; and it was arranged that I should visit the pupil's residence at Westminster. When I arrived I was shown to the drawing-room, and found myself in the presence of two gentlemen well past middle-age. The one who had the appearance of being the younger of the two commenced the conversation by requesting me to give an example of my capability. I pointed out that I was there not for the purpose of giving an entertainment, but to instruct one of them in the Art, and I added that I had been given to understand this person had already seen my performance, and that was the reason he had particularly requested I should attend. The gentlemen agreed, but still expressed a desire to hear what I could do before we went any further. Accordingly I took my stand beside a window, had a conversation with an imaginary Irishman behind the curtain, apparently drew a tooth for him (unconscious satire!) and then sent him out of the window and down the street to the Chemist's to get some cotton wool to stop up the cavity in his jaw. My audience of two applauded, and I proceeded with a few Polyphonic experiments, including sawing, the phonograph, and this imitation of the opening of a bottle of soda-water. The gentlemen were manifestly satisfied, and the elder one was then introduced to me as my pupil. He was a tall, military looking man, perilously close to the "sixties." He informed me that he had seen my performance at one of the music-halls, and was anxious to acquire some knowledge of the Art, so that he might amuse his friends. He was not inclined to take a series of lessons,

but felt sure that if I would explain a little he could manage the rest, as he had "read a book on the subject." The illusion of the Irishman behind the curtain struck him as being something near his mark. I tried to explain that he must first master the details of speaking without moving the lips, &c.; but he assured me he would get over those difficulties himself if I would show him how to produce the voice behind the screen. I tried, but of course as he had not perfected himself in the elementary exercises, my efforts were foredoomed to failure. He grunted and groaned and made a terrible mess of it, and at last gave it up as a bad job. My pupil next questioned me with reference to the imitations, and I told him that they, unlike Ventriloquial effects, could be acquired almost immediately by anyone who had mimetic powers. Determined, I suppose, not to go "empty away," he asked me to show him how to do one of these imitations, and I chose the soda-water experiment as being the easiest. I explained that he had to place the top teeth on the lower lip, and then to send the lip from under the teeth with as much force as possible. He did as directed, blew with all his might, but immediately gave vent to a muffled "Oh!" and clasped his hands over his mouth. He had blown his false teeth out!

A good imitation of soda-water coming from a syphon can be produced by clenching the teeth and making a noise like "she-e-e," letting the sound come out at the sides, and gradually closing the lips.

DOGS.

For the big dog, roll the tongue back and say "Ow! Ow! Ow!" as far down the throat as possible. For a little dog, such as the terrier, bring the tongue forward in the mouth and repeat the "Ow!" business. For a very small dog the sound should be sent through the nose.

DONKEY.

Draw the breath in sharply, saying "Hee," and break it off immediately as if you were about to hiccough. Without pausing, roll the tongue towards the roof of the mouth and say "Haw" well down in the throat. This will give the donkey's well-known "Hee-haw."

QUARRELLING CATS.

Cats are imitated by uttering a noise like "ngew ! ng-ol-row !" the sound being directed through the nose as high as possible, and with as many variations as you can assume. Quarrelling cats can be imitated by keeping one set of sounds in a lower key than the other, the final "Phitz ! Phitz !" with which these midnight prowlers usually conclude their "spar" being produced in the same way as the forcing in of the soda-water bottle stopper.

PARROT.

Tongue rolled well back, the sound being made in the throat but forced through the nose.

HENS.

Press the lips together, and utter a succession of "tucks," keeping the tongue well forward in the mouth and forcing the sound through the lips.

COCK-CROWING.

Don't try to say "Cock-a-doodle-do" in this imitation; make it "Ooo-o-oo-oo-ooo," and you will be more likely to succeed. For the Bantam the sound goes through the nose; for the larger species think of the "old man's" voice, but produce the sound nearer the top of the throat.

DUCK.

Roll the tongue towards the back part of the palate, say "Wuack! Wuack!"—not "quack"—down in the throat, and send the sound through the nose.

THE BLUEBOTTLE.

This is another effective imitation, and affords the novice an excellent opportunity for acting in a small way. Press the lips tightly together, except at the left corner, where you leave just sufficient space for the wind to force its way out when you blow hard. The wind passing through this slight aperture causes a vibration which is exactly like the buzzing of a blue-bottle. Chase the supposed tormentor about your end of the room, flicking him off with your handkerchief whenever he settles, finally dodging him about on a window-pane until his capture is effected. If the sound is modulated it will add greatly to the effect. When the fly reaches the window-pane the sound should be sharper and rather jerky.

BANJO.

"Ping," "pong," and "pang," are the three sounds used to imitate the different tones produced by the twang of banjo strings; the sound should have a metallic quality, and must be directed towards the nasal organ.

MUSETTE AND SHEPHERD'S PIPE.

Pinch the nose, make a cap for the mouth with the palm of the hand, and go through the tune, uttering the sounds "tar-rar-rar-rar" (never mind about the "Bom-de-ay") commencing each breath with a "tar," and making the "rar-rar-rar" serve for the rest.

CORNET.

Make a sort of funnel with the hand held close to the mouth; keep the lips open and go through the tune with the words "tut tut" (apologies to Paul Mill), and "ta ta," making a liberal use of the tip of the tongue.

