

Stage Tricks and Hollywood Exercises

HOW TO DEVELOP SKILL IN
SUPPLENESS AND ACROBATICS

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Illustrated by the Author



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To
the art of contortion
and to
aspiring people of all ages

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Preface

When the author first became interested in acrobatics, he searched libraries, publishing-house lists, physical-culture magazines, and athletic-supply houses for a treatise on contortion, without finding anything very instructive. They all had excellent books on the use of apparatus, calisthenics, games, tumbling, boxing, wrestling, and other sports, but practically nothing on contortion. Whether this lack is due to the meager knowledge writers have on the subject or the biased opinion they have of the profession is a question. Probably some of both, for contortionists have created more or less mystery about themselves and their profession, and for ages information has been passed from mouth to ear and little or nothing has appeared in print. However, artists and sculptors, appreciating beautiful figures and graceful carriages, have sought athletes as models from the days of old Egypt down to the present day.

As performers will attest, there is always much general public interest in contortion. The questions and comments one gets after every performance are very amusing. The audience offers suggestions for mystifying the bystanders and creating the impression that a contortionist is one of the favored few. Usually one is asked, "Were you born that way? Are you double-jointed all over? What do you eat? What do you use for a rub?" If the performer cares to jolly them, he can tell them some of the following. He was born on Friday the thirteenth. When he was a child, an old-timer dislocated his joints so that they never set normally. He lives on liquid food, sleeps between oiled blankets, and rubs with angle work oil. If he cares to prolong the fun, others will keep asking questions and relate what they have heard, thus furnishing suggestions for more fanciful stories. The amusing part of it is that the larger and more fantastic the stories, the less they are questioned and the better people seem to like them. Just telling the fans that it is ten per cent know-how and ninety per cent practice destroys their interest. However, those who are not afraid of work and want to know the facts will find this treatise a real aid in developing a fine physique and learning some entertaining stage tricks.

N. H.

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PART I

Introduction



HEALTH

The public is of the general opinion that athletes, and especially contortionists, are short lived. One hears this continually because the public sees no old-looking performers and does not realize that many performers are much older than they appear. Regular exercise, clean living and right thinking keep them looking young, feeling good and working past the allotted time of three score and ten years. True, one can shorten his useful days by overwork, as is often done in competitive athletics such as track or boxing. Neglecting practice, sumptuous living and general good times soften the body and make it easy prey to all the ills the flesh is heir to. Spasmodic training, such as boxers do, is not conducive to a long life. For health and long life, regular practice is far more satisfactory. It takes much more practice to get back in shape than it does to maintain good condition.

There is no need for spasmodic training in contortion. From the exercises to follow it is easy to pick a daily dozen that will suit almost any person. Here are exercises for the arms, legs, feet, hands, eyes, face, neck, body and the internal organs. In all the exercises one is handling his own weight. In practice he can work long or short periods, fast or slow, strenuously or easily to get just the desired toning for the entire body. Stretching the muscles to their limit squeezes out the blood, then relaxing them lets it surge back, helping the heart force blood through the smallest capillaries.

Twisting is considered one of the best tonics for the liver. Bending back, forward and sideways tones up the entire digestive system. Controlled breathing, such as is used in going through rings, strengthens and gives capacity to the lungs. As there is no sudden jerking and straining, the nerves are steadied. The muscles are kept young and flexible, so that the cheeks do not sag and the face need lifting. The sum total results in a body that is well toned.

Judicious practice can correct or help restore the use of members of the body after accidents, surgery or sickness. Many times exercise is used as a therapeutic measure to correct deformities or a slouchy carriage.

HISTORY

Stage tricks and Hollywood exercises are based on contortion as performed on the stage and in circuses. Contortion consists of writhing, twisting and bending movements under control and executed in a pleasing and surprising manner. We all start off being contortionists, doing a lot of wiggling, twisting and squirming in the cradle and getting acquainted with our new bodies. We finish contorting late in life with a good stretch after a nap in an easy chair. Contortion enters our lives so much that we are not conscious of it as such.

People have always admired contortion. The walls of ancient Egypt, the temples of India and the scrolls of old China record the feats of athletes and acrobats. The Greeks specialized in recording with sculpture the fine physiques of their athletes during the bright days of Greek culture. What statues the Romans at home did not create for themselves they collected from their provinces.

The exercises to follow are old and have been known to some for ages. This treatise is just a course from the author's experience, systematized to give the student results in the shortest possible time. Just master the exercises, then combine them into tricks and the tricks into an act. When the author first got the lotus posture and developed some tricks around it, he was sure he had something new, only to find, after studying yoga, that his tricks were just a part of eighty-four that have been standard practices in India for over six thousand years. Likewise, with arm twisting and escapes, he found that escape artists were using part of it in getting out of strait jackets. It makes no difference where you are, on the stage or off, in the jungles or palaces, you will find tricks of this course being performed. Never imagine you are the first or only one doing a trick. Many times you will find it was developed and used before you were born, and someone else may be doing it today. Don't think that because you cannot do a trick it can't be or never has been done, for about that time some tiny tot in the acrobatic class will up and do it.

EATING, DRINKING AND BREATHING

Eating, drinking and breathing furnish the elements for life, growth and the energy of the body. Care and understanding should be used in the selection of food and drink and in proper breathing practice. People have been known to have lived over sixty days without food, about seven days without water, but only a few minutes without air. Food and drink will be discussed here, and breathing, with illustrative exercises, later in the text.

Eat what is tasteful and wholesome in such quantities as always to be hungry at the next mealtime. Foods from health or diet specialty stores are invariably nourishing. Such stores sell books and magazines with information on balanced diets, appetizing menus and directions for their preparation. Some of these stores even offer dietary counsel for those wanting such service. Physical-culture magazines discuss foods, especially the ones that are in season, in ways that are easy to understand.

Fresh fruits, vegetables and meats are preferable to foods canned, preserved or overprocessed, such as white sugar, flour, or rice. It is too much to expect the stomach to digest and make good, red blood from foods so well preserved that the forces of nature cannot break them down. Remember that your stomach must have more intelligence than the faculty of a cooking school, for it must take your steaks and mistakes day after day and make good red blood of them. Eat sparingly of complicated foods or pastries that look nice and taste good but are so hard to digest that they are served in small portions.