VIOLIN.

This is a difficult instrument to imitate, but it can be done by keeping the lips closed, smoothly humming the tune, and directing the sound through the nose, as in the case of the baby. The *pizzicato* effect is managed by means of the lips. Still hum the tune, cutting off each note sharply with the lips, as if you were trying to say "blup" without parting them.

VIOLONCELLO.

The 'Cello can be imitated in the same way as the Violin, except that the tone is much deeper, and is not forced through the nose to the same extent.

SIDE-DRUM.

The side-drum is to be imitated by a succession of sounds indicated by "ter-r-r-up," the "r's" being rolled as much as possible. The vocal chords should not be used at all in this imitation.



HOW TO GIVE A "SHOW."

I think I have told you all there is to be told—or at any rate, all I am capable of telling you—about Ventriloquism, Colloquism, and Polyphonism. I have striven to make the directions as intelligible as possible; but, as I have stated before, it is very difficult to convey all one would like to in cold print, and it is beyond the power of mortal man to set forth in words all the twistings and contortions of the tongue and vocal organs necessary to produce sounds incidental to some of the imitations. I do not pretend to make a Ventriloquist or a Mimic of every person who peruses this book; all I have attempted is to explain the method and general principles upon which these complex Arts are founded.

Although it is very desirable that you should have a thorough knowledge of each branch of the Art, it is not absolutely necessary for you to go through the whole curriculum. For instance, if you intend to confine your efforts to distant voices, you are not bound to acquire the colloquial voices, or the polyphonic imitations; or if you decide to work only with figures, you may dispense with the other two. But you will find it an immense advantage to perfect yourself in each branch, and an entertainment in which the three are judiciously blended, will surely be the most effective.

We will suppose, then, that you have studied the Art in its entirety, and that you are capable of "throwing" your voice, speaking through figures, and

imitating sounds. As this is your first attempt at entertaining it would not be wise to go to a lot of expense in purchasing a group of figures. You can do that later on if you like, when, as the result of experiment, you have determined the class of entertainment you will stick to. You might for a start purchase one figure, say a boy—but let it be a good one—and a curtain-screen. I assume you are making your initial appearance in a drawing-room. Take the bay-window end of the room for your stage, and seat the audience in rows at a respectable distance. Keep the people in front of you; don't let them stand at the sides, and, above all, never start if there is anyone behind you. Always get as far away from the audience as you conveniently can, for in Ventriloquism distance certainly lends enchantment. The effect is better, and is much easier to attain. Place your screen well back, with the figure behind it, and then step forward and explain in a few words what your intentions are: One gentleman who has written on this subject considers it inartistic to commence with an explanatory address. I do not agree with him. You must start somehow, and a brief neat sentence or two does no harm; indeed, it is of considerable assistance, and aids the entertainer, because it gives the audience an idea what to expect. A conjurer should never explain what he is going to attempt, but a Ventriloquist should, because, as I have said elsewhere, when people expect to be deceived in a Ventriloquial sense, they assist by their imagination to deceive themselves. Then commence with the distant voice, calling to Bill on the roof, gradually getting the voice nearer until you locate it behind the screen. Call to Bill's wife, who is in the cellar drawing the supper-beer. She comes up the stairs, counting each one, the voice gradually approaching until she, too, is behind the screen, and has her little girl and boy with her. That will suffice for the distant voice part of the entertainment. Now you proceed with the colloquial voices by holding a conversation with the man, woman, girl, and boy, behind the screen, finally bringing the figure of the boy out, going through a

humorous dialogue with him, and finishing by making him sing one verse of a song. One verse will be sufficient ; it loses in effect if you sing more than one verse, and besides, it is very tiring. Place the boy behind the screen again, and then introduce a few of the imitations. Thus you will run through the whole gamut and provide a well-varied show.



MUSIC-HALL, CONCERT, AND DRAWING-ROOM ENGAGEMENTS.

Whilst the majority of those who read these pages will do so merely because they are interested in the subject, or because they would like to know sufficient of the Art to amuse their own family circle, others may be inclined to take up the study with the object of making money by it. My intention has not been to create professionals. Study Ventriloquism by all means, if only to amuse your friends. It will help to pass away pleasantly many an otherwise dull evening, and your company will be much sought after in the society in which you move. But if you have a good berth in an office, warehouse, shop, or elsewhere, don't throw it up to become a "pro." The life is hard, unsettled, and, for the rank and file, unprofitable. The salaries may look all right on paper, but when you come to deduct agent's fees, travelling expenses, and the extra cost of living away from your home, there is not much in it. The average "pro" is no better off than a good mechanic or a person who has a decent berth in the City, and his life is certainly not such a comfortable one. The fact that one or two music-hall artistes draw a salary equal to that of a Cabinet Minister may tempt you to try the "halls;" but Punch's advice to those anxious to marry comes in here very emphatically—Don't. The market is already glutted, and in no department of the theatrical business are there so many artistes "resting," as in the Ventriloquial and mimetic branch. Clever men, with the experience of years to guide them