An unspoiled appetite will crave the foods the body needs. Heed it and do not spoil it with fancy dishes, desserts and drinks. First, there are foods necessary for the constitutional building of the body. For instance, a lean six-footer will need different food for his constitution than a short, stout woman. Then, each will need a different food supplement for the kind of work each is doing. If two men of the same constitutional build are pushing pianos and a pencil, respectively, the food supplement for the first must have plenty of muscular energy and for the second, ample nerve or brain energy. At leisure they could live on the same

foods, but not when working. With two girls of the same constitutional build, the one training for a tennis match needs a muscular-energy food supplement, and the other, doing office work, will need nerve and brain food.

It is usually better to miss a meal than eat an extra one. As long as one is not losing weight, he is getting sufficient volume. Most people are inclined to eat too much. So many of our denatured foods have the vitamins and minerals processed out for storage that a large volume of such foods is necessary to provide sufficient vitamins and minerals for the body's need.

The digestive system must have capacity to handle the volume given it. Sufficient time should be taken at meals so the food can be chewed into a pulp and does not need to be washed down. As the stomach has no teeth, all the chewing must be done in the mouth where the foods can be broken up and thoroughly mixed with saliva. With thorough mastication, one will not need or care to drink while eating.

When tired, rest before eating. After eating, be as quiet as possible so the stomach can have all the blood it needs for the digestive period. Good food, slow eating and good chewing will do away with the need of bicarbonate of soda.

Despite all the drinks on the market, none can take the place of water. Fresh fruit juices from tree-ripened fruits come next in importance, in fact they contain a large percentage of water. Stay away from any drink that tends to be habit forming. Keep control and permit nothing to make you its slave.

During World War II, the author worked in a drafting room with about 100 men designing tools and special machinery. Fully two-thirds of these men suffered from summer colds, asthma and hay fever. Each sufferer was a cigarette smoker and consumer of soft drinks except one who smoked cigars continually. Leave to the other fellow what does not agree with you.

BATHING

After each exercise workout, take a bath if possible. A bath removes impurity-laden perspiration from the skin and prevents its absorption like a liniment. It also eliminates the chance of body odor. Either tub or shower bath should be followed by a rubdown

with a coarse towel. If a bath is not possible, at least rub your body thoroughly with a rough towel to remove the perspiration from the skin. If it can be avoided, never let clothes dry on the body.

When there have been bumps or bruises, lying in hot water or applying hot wet towels to the injured parts will reduce the soreness, aid circulation, and speed healing. Rubbing or kneading the injured parts will help circulation return to normal. A golf ball or large marble laid in the palm of the hand will knead the flesh deeper than can be done with the hand alone. A good rubbing liniment can be made from equal parts of arnica, witch hazel and bayrum.

Contortionists do not often have serious accidents. They yield when falling and bones are rarely broken. Because of their ability to balance and strength to handle the body in any position, they do not have many spills. Overwork or new movements will sometimes make the muscles sore. Soaking in hot water right after the workout and again just before the next one will generally bring relief. Usually muscle soreness will leave when perspiration starts.

As a rule, beginning with hot and finishing with cool or cold water is better than immediate subjection to a cold tub or shower. A little judicious experimenting will show what is best for you.

Throughout this book the author has drawn largely from his experience of many years of practice, experimenting and observing. Use it as a basis and starting point to work out a system for your individual needs. The last word has not been written on physical culture. You have a good chance to advance the art by experimenting and analytical thinking.

CLOTHING

When practicing, wear as little clothing as possible. Give the skin a chance to contact the air and the perspiration to evaporate. This takes heat from the body and gives a cooling effect. Clothing saturates and holds moisture to the body and slows cooling. Always get out of wet clothing as soon as possible. Never let clothing dry on the body, if it can be avoided. Sweat tends to dull the colors and take life out of fabrics and leather. Also, wet clothing stretches out of shape with a consequent loss of good appearance.

Whatever clothing is worn should be light and loose to avoid

binding, chafing or pinching. Cotton goods are cheap, but cling to the skin when perspiration starts and are likely to be uncomfortable or even a handicap in some movements. Woolen goods, while costing more, wear well and do not cling when wet. Knit goods will yield readily in any direction, hence are preferred to woven goods of the same material. Thread or yarn of the same material and color should be bought when the costume is purchased so rips and tears can be fixed at once. One thread breaking in knit goods may start a big hole.

When costuming an act for the stage, get *Billboard*, the showman's stand-by paper. It carries advertisements of firms catering to the theatrical trade. Many have catalogues that may be had for the asking. Get one or more of those and study them carefully to see what is available and what new ideas they may suggest. Most of these firms stock tights, shirts, leotards, trunks, and supporters in cotton, wool, rayon and silk of various colors. Some carry a variety of animal, skeleton, clown and spangle suits and many will make special suits to order.

There are goods and suits that will produce surprise effects with lights or a change of lights. For instance, in one light a suit may appear a solid color and, with a change of light, it will be a skeleton suit. There is no end to the effects that may be produced with lights, but discretion must be used or the act will look like a magic show. Some will have papier-mâché outfits or will make them to order. For instance, in a frog suit the head may be papier-mâché with eyes and mouth that can be worked by the wearer. In many papier-mâché outfits, parts or all may be laid off as the act progresses. Peruse these trade catalogues thoroughly before having special costumes made to order.

Personally, the author liked tights and leotards made of wool. This combination was plain, comfortable and durable. Besides there was nothing to tangle or catch when going through rings. Avoid all equipment that will foul, pull apart, or become disarranged in any of the tricks, unless some gag is being worked.

With some of the catalogues there will be patches of material that will show the quality and color. These all help in arranging the color scheme. Much depends on a color scheme that will please and hold an audience. Many combinations are tiresome to look at and should be carefully avoided. Also, select colors that will hold up after a month or so of service and will not give the act a drab appearance. Art books give information on color combinations

that have been successful in advertising, clothing or pictures. Select what you like and feel comfortable wearing, as well as what is good looking.

SHOES

When selecting shoes get catalogues from the advertisers in *Billboard*. Several firms stock a large variety of shoes that will fit almost any act. Several make up special shoes to order.

Shoes for practice should have soft soles and no heels. Heels tend to catch when jumping over the hands and drag in some tricks. At practice, going barefoot gives the feet the same feel on the floor that the hands have. A pair of rolled-down socks or canvas pumps is convenient.

For exhibition work elkskin pumps are easy on the feet, wear and look well, and will not interfere in any of the tricks. If the soles become slippery, rub them with a little powdered rosin. When there are dancers on the bill, there is usually plenty of rosin on the floor and a rosin board in the wings. Rosin, while fine for the shoes, spots costumes. Some clown and animal shoes are stocked and any kind may be made to specifications.

ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL AND DRAWINGS

Throughout this book, the left-hand page carries the text and the right the illustrations. Each pair of pages includes the information for the work therein, with only an occasional reference to other pages. This avoids leafing, which takes time and distracts attention. Some extra drawings to show combinations are necessary for clarity.

The drawings were made by the author from his work and notes. Most of the figures were posed before a large mirror and sketched. Throughout the text, combinations are pictured so that the student will learn to form tricks suitable for presentation. In the back of the book will be shown in detail how to work out tricks in pictorial form. This method the author has found best for himself and in teaching others to plan their tricks and acts.

Nothing will get a troupe working together quicker than pictures of the proposed stunts. Each member then has a chance to

see what is expected of him. Besides seeing in pictures what the audience will see on presentation, a chance is given to offer suggestions, exercise ingenuity and co-operate fully.

In teaching, pictures are as good as or better than a demonstration, because slow students can take their time with pictures. Of course a combination of demonstration and pictures is ideal, especially when the teacher is a good and patient demonstrator.

NAMES OF TRICKS

Even in the theatrical profession there is no uniformity in naming the tricks. Some are known by the name of the one introducing or popularizing them. Others are named to suit the act or its advertising.

For tumbling, teachers have attempted to adopt a uniform set of names. Some day this may be done for contortion, which would be a big help to students, teachers, managers and advertising men.

Throughout this book more or less descriptive names are used. Learning the trick means more than the name, so christen them what you like and practice—practice—practice.

KEEPING NOTES

Early in his training one should start keeping notes, especially if he intends to make a profession of the work. He should jot down what he hears and sees about acts, actors, audiences, and houses and keep press clippings which will be useful later in his career. The diary form is excellent and having a book keeps one from neglecting his record. A five-year diary is not too large a volume. A loose-leaf pocketbook is very convenient when material is filed in an orderly fashion. If the notes record which acts went over big on the bill and which ones fell flat, one will soon have a list of do's and don't's from other people's acts that will be good guidance for his future. He will know what certain audiences favor and can shade his act accordingly to please better on return dates. If the audience favors comedy or clowning, give it some fun such

as is shown in the text. Managers will book what their audiences like or what will fill the house.

The author wishes he had kept better notes. For years he carried a 3-by-5-inch loose-leaf notebook in which he sketched draperies, settings, ornaments, posters, novelties, trophies, acts and tricks. These were found in lodges, homes, hotels, halls, theatres, railway stations or churches. Later, when he became a stage manager, this data was of great value. From this fund of information, with little trouble he could stage anything from a prayer meeting to a smoker, from a floor show to an opera. When one is stuck for an idea, leafing through old notes will often bring forth something new that may be just what is needed. The practice of putting a thing down on paper fixes it in the mind and makes it easier to remember. Besides, having a sketch to show an artist or advertising man may start him thinking quickly in the right direction. Directions for quick sketches of tricks will be given at the end of the text.

PRACTICE

Broadly speaking there are two kinds of contortion, forward and backward bending. As forward bending is generally easier for beginners, it will be covered first in the text. After having learned them, however, many of the back-bending tricks are found to be easier than forward ones. To start, read the text carefully and examine the drawings until the idea is thoroughly grasped. Proceed to do the exercises slowly with no hitches or jerks. The work is graded so that the mastering of one exercise is preparation for the next. Hence, it is best to work straight through the book. The book is written, however, so that it can be opened anywhere and the facing pages will have complete information for a set of exercises. The text can be used later as a reference manual for specialization in exhibitions. Some will have a natural aptitude for forward bending, others for back bending. If one works on apparatus, however, he should keep his program well balanced. As we go along the author will cite tricks he used on swinging rings, trapeze and slack wire, to show how useful contortion is to the gymnast.

Set aside definite periods for practice and keep them religiously. Lengthen or shorten them but never skip one, even though you

do only some hand or face exercises, which can be done anywhere and at any time. Look for ways of getting time for the practice periods free, but never invent excuses for skipping them. Regular practice will bring results much more quickly than spasmodic splurges. Remember, contortion is ten per cent know-how and ninety per cent practice. Each is important. Keep busy at one or the other and you will succeed.

By practicing before a large mirror one sees what the audience will see, thus improving his technique and smoothing his performance. A lamp casting shadows on the wall will also show up bad movements that should never be seen by an audience. Always be ready to learn, regardless of the source, and to practice, regardless of the place. As most of the exercises are noiseless and require little or no equipment, one can practice in hotels, rooms, homes, or dormitories when a gymnasium or stage is not available. Success comes from enormous practice and is maintained by constant practice.

Very often we are asked at what age should children start. Sometimes we are told that the child is too young. The child has already begun and is able to put his big toe in his mouth while squirming and twisting around in the cradle, something that mother and father can't do.

Some parents worry about girls taking up the work. In the country schools, especially, girls and boys play together in a rough and ready manner, enjoying much the same games. Most girls develop suppleness easier than boys although girls rarely have the endurance of boys. A girl's weight is centered largely in her hips, which gives her advantage in some tricks and makes her easier to handle in team or pyramid work. Girls balance easily on one's hands, with the hands resting on the hip bones. For boys, who are heavier in the shoulders, the pivot point is on the muscular tissue between the hip bones and short ribs. This makes them harder to balance. Girls can put on a very good act alone and their physical build makes them team well with men. Forget age and size, give each a well rounded set of exercises and encourage them to practice regularly.

Nearly every youngster, and often older people too, will attempt the simple tricks when they are shown how to start right. For that reason many illustrations are used in this book. In fact, half of the book is pictures. These are as near as possible to the accompanying text, so that the author can show what he has in

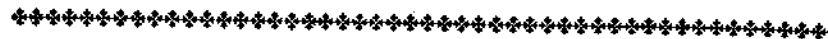
mind and would demonstrate if he were with you face to face. The exercises and combinations will enable the student to acquire tricks that can be performed anywhere.

Approach the work with a determination to master it and you will succeed. Think clearly, practice sincerely and success is bound to come.