in the search for "shops," are "out" half the year; and managers, who are, of course, men of business, have not been slow to take advantage of the glut, with the result that salaries have been cut down accordingly. If you are exceptionally clever and exceptionally fortunate, a music-hall manager or agent may "discover" you, and get you an engagement at one of the halls; then it rests with yourself what progress you make. This is the kind of thing which very seldom comes off however, and there is nothing for it but to commence at the bottom of the ladder and fight your way up rung by rung. The arduous apprenticeship in fourth-rate Provincial halls, at something less than a living wage, is calculated to knock the romance out of a stage career in double-quick time. Suppose you decide to ignore all this, however, and are determined to try your luck, then you should send your credentials to one of the music-hall managers and ask him to see your performance at rehearsal. If he consents, and you really have something out of the common, he will give you a trial-turn in the evening programme, and if you go well an engagement may follow. But don't ask for a trial until you are quite ready, because if you once make a "bloomer," as it is called, that manager will never waste his valuable time on you again.

Then there are the concerts and "smokers." This is where you may have a chance to make a little money, but the "house-full" boards are almost out, and it is difficult to get "in the swim." The fees paid for "smokers" range from 5s. to 3 guineas. A good man may get a guinea for his contribution to the programme, but it is only the top sawyers who receive that, and you must be a very big "pot" indeed to obtain more. The concert "season" starts about the middle of October, and runs well into April.

Drawing-room work is rather arduous, because the entertainer is usually required to give a very long performance—often an hour-and-a-half at a stretch.

This class of work is a separate study, and is confined to a limited number of entertainers, who have special qualifications. The fees are good, ranging from 3 guineas to 10 guineas; but there is no demand to speak of except just at Christmas time. Mr. George Ashton, Bond Street; Messrs. Mitchell, Bond Street; Messrs. Hays, Cornhill; Messrs. Keith, Prowse & Co., Bond Street; Messrs. Lacon & Ollier, Bond Street; the Army and Navy Stores, Victoria Street; and Harrod's Stores, Brompton Road, are the principal Agents in London.



GENERAL HINTS.

When you speak in the Ventriloquial voice, whether the sound is supposed to come from a distance or from a figure, the words should be pronounced more deliberately than when you speak in your natural voice. This enables the audience to thoroughly understand what is said. But it is also important there should be no delay in changing from the ordinary to the Ventriloquial voice. The effect is so much better if the answer follows the question immediately.

* * * *

Don't forget what I have written as to the importance of acting. The Ventriloquist has to do something more than imitate sounds. He must be to all intents and purposes one of the audience himself, simply questioning his friend on the roof on their behalf, and must appear as anxious to hear the answer, and as doubtful what that answer will be, as any one present, although he furnishes the reply himself.

* * * *

Don't strain the voice. When the vocal chords are tired, let them have complete rest, or you may do yourself permanent injury. You must not try to run before you can walk. Progress by easy stages is the only way; disregard this rule and all your efforts will be in vain. Take things easily for a short period each day, and leave off directly you feel at all fatigued.

* * * *

If you are using figures take care that everything is in good order before you start ; examine the strings, levers, &c., to see that they work easily. When mishaps arise, as they will even in the best regulated Ventriloquial families, you need not lose your head. If the audience observe the accident, turn it to account by referring to it through the figure, and you may be glad the accident occurred.

* * * *

If you are performing in a drawing-room, don't be vulgar. Music-hall audiences require stronger meats, and like a piquant flavour. You must make your figures natural, and if you have a "vulgar boy" he must be vulgar ; but there is a limit, and it is wise to keep well within it.

* * * *

Don't attempt to practise when you have a cough. There are several gargles for strengthening and relieving the throat. The best I know of is a tea-spoon-full of common salt with half the quantity of borax mixed in a tumbler of cold water. A weak solution of Condry's Remedial Fluid is also good ; and if you are a little husky just before starting, a pinch of borax will do wonders for you. All forms of alcohol are bad for the throat, and it is very unwise to smoke just before performing.

* * * *

Impromptu remarks and local allusions, if neatly introduced, are sure to secure a round of applause. The best "stock gag" in the world will not create the enthusiasm which an apt remark on something occurring at the moment will evoke. But don't be personal unless someone tries to take a "rise" out of you ; then, if you feel equal to the emergency, "go for" him, but always do it through a figure. A case in

point. Last winter I was playing at one of the smaller London Music-halls where the gallery boys are notoriously "hot." In the course of the dialogue, "Coster Joe" enumerates the dishes enjoyed at a coster wedding feast, and at one point he is supposed to say, "And we had chamber-of-horrors." "Chamber-of-horrors!" I exclaim, "What is that?" and Joe answers "Sheep's head." Now, some of the gallery boys had thoroughly digested this—I mean the remark, not the sheep's head—for one night, directly I asked the question "What is that?" and before Joe could answer, someone in the gallery shouted "'Ere yer are, cull!" and the half of a sheep's head came whizzing through the air and fell about two yards from me. I was considerably astonished at first, and thought someone had thrown a boomerang at me; but glancing down I observed what it was and at the same time noticed that the large bone was quite devoid of meat. At once I turned Joe's head towards the gallery and caused him to say, quietly and very deliberately: "Thank's, cully; I see yer had yer dinner off it afore yer chucked it down!" The laugh was against me at first, but Joe's remark scored tremendously, and effectually turned it against the perpetrator of the "joke." Under such circumstances as these the sympathy of the audience is always with the performer if he answers smartly.