PART II

Exercises and Tricks



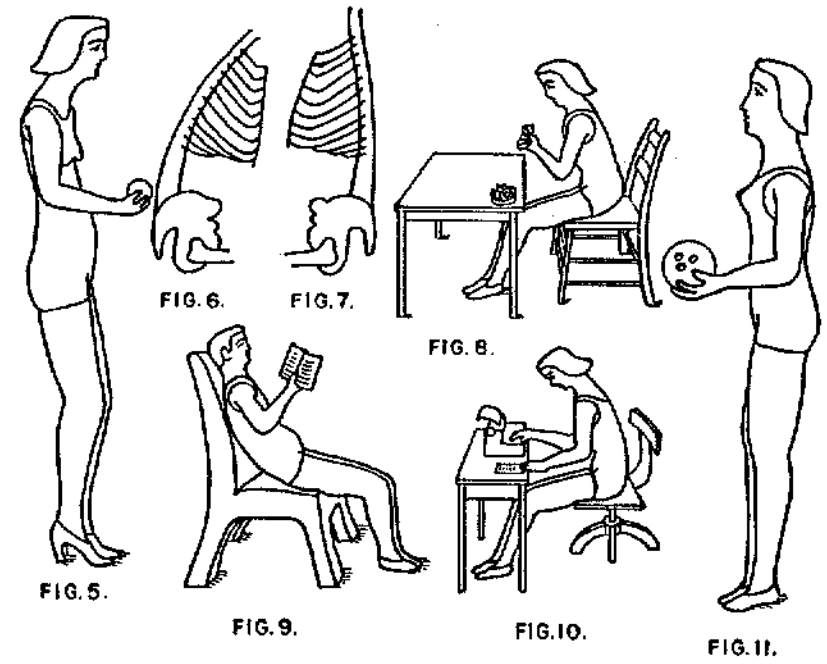
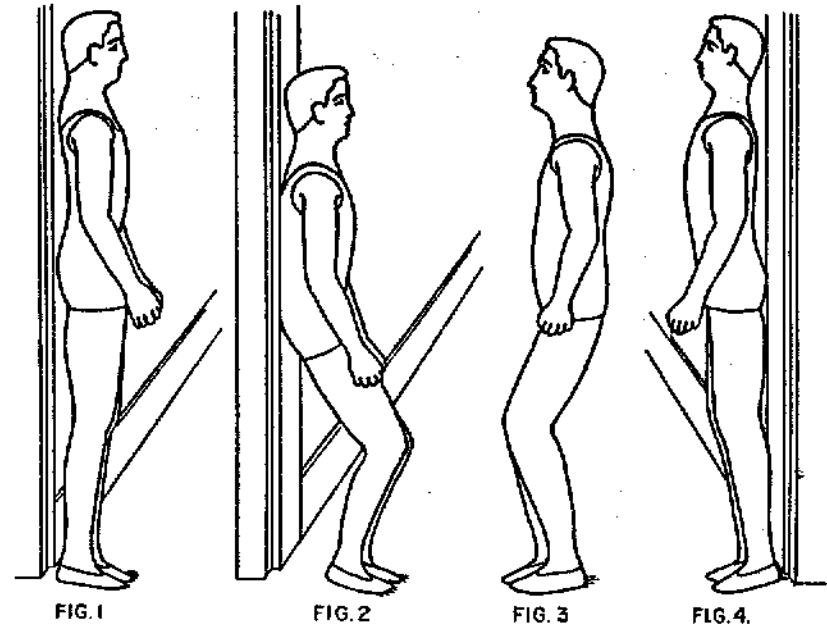
BODY CARRIAGE

Stand with the back, head and heels against the wall, raise the chest and pull in the abdomen as in Fig. 1. If the back does not straighten readily, bend the knees and slide down the wall as in Fig. 2. This will help tip the pelvis back so that the position in Fig. 1 may be had when straightening the knees. Hold this erect position and tip forward from the ankles to a balance as in Fig. 4, then walk about with a light springing step and observe what a delightful feeling comes from a good carriage. Postures as shown in Figs. 4 and 11 are so rare that they always command attention.

Slouching, shown in Figs. 3 and 5 is, unfortunately, the all-too-common posture. A carriage such as in Fig. 5, with craned neck, flat chest, sagging breasts, protruding abdomen, tipped pelvis, and buck knees, is so common that a good posture (Fig. 11) is immediately noticeable. Other undesirable postures are common at card tables (Fig. 8), in the hotel lobbies and waiting rooms (Fig. 9), and among office workers (Fig. 10).

All of these produce round shoulders or flat chests (Figs. 3 and 5) which are not only unsightly but detrimental to general health. Fig. 6 shows the rib cage and pelvic bones in a stooped position. Fig. 7 shows them in an upright position. Notice how the stooped position cramps the internal organs and may produce physical disorders.

Remember, people form an opinion of you and your act from your personal appearance before you do a single trick. A good figure commands attention on and off the stage. It helps develop the vitality, energy and endurance necessary to play a part successfully. Never let the public or a talent scout catch you in a slouchy position, for it will give you a demerit mark that may affect future contracts.



TOE SQUAT

From a standing position rise on the toes and squat, as in Fig. 12. Do this rapidly up and down. At first let the arms swing for balancing, but later keep the hands on the hips. When the balance is steady, as in Fig. 13, raise the knees from the floor as shown. Practice until this can be done rapidly while keeping a good balance. From position (Fig. 14) hop around the room forward, backward and sideward. These are all good balancing exercises and should be practiced often, for balancing is important in this work.

FLAT-FOOT SQUAT

From a standing position stretch the arms out horizontal in front, keep the feet flat on the floor and squat, as in Fig. 15. Do this rapidly up and down. From position (Fig. 15) rock the knees to the floor, as in Fig. 16, then to A of Fig. 16 rapidly. From position (Fig. 15) catch the back of the heels and pull the head to the floor, as in Fig. 17. From position (Fig. 15) pass the head and shoulders between the knees till the forearms lie on the floor, as in Fig. 18. These are good forward bending exercises and are often used by actors in frog costume, especially if they have papier-mâché heads.

LEG FREEING

Stand up straight, bring the knee to strike the chest, as in Fig. 19. Do this with alternate knees rapidly. Let the knee pass by outside the arm, as in A of Fig. 19, as far back as possible. Do this rapidly with alternate knees. Stand straight, swing the heel up against the buttock as in Fig. 20, keeping the knee from swinging. After this comes easily, let the knee swing back so the heel will strike higher. Stand straight, swing the whole leg back as if trying to kick the head, as in Fig. 21. Bend the body and swing the arms as the leg goes up so as to keep a good balance. Do this with legs alternately.