DIALOGUE.

Unless you are clever enough to write your own dialogue, you will find it a very difficult matter to get suited. It is by no means easy to write smart "patter" for a Ventriloquist, and most of the "authors" fight shy of the task. The necessity of avoiding as much as possible the use of b's, p's and m's place many obstacles in the way, and often spoil what would otherwise make a very good "gag." The two sketches which follow, "Domestic Infelicity," and "Clara's Babies," will serve for practice; but when you appear before the public it should be with something original, written to suit your idiosyncrasies, and to show off your strong points to the best advantage. For distant voices it is not absolutely necessary that the dialogue should be funny, because the main consideration is the illusion; but for figures it is a *sine quâ non* that the "patter" should be as laughable as possible.

In the following, V indicates the Ventriloquist; O.M. the old man; O.L. the old lady; T. the boy, and G. the girl.

"DOMESTIC INFELICITY."

Ventriloquial Dialogue for Old Man and Old Lady.

Figures on Stage with covers over heads, Old Man on Performer's right, and Old Lady on left.

V. : Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have the pleasure of introducing to your notice this evening, a little Ventriloquial sketch, and with the assistance of my old friends here—

O.M. (*interrupting*) : Now, then, governor, how much longer ?

V. : Half a minute, sir.

O.M. : Well, let's have this fly-catcher off, it's enough to choke yer
(Here the old man should be made to cough as if stifled. This sound should be a little muffled whilst the cover is over the figure's head).

V. *(taking cover off)* : Well, there you are.

O.M. *(grumbling)* : Keeping anyone covered up like this all night.

V. : I apologise to you, and to the lady also.

O.M. : Never mind her. That's a face that wants hiding.

V. : Come, I say!

O. L. : You used to think very different to that at one time.

O. M. : Well, you need'nt remind me of it ; I've got sense now.

V. : Come, sir, this is out of order.

O.M. : What is? Her dial?

V. : No, sir, I mean this is out of place.

O.M. : Well, take it to Madame Tussaud's, and stick it in the Chamber of Horrors.

O.L. : Oh dear ! Oh dear ! *(sobbing)*.

O.M. : Hullo, another shower.

V. : Pray don't distress yourself, Madame.

O.L. : It's very hard to be held up to ridicule at my time of life.

O.M. : I've seen you held up to get home.

O.L. : Anyhow, you were glad enough at one time to take me out.

O.M. : Yes, and I was'nt long before I found out I had been taken in.

V. : Come, come, don't quarrel. Why I always thought you were such an admirer of the fair sex.

O.M. : So I am.

O.L. : So he ought to be. Look what he's got here.

O.M. : Guess what it is, and you can have it.

V. : I'm afraid you don't quite understand the sex. You know a good woman will go through anything for the man she loves.

O.M. : Yes, even through his pockets and sneak his overtime.

O.L. : You used to say I looked like a lily.

O.M. : Yes, and you didn't take long to fade.

V. : Come, you are hurting the lady's feelings. You took her for better or worse.

O.M. : That's the worst of it.

- V. : What is?
- O.M. : She is.
- O.L. : That's the way he is always insulting me.
- V. : I'm sorry to hear it.
- O.L. : What do you think he did last Sunday?
- V. : I've no idea, Madame.
- O.L. : He came home intoxicated.
- V. : Then he broke the Sabbath.
- O.M. : Yes, and nearly broke my nose on the fender, too.
- V. : I'm sorry to hear this. Why do you drink the nasty stuff?
- O.M. : 'Cos it 'aint thick enough to eat.
- O.L. : My first husband never treated me like that.
- V. : He died young, did he not?
- O.M. : Yes, and lucky to get off so easily.
- O.L. : My first husband was in a high position.
- O.M. : Lived in a garret.
- O.L. : He held an excellent situation for five years.
- O.M. : Under Government.
- V. : What was his occupation, madame?
- O.M. : Grinding wind.
- V. : Hold your tongue. Did your husband earn good wages Madame?
- O.L. : What do you say?
- V. : What did he get on Saturdays?
- O.M. : Tight!
- V. : We had better change the subject, and leave family matters alone.
- O.L. : I've done with his family.
- O.M. : Yes, you've done all the lot one way and another.
- O.L. : Now you're stretching it.
- O.M. : That's what you did with my sister's shoes.
- O.L. : My friends never asked you for anything.
- O.M. : No, they took it without asking.
- V. : That is the worst of having relations.
- O.M. : It is the worst of relations having you.
- V. : Now, come, let us talk of something else.
- O.M. : Right.

V. : I have heard, Madame, that you are a very nice singer. Perhaps you would not mind obliging us with a song.

O.M. : Don't ask her, old man, you'll be ill.

V. : Just keep quiet.

O.L. : I could sing when I was young.

O.M. : That's a day or two ago.

O.L. : I had a nice falsetto voice.

O.M. : You've got a nice *false set o' teeth* now.

V. : Please behave, sir.

O.L. : I sang with Sims Reeves once.

V. : Indeed ! I never heard of it.

O.M. : Quite likely not. He sang inside the hall ; she sang in the gutter.

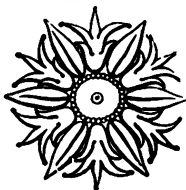
V. : Now, as you won't let the old lady sing, perhaps you'll oblige yourself.

O.M. : I don't mind, if the old Dutch will join in the chorus.

V. : Will you join in, Madame ?

O.L. : Oh yes.

(Old Man sings song, and Old Lady joins in chorus, the two singing alternate lines).



The following sketch was written by me nearly ten years ago, and produced at the Brighton Aquarium on July 14th, 1890. It is intended to illustrate the three branches of the Art—Ventriloquism proper, Colloquism and Polyphonism.

“CLARA’S BABIES.”

The stage “set” is very simple, consisting of a folding screen, one or two chairs, and a table. The properties, three figures—girl, boy, and baby; lemonade glass, stool for girl, dentists’ forceps, walking stick and newspaper on table. Performer attired in morning dress or dressing gown.

V: Well, I’m afraid I’ve committed a very rash act. Having accepted the invitation of my sister Clara to spend a few days with her and her husband at their suburban residence, leaving my surgery to take care of itself, I suddenly find myself sole guardian of the entire establishment, including their three very interesting but somewhat troublesome children. The fact is, Clara and Bob—that’s her husband—wanted to go to a garden party, but as Mary the nurse girl has her “day out” to day, they were disposed to give up the idea until I, in an unguarded moment, rashly undertook to transform myself into house-keeper and nurse, and I sincerely hope I shan’t have cause to regret it. My experience of children is decidedly limited, and I hardly appreciate becoming a family man on such short notice. However, they have gone, so there’s no help for it. Now, let me see; I think I can manage Tommy and little Clara all right; but I’ve my doubts about the baby. Clara put him in the cradle in

the other room and said he would sleep for hours. I'm sure I hope he will. If he should wake what on earth should I do? Oh, it won't bear thinking of! But it is of no use meeting trouble half-way, although the bare thought of what *might* occur makes me wish I had never visited this suburban retreat. My brother-in-law is always raving about the charms and convenience of the suburbs, but I don't see where it comes in. The leading characteristics of this particular neighbourhood appear to be jerry-built houses, match-making mammas and amateur mechanics. The latter especially are very much in evidence. The men, who spend the greater part of the day in the City, utilize their evenings, and, I regret to say, their Sunday mornings, for the erection of out-buildings, such as summer-houses, and things of that kind. Now, the fellow who lives next door here sadly disturbed my rest last Sunday morning by the row he made putting up that very unromantic structure, a fowl-house. About seven o'clock I was aroused by a strange noise, and on looking out of the window I saw our neighbour, with his shirt sleeves rolled up to the shoulder, planing away at a board for dear life, and producing a sound like this :

(Imitation of Planing).

Of course, sleep was out of the question, so I sat at the window and watched him. Having planed the board to his entire satisfaction, he took up a large saw and proceeded to cut away at a plank like a steam saw-mill. We will imagine this walking stick to be the saw. This is the row it made.

(Imitation of Sawing, kneeling on the Chair).

There was a knot in the wood, but this did not stop him. Wiping the perspiration from his manly brow, he proceeded :

(Imitation of Sawing through knot. This is done by making the sound harder, and pitching it in a higher key).

Apparently much exhausted after this unwonted exercise, he refreshed himself with a "B-and-S."

(Imitation of opening Soda-water Bottle).

My attention was next drawn to the neighbour on the other side, whose fad is the cultivation of live-stock,

When I first observed him he was walking from the house, with a small terrier close to his heels. The presence of the dog seemed to annoy the gentleman, and the following dialogue ensued. "Go in, Charley" (*dog barks*). "Go in, sir" (*loud bark*). "Get down, will you" (*dog growls and snaps*). As the dog would not go in by fair means the owner tried foul. He administered a severe kick to the dog which departed yelping.

(Imitation of dog yelping, cries gradually getting fainter).

Having disposed of the dog our neighbour walked to his fowl-house to gather the eggs; then we had a classic concert something like this:

(Imitation of hen's cackling and cock-crowing).

A little Bantam about ten gardens off could not resist the temptation, and joined in the chorus with—

(Imitation of Bantam, with rather distant effect).

The noise disturbed a donkey in the stables at the back, and he raised his voice and exclaimed in melodious tones—

(Imitation of Donkey).

Not being equal to a repetition of this kind of thing, I asked Bob to shift my quarters to the front of the house; but there the noise created in the morning by the early tradesmen made sleep impossible.

(Imitation of street cries, such as Milkman, Coal-man, Watercress man, etc.).

How slowly the time drags! (*looks at watch*), no chance of Clara and Bob returning yet. Now, how shall I kill time? Well, we'll have a cigar to start with. When I was in the garden just now, I met Pat, the gardener, with his face swollen like a baboon's, and evidently suffering a martyrdom from toothache. Knowing I was a dentist, he asked me if I could help him, and I promised if he would come here I would see what I could do with the troublesome molar. (*Knocking heard off*). Who's there?

PAT: (*outside door, "middle voice"*) It's me, sor.

V.: Oh! there he is. Come in, Pat.

(A very good effect can be obtained here by causing Pat to say in the "middle" voice "All right, sor," immediately making a slight noise with the foot like the slam of a door, and then let Pat say, in the full colloquial voice, "Here I am, sor").