Set one foot on a table, grasp the edges with the hands, pass the knee under the arm and pull the head down to the table as in Fig. 22. This trick can be done anywhere and in street clothes, whenever you are asked to, "Show us something."

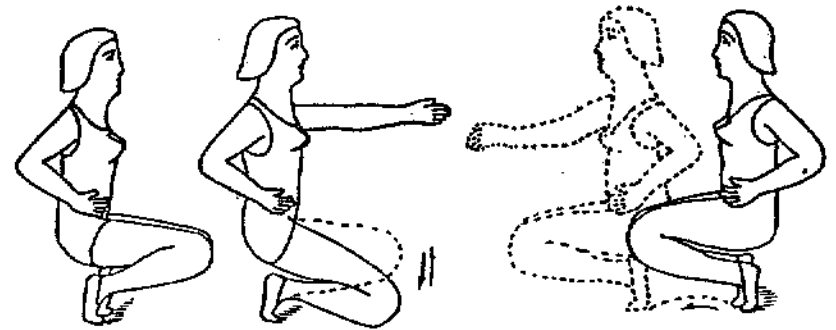


FIG. 12.

FIG. 13.

FIG. 14.

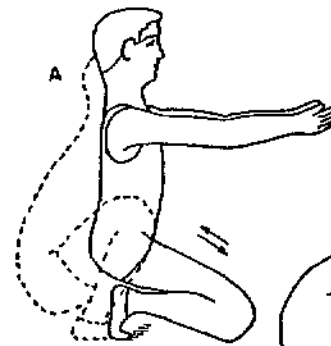


FIG. 16.



FIG. 15.

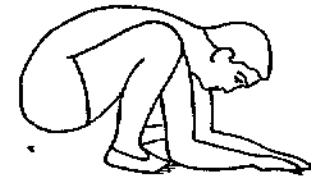


FIG. 17.



FIG. 18.

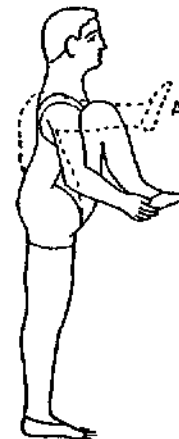


FIG. 19.



FIG. 20.



FIG. 21.

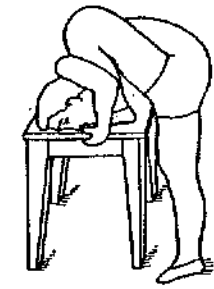


FIG. 22.

JUMPING OVER THE HANDS

Get a clothes hanger. Cut the hook away as at A & B of Fig. 23 and straighten the sides as shown. Hold it by the sides before you (Fig. 24) and jump over it, as in Fig. 25. Jump back and forth rapidly. Keep shortening the hold on the wires until the straight part can be held in the hands. Later, touch the fingers together and jump over them rapidly. Hold a knife or razor blade between the hands and jump over it. When going over forward, turn the blade as in Fig. 27; backwards, as in Fig. 26. When doing it before an audience, turn the blade just as late as possible and jump fast.

JACKKNIFING ON THE LEGS

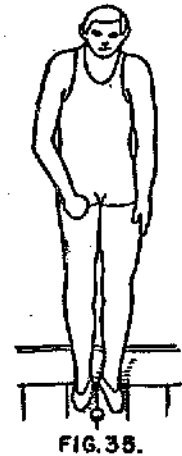
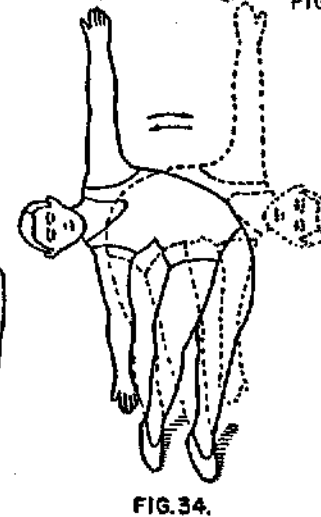
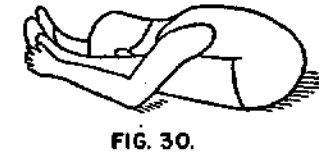
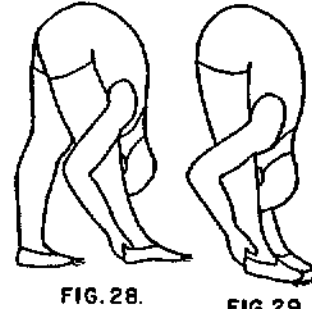
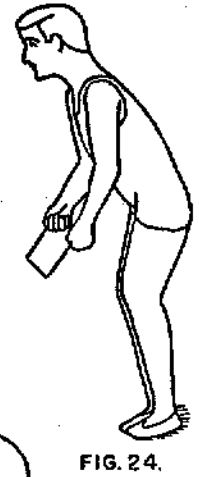
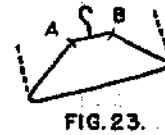
Take a short step forward, grasp the ankle with the hands, keep the knees and back straight, and bend at the hip to lay the body flat upon the leg, as in Fig. 28. Stand with the feet slightly apart, grasp the ankles with the hands, keep the knees straight and pull the body flat upon the legs, as in Fig. 29. Sit flat upon the floor as in Fig. 31, then lie forward on each leg alternately, as in Fig. 32. Sit flat upon the floor with legs close together. Grasp the heels and pull the body flat upon the legs, as in Fig. 30. This is much harder than when standing.

Stand on one leg, keep the other straight with the body, bend forward, grasp the ankle and pull the body on the leg, as in Fig. 33. Swing the free arm for balancing.

BENDING SIDEWAYS

Stand with the feet a little apart, arms out sideways horizontal and bend over sideways, as in Fig. 34. Rock from side to side trying to make the short ribs hook over the hip bones.

One may be asked to stand against a wall. Someone will put money at his feet as in Fig. 35 and told he may have it if he can pick it up without bending his knees. Bend over sideways as in Fig. 34, then twist to position in Fig. 29, and picking it up is easy. It is a good exercise and a trick worth mastering to spring on others.