V. : *(going to side of curtain, Pat apparently being behind).* Well, Pat, how's the tooth now?

PAT : Sure, its awful, sor.

V. : Well, shall I take it out?

PAT : Will it hurt?

V. : Not much. Now, which one is it? This?

PAT : Here, hold on, sor, you've got the wrong one.

V. : Is this it?

PAT : That's it, sor.

V. : *(producing forceps).* Now let me get a firm hold of it.

PAT *(in mumbling voice as if he had something in his mouth)* : Here, hold on, you'll break my jaw!

V. : Now, then!

PAT : Oh! Murder!! Is it out, sor?

V. : Yes, that is all right now, Pat. Mind you don't get cold air in the hole.

PAT : I'd rather have some cold whisky, sor.

V. : I dare say you would. Well, here's a shilling; go and get some. You need not shut the door.

PAT : All right, sor.

V. : Take care.

PAT : All right, sor.

V. : Don't take all the shilling's-worth of whisky at once, Pat.

PAT : All right, sor; I'll drink four healths to you. Thank's sor.

(Make Pat's voice gradually get fainter and fainter after the words "need not shut the door" and the effect will be as if he were going down the passage).

V. : He has gone. *(Looking at watch).* I say, they are a long time at that garden-party. I wonder when they will return. I'll just have a glance at the paper *(sits down and takes up newspaper).*

LITTLE GIRL *(behind screen)* : Uncle!

V. : That's one of the children.

G. : Uncle!

V. : Well, Clara, what is it ?

G. : I want you.

V. : What for ?

G. : I want to come out.

V. : Have you anyone with you ?

TOMMY : Yes, I'm here, and I wish you'd take me out of it, she's sitting on my chest.

V. : Oh, we'll soon relieve you of that. Come along, my dear.
(*Brings girl out*). Why, you do look nice.

G. : Let me stand down.

V. : Why ?

G. : I don't like to be cuddled.

V. : Don't you ? You will when you get older.

G. : Shall I ?

V. : I think so ; most young ladies do. Now, will you sit on this stool. How is that ?

G. : Mind my sash.

V. : There, is that better ?

G. : That will do.

T. (*behind*) : I say, Uncle, when are you going to take us out of this ?

V. : Presently, if you are not rude.

T. : Who's rude ?

V. : That will do, sir.

T. : Well, take me out of this.

V. : Hold your tongue.

T. : Shan't.

V. : I shall box your ears if I come there to you.

T. : No you won't.

V. : Don't contradict.

T. : Your another.

V. (*going to curtain*) : Now let me hear another word from you.

T. : Go and eat coke.

(*V. goes behind curtain, and boy has a beating, and cries out*).