TWISTING

From a standing position reach just as high as possible—trying for the ceiling, as in Fig. 36—then twist from hands to the feet, first clockwise, then counterclockwise. Rotate back and forth as far as possible. Hold the arms sideways horizontal from the shoulders. Bend over at the hips and rotate the arms and shoulders, as in Fig. 37, clockwise and counterclockwise as far as possible. Sit flat upon the floor, as in Fig. 38, and rotate the body and arms clockwise and counterclockwise as far as possible. Bend over forward, and with the left hand catch the right ankle. With the right hand, catch the left ankle and pull the body to position in Fig. 39. It is not as difficult as it looks and it can be made comic for a filler. Stand about six feet in front of a wall, arms out sideways, level with the shoulders, then twist, as in Fig. 40. Swing the arms to increase the amount of twisting and rotate back and forth. One should twist to see more than a full circle of walls. Twisting is one of the most health-giving exercises. It moves all the internal organs about with a gentle squeeze. It is great for tuning up the liver and bowels and is a fine morning exercise.

LEG STRETCHING

Lie face down on the floor. Bend the knee to raise the foot so it can be caught with the hand and the heel pulled down against the buttock, as in Fig. 41. This will free the muscles in the fore part of the upper leg. Set one foot on a table, catch the edges with the hands and pull the head under the leg as in Fig. 42. Set one leg forward, reach over to grasp its ankle and pull the head under the leg as in Fig. 43. Lower the body to the floor as much as possible.

Stand behind a chair, place the heel on the top of the chair back, as in Fig. 44. Then lay the body flat upon the leg. This trick is excellent when one is called on to do something at lodges or parties, for it can be done in street clothes and is not easily duplicated by others.



FIG. 36.

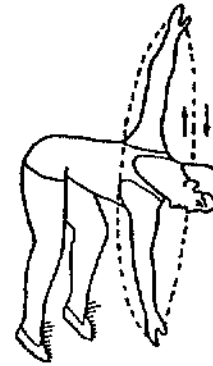


FIG. 37.

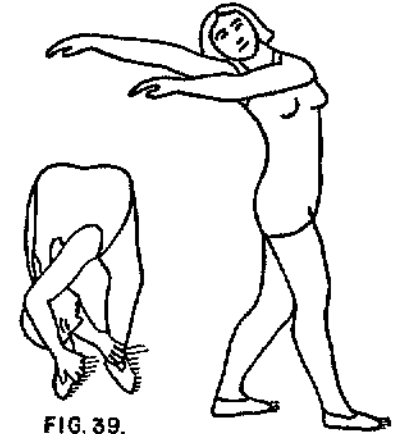


FIG. 39.

FIG. 40.

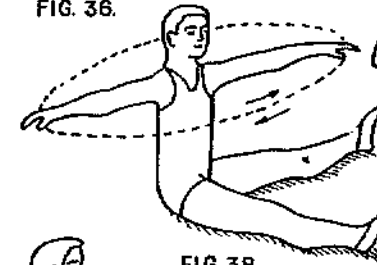


FIG. 38.



FIG. 41.

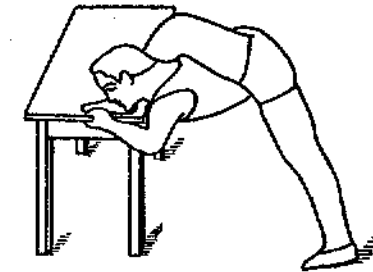


FIG. 42.

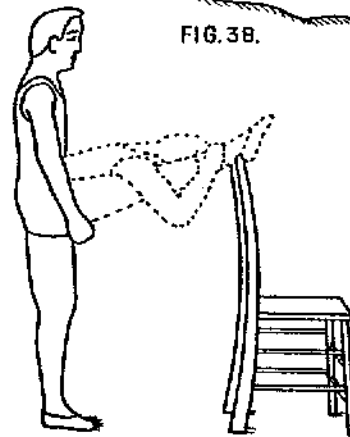


FIG. 44.



FIG. 43.

THE ELEPHANT WALK

Bend over forward. Place the hands on the floor, as in Fig. 45. Keep the arms and legs very stiff and walk by moving the left foot and hand forward together, then the right foot and hand. This is the gait of a pacing horse. Place the hands on the floor, as in Fig. 46. Keep the arms and legs stiff and walk by moving the left foot and right hand forward together. This is the gait of a trotting horse. If these are well done they bring a ripple of laughter and are good clown tricks.

FOREHEAD STAND

Squat, as in Fig. 48, then come to a balance as in Fig. 49. Hold the knees tight against the arms and tip forward until the forehead touches the floor, then raise the legs up to a balance as in Fig. 50. If this is done on the edge of a bed, as in Fig. 51, one can do some easy bending and help learn to balance as at A of Fig. 51. From a kneeling position (Fig. 47), spring to the balance position of Fig. 49. These should be practiced with the knees inside, then outside, the elbows, and finally without the knees touching the arms at all.

TIPPING BALANCE

Stick a pin in the floor as at A of Fig. 52 and, with the knees outside hugging the elbows, tip forward to pick up the pin with the teeth. Stick a pin in the floor, as at A of Fig. 53, and, with the knees inside hugging the elbows, tip forward to pick up the pin with the teeth. This should be practiced until the knees will not need to touch the elbows at all.

SIT-UP BALANCE

Sit on the floor, catch the legs with the hands and rock to a balance, as in Fig. 54. This makes a good clown trick when he strikes a balance, does a grotesque spin and topples over.

SWINGING BALANCE

Lean forward on one foot with the knee bent, as in Fig. 55. Then swing to the same position on the opposite foot. Do this back and forth for balance and smooth movement.

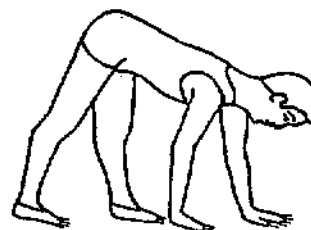


FIG. 45.



FIG. 46.

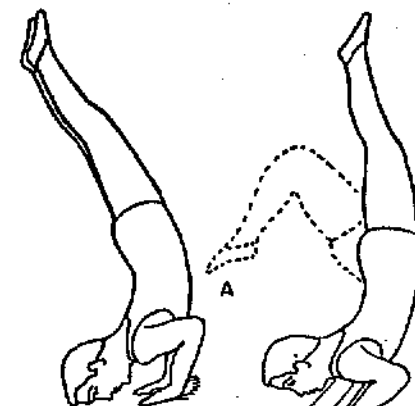


FIG. 50.

FIG. 51.



FIG. 47.

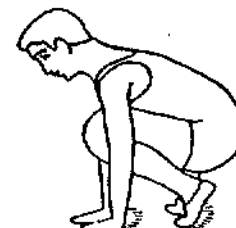


FIG. 48.



FIG. 49.



FIG. 52.



FIG. 53.



FIG. 54.

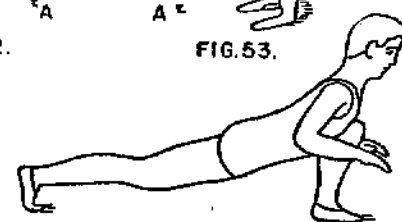


FIG. 55.

THE FORWARD FALL

From a standing position fall forward, keeping the body and legs straight and landing on the hands with the arms bent, as in Fig. 56. The difficulty here is keeping the body and legs straight. It can be used many times to start a trick.

JUMPING THROUGH THE ARMS

From position (Fig. 56) raise up to rest on the arms, as in Fig. 57, and, with a little spring, pass the legs between the arms to land in the sitting position of Fig. 58. At the start, the hands may be raised on some blocks or books. At any time the hands may be bridged up as in Fig. 59, which is a big help. Practice this forward and backward until there are no hitches.

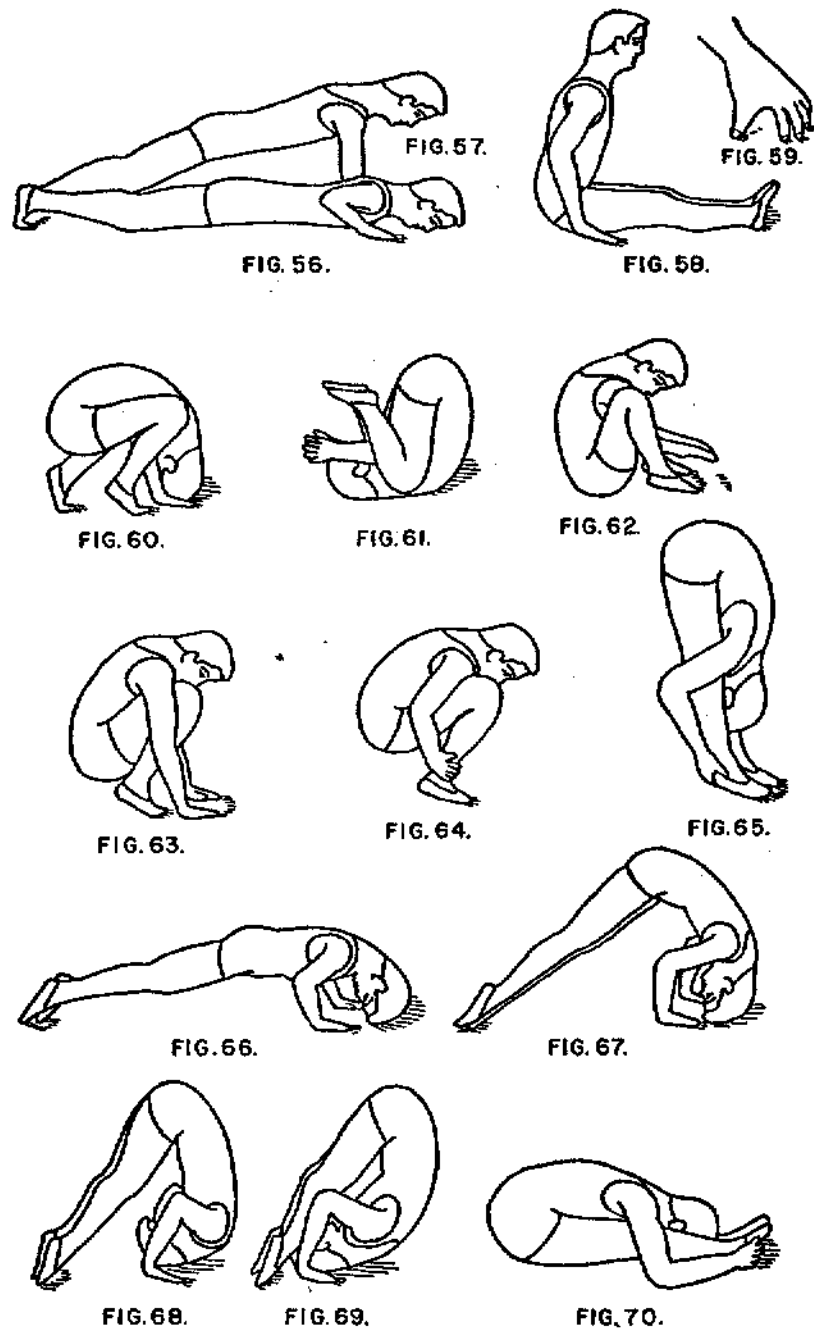
THE SEA-LION CRAWL

From position (Fig. 57) walk about on the hands, dragging the feet on the floor. This can be comical.

THE FORWARD ROLL

Squat, lean forward, put the head and hands on the floor, as in Fig. 60, and push with one foot to roll over to position (Fig. 61). Keep well doubled up to roll on over to position (Fig. 62). After a little practice, roll on to position (Fig. 63), which makes it easy to do another or a series.

From position (Fig. 63) catch the ankles, as in Fig. 64, and come to position (Fig. 65). In the roll the knees may be either inside or outside of the elbows. Master each way. From position (Fig. 57) turn the head under, as in Fig. 66, drag the toes on the floor as in Fig. 67 to balance on the head and hands, as in Fig. 68. As the body starts to fall, as in Fig. 69, grasp the feet with the hands to finish in position (Fig. 70). In the roll, keep well bent so as to roll like a ball. If the back is straightened, the hips will rap the floor hard. Sooner or later, everyone proves this to his own satisfaction, the hard way. Practice the roll till it can be done freely, without a hitch or jerk, for it will be used often in the acts. Strive for that professional smoothness.



PUTTING FEET BACK OF HEAD

Sit flat on the floor with the back against one side of a doorway. Grasp one foot with both hands and carry it over the head to the back of the neck, as in Fig. 71, holding it until the muscles begin to ache. When either foot can be kept at the back of the neck without holding, set the back against one side of a doorway or chair, catch one foot in each hand and carry them over the head, as in Fig. 72. As soon as the toes can be locked together and the body tipped forward (Fig. 73), walk about using the arms and the body tipped forward (Fig. 73), walk about using the arms like crutches. From position (Fig. 73) swing the body up to a balance, as in Fig. 74, and walk on the hands.