V. (*coming from behind curtain with boy*) : There, now perhaps you'll behave.

T. : Why don't you hit one your own size.

V. : That will do.

T. : You're not going to knock me about like this; I'm not a door-mat.

V. : You should not be saucy.

T. : I ain't.

V. : Don't contradict.

T. : 'Garn.

V. : Be quiet, sir.

T. : Coward.

V. : Will you hold your tongue?

T. : No.

V. : Then I shall have to thrash you again.

T. : Yes, you try it on, that's all.

V. : Order, sir.

T. : Order ! I think you had better order me a coffin.

V. : Do be quiet, Tommy.

T. : Well, don't you knock me about.

V. : Now, look here, if you behave yourself, and answer a few questions, I'll give you some money.

T. : Fork out your ooftish, I'm on.

V. : You vulgar boy ; that is not the way to speak. What do they teach you at school ?

T. : Oh, lots of things.

V. : Do you know the alphabet ?

T. : Rather.

V. : Well, let me hear you repeat it.

T. : You won't forget the money, will you ?

V. : Oh no. Now just repeat the letters *after* me (*V. goes through the alphabet, boy repeating each letter.*)

V. : A. B. C. (*Boy stops and looks round*), C ! What do I do with my eyes ?

T. : Squint.

V. : No. C. D. E. F. G. H. I.

T. : You ?

V. : No, I !

T. : Well that is you, 'aint it, fathead ?

V. (*hits him*) : You impudent young scoundrel.

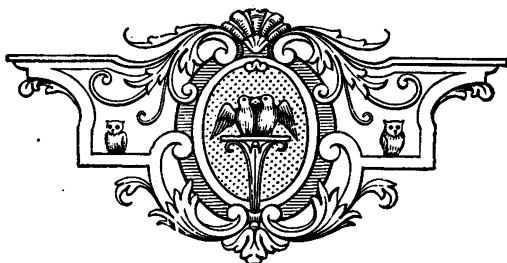
- T.: Here, don't be so handy.
- V.: Ah, Tommy, I'm afraid your education has been neglected.
Do you go to school regularly?
- T.: No. I play the "wag."
- V.: Ah, I thought so; you play truant, do you. If I were your father I'd cure you of that.
- T.: Father never lays a hand on me.
- V.: Indeed!
- T.: He's rather lively with the stick though.
- V.: And you deserve it. *(To girl)* Now, my dear, will you sing a nice little song for me?
- G.: What will you give us if I do.
- V.: Well, if you sing very nicely I'll give you a penny. I've a lucky penny here with a hole in it.
- T.: Don't give her that; she'll fall through the hole and lose herself.
- V.: Never mind him, my dear; you sing the song and I'll give you the penny.
- G.: Have you got one?
- T.: Hullo, she's on your track.
- V.: Yes, my dear, of course I have.
- G.: Let's look at it.
- T.: That's right kid; you get the stiver first.
- V.: Look here, will you behave yourself?
- T.: All right, keep your hair on.
- V.: I shall tell your father directly he comes home. Now, perhaps as you've spoilt Clara's song, you'll sing yourself.
- T.: Not if I know it. *(Baby cries)*. There's someone going to sing for you.
- V.: There's the baby. Now you must go behind the curtain again.
(V. puts figures behind the curtain, and baby commences to cry vigorously again.)
- V.: All right, I'm coming. Oh! here's a treat. *(Goes to side and brings on dummy baby, making frantic efforts to stop its cries.)*
What on earth shall I do? *(Baby screams louder than ever)*
Clara said I was to give him the bottle if he awoke.
Where is it? Ah, here it is. *(Business with feeding bottle, which soothes the baby for a minute, but it suddenly screams)*

out again.) Oh, I shall commit murder in a moment.
(Tries to hush baby which continues screaming. A loud Rat-tat is heard.) Thank goodness, here they are at last.
 Never again will I undertake the charge of "Clara's babies."

CURTAIN.

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If the student has not sufficient confidence in himself to act this sketch through, and yet has the screen and figures, he can commence at the tooth-drawing episode, and finish by making Tommy or Clara sing a song after their dialogue.





## A FEW "DON'TS."

Don't try to go ahead too fast ; take the journey by easy stages, and master every lesson thoroughly.

\* \* \*

Don't fail to practice daily ; morning is the best time.

\* \* \*

Don't breathe through the mouth ; the nose is the proper channel.

\* \* \*

Don't move your mouth whilst talking Ventriloquially.

\* \* \*

Don't look like your dolls—wooden ; assume a natural expression.

\* \* \*

Don't forget it is half the battle to have a proper appreciation of sound.

\* \* \*

Don't have cheap figures.

\* \* \*

Don't commence a performance without having first ascertained that the properties are in good working order.

\* \* \*

Don't have the audience too close to you.

\* \* \*

Don't mumble your words ; speak distinctly, whether you use the natural or the Ventriloquial voice.

\* \* \*

Don't strain the voice.

## “COSTER JOE” INTERVIEWED.

*Reprinted from “Illustrated Bits,” July 3rd, 1897.*

“Our Boss is nothing if not original, but I plead guilty to experiencing a slight feeling of astonishment when I received peremptory orders from ‘He-who-must-be-obeyed’ to interview a ventriloquial figure—‘Coster Joe,’ to wit.

‘Coster Joe,’ as every Londoner and most provincials are aware, is the wonderful little automaton introduced by Mr. Fred Russell, the ventriloquist, in his entertainment, ‘Ventriloquism Up-to-Date.’ They are such a busy pair that it is a difficult matter to obtain half-an-hour’s conversation with either; but I managed to get ‘Joe’ into a quiet corner while he was waiting for his turn at the Palace the other night, and elicited from him—no matter how—a few items of interest. In answer to my inquiries ‘The Nipper’ said:

‘Where was I born? I wosn’t born at all, and I ain’t like Topsy neither, I didn’t grow. I wos ‘hevolved,’ as my guv’nor calls it.

‘It wos like this ’ere, you know. The guv’nor used to belong to the journalistic perfession. I’ve ’eard people say as ’ow ’e wos a editor—more like a fat-ed itor—but I fancies ’e must ’a been a ‘penny-a-liner,’ or some other stoomer o’ that kind. Any’ow, his powers o’ suction bein’ somethin’ marvellious, ’e soon found out ’e couldn’t earn enough splosh at the ink-slingin’ fake to find ’im in beer, so ’e makes up ’is mind to try another emag, and as ’e was allus a-kiddin’ ’isself on ’is ventreacleism, or wotever ’e calls it, ’e starts a-chuckin’ ’is voice about—more’un ’e does with ’is money, I give yer *my* word!

‘Fust of all ’e tries the fake with a lot o’ figgers; but ’e wasn’t long a findin’ as that game wos played out. Besides, with a

big show 'e 'ad to carry a lot o' 'props,' and as 'e fell out with 'ard work years ago 'e loks abaht fur sumthin' easier, and says to 'isself, says 'e. 'Now if I could only get 'old of a little bloke wot's a bit wide as can make the people larf, why I shall soon be a' scoopin' in as many 'quids' every week as I do 'blo' now.'

'The end of it was that I makes my fust appearance on any stage, although plenty of other ventreaclists 'as sneaked the idea and pinched my gags inter the bargin' since then. That's the worst o' this business, there's so many bloomin' people who are allus on the look out to pinch yer ideas and yer gags. Why, I've 'eard other vents—and big 'uns at the game, too—crackin' my gags to further orders, and as for the smaller fry, well, I thinks we keeps 'em agoin.

'I 'eard a vent at the seaside one day doin' nearly all my show, and the other night at a concert a bloke 'ad the bloomin' cheek to do it abserlootly 'verbatim,' as the guv'nor says, and pass it orf as 'is own. But we've got a rod in pickle for these pinchers.

'But, to resoom, as the parson says. The guv'nor 'e sends down to the Midlands somewheres to get my dial, and, as 'e is werry fond o' tellin' everyone, 'e made my carcase 'isself—not in the ordinary course o' nature, yer know; but 'e gets a few bits o' deel, some canvas an' stuffin', and manufacters me body in 'is backyard. 'E made sich a thunderin' row a'doin' of the job that all the neighbours thought 'e was a' buildin' a fowls'-ouse. Then 'e got one of 'is noomerous lady friends to make me a pair o' 'round-me-'ouses,' a 'Charlie Frescot' and 'I'm afloat;' stuck on a few perlies, and —'ere I are.

'Course, with a 'andy little bloke like me to work for 'im, the guv'nor wasn't long afore 'e was a' doin' all right.

'Then about fifteen months ago we 'as a cut at the music-'alls, and didn't it take on? Rather! Why, at the Palace Theatre, where we opened, we 'ad a run o' mor'un fifty weeks rite orf the bloomin' reel. Went for a week and stopped for a year; and now we've got nearly every music-'all worth goin' to on our books.

'Do we get abaht? What ho! Music-halls and mansions, theatres and thieves' kitchens, workhouses and warships, lecture-'alls and lunatic asylums. Why, we've been everywhere and showed afore nearly everyone. We ain't done a turn for the Queen yet 'less she's seen us somewheres 'incogniter,' which I don't think

likely; but yer never knows yer luck, and p'raps we shall 'ave a chance afore long if 'er Majesty takes on a variety show.

'I've 'ad a cut at the Prince o' Wales mor'un once, and other members o' the Royal Family is quite common. The Juke o' York is *all* rite, and the fust time 'is Royal Nibs took me on I thought he'd a bust. He said some werry nice things to the guv'nor, who, as per usual, shoves 'isself forward and leaves me in the back-ground.

'Wot do yer say? Do we enjoy ourselves? Do we not! At the music-halls and concerts we often meets some lovely donahs, and, don't you forget it, the gals is werry fond o' me, altho' the guv'nor tries to cut me out. When I'm a' layin' on a chair or table waitin' to go on, they comes and looks at me, and says, 'Ain't 'e a darlin'; 'I love the little rascal.'

'Only fancy, 'ow would *you* feel if some lovely donah like Lottie Collins, Anna Held, Marie Montrose, or Madamoselle Fougère—ah! me 'eart! Fougère!—wos to come up and call you a darlin'! Wouldn't you waltz on yer ear? 'Course, I never says nothin' or they might get a little shy, which is the nature of serios; but it do make the guv'nor wild 'cos they won't tork to 'im like that. 'E wouldn't keep 'is mouth shut, I lay a quid.

'Work, did yer say? Lor' lumme, it's all work. Why I've been thro' that bally show as many as eight times in one night, and five or six times is nothin'. This week we're a doin' the *Matinée Theatre*, the *Canterbury*, the good old 'Mo,' the *Paragon*, and the *Palace Theatre*, with one or two odd concerts chucked in. I tell yer streit it do give yer socks to sit on Russell's bloomin' knee and crack gags by the yard, to say nothin' of the clumpin' I captures about every minit if I 'appens to chime in with some little remark what don't quite suit 'is nibs.

'Does 'e welt me 'ard? Do 'e! I should say so! Why, one night we wos a doin' a show, and I 'appened to say somethin' wot didn't please 'is giblets, when 'e ups with 'is left and 'afore I could dodge it 'e lands me a clump on the 'point,' and knocked me bloomin' 'ed right orf me shoulders! Me bonce went down such a whop, bounced twice and rolled inter the footlights.

'Then 'e comes and stands over me, and I torked to 'im from the footlights, and didn't I tell 'im somethin' too, what ho!

'Course the people larfed, and I dessay they thought it was werry funny, but it made old Russell look a blitherin' ass, I tell yer.

'Yus, 'e's very tricky is my guv'nor. When I gets a good 'round' for a song or somethin' like that he takes all the credit and I gets none. But, lor' lumme, where would Fred Russell be without me? Up the bloomin' pole, or in the Lump, long ago. He ain't got no gratitood in 'im. He gets all the pieces, but who does the work? that's wot I wants to know. As my old pal Teddy Kent says in one o' the songs he rote for me—

It's the figger wot does it,  
 It's the rorty little figger,  
 I does all the work  
 While Russell jerks the jigger.  
 I cracks the gags and sings  
 While 'is nibs just works the strings,  
 Wot's 'is show I'd like to know  
 Without the little figger!

'The people allus larfs at my gags, and when I sings 'Coster Joe,' or 'Nell,' I nearly makes 'em cry and pulls the bloomin' 'ouse down. But there yer are, Russell gets the credit and the oof. Then 'e kids 'isself 'e's a bit of a recititioner tco, but when 'e chucks the 'Squire's Daughter' at 'em, they'd give 'im the 'bird' if I wasn't to drop a gag 'ere and there, just to liven things up a bit. 'Ere 'e comes to take me on now, so you'd better 'op it; but you just watch the show, and see if wot I've been a' tellin' of yer ain't true."