Stand with the feet wide apart, knees bent, and bend down to pass the head and shoulders between the legs (Fig. 75). Practice raising from this position to that of Fig. 74. Squat on the floor and raise one leg as if to scratch the ear with the foot, as in Fig. 76. Acrobats impersonating frogs always use this. Stand on one foot, carry the other over the head and hop about. In an oriental troupe one acrobat could push his foot down to his waist, as shown in Fig. 77. Stand with the feet well apart, knees bent, and bend forward to pass the head and shoulders between the legs, swing the arms freely or catch the ankles with the hands and waddle about, as in Fig. 78.

ONE-FOOT SQUAT

Stand on one leg, hold the other out horizontal in front, and bend the supporting leg to come to a squat as in Fig. 79. Do this up and down on each leg. Change feet while in the squat, like a Russian dancer.

LEG LOCK

Sit on a chair, cross the legs and hook the toe of the upper leg behind the ankle of the other as in Fig. 80. With the legs thus locked stand up on one foot. Put the hands on chairs set on each side, if necessary.

ONE-FOOT BALANCE

Stand on one foot and lean forward to pick up a handkerchief laid on the floor, as in Fig. 81.

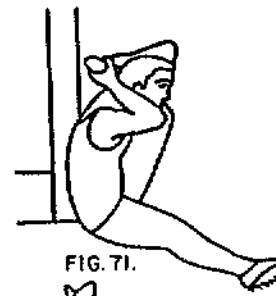


FIG. 71.

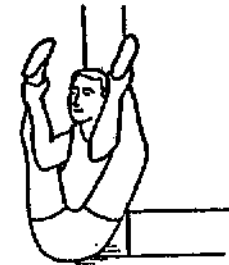


FIG. 72.



FIG. 74.



FIG. 73.



FIG. 76.



FIG. 75.



FIG. 80.



FIG. 77.



FIG. 78.



FIG. 81.

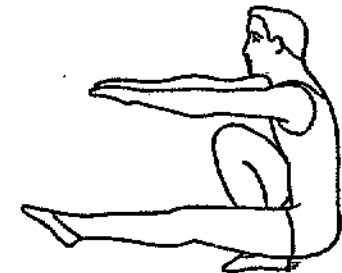


FIG. 79.

THE SPLIT

There are two versions of the split, forward and side. While the forward one can be mastered by anyone in a short time, the side one depends largely on the anatomical structure of the hip joint and is not for everyone. The forward will be discussed first.

Set two facing chairs about 24 inches apart. Place one hand on the seat of each. Start one foot forward, the other back, carrying the weight on the hands, to lower the body, as in Fig. 82. Soon one can slide down so the legs will lie flat on the floor, as in Fig. 83. From position (Fig. 83) place the hands on the floor, raise the body (Fig. 84), and turn around to lower it (Fig. 85). At first, the body must be raised quite high till the leg muscles get conditioned. From position (Fig. 83) lie forward flat upon the leg, as in Fig. 86. Later this will be used in ring work.

From Fig. 83 place the hands on the floor, one on each side of the forward leg, as in Fig. 87. Raise the body as at A of Fig. 87, bring the front foot back, and the back foot forward to position (Fig. 88). Doing this rapidly several times makes a good trick. From position (Fig. 83) place the hands on the floor inside of the forward leg, as in Fig. 89, swing the forward leg around back and the back one around forward in semicircles, as shown. At first the body will have to be raised and the weight carried on the hands. Do the split, as in Fig. 83, and lie forward to make a capital T of the body and legs, as in Fig. 90. Positions (Figs. 84 and 90) are good preliminary work for the side split.

Get all the split exercises perfect, for nearly everyone thinks that the split is something wonderful. In reality it is one of the easiest of tricks after it is mastered. More will be given in this book for the forward split as well as a discussion of the side one. It is important that this trick be done smoothly and held comfortably.

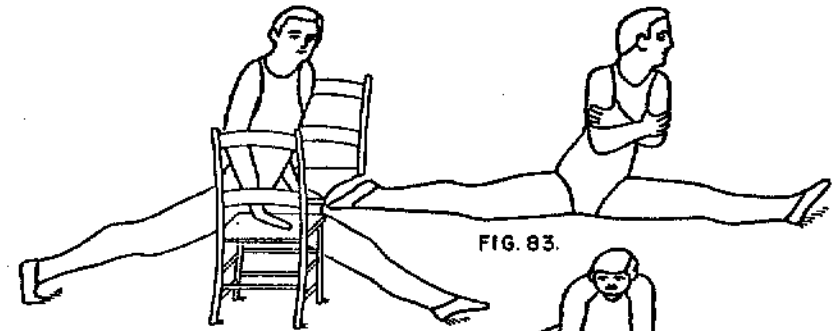


FIG. 82.



FIG. 83.



FIG. 84.



FIG. 85.

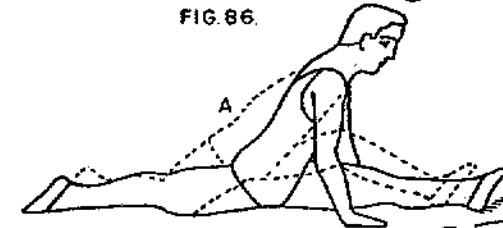


FIG. 86.



FIG. 87.



FIG. 88.

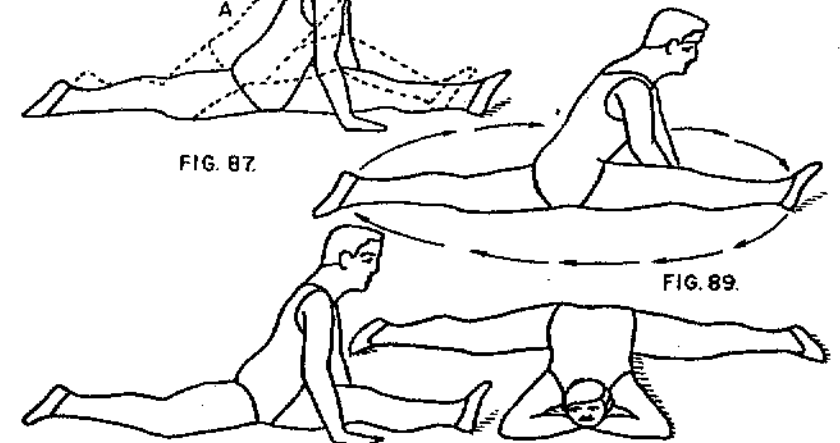


FIG. 89.



FIG. 90.

THE LOTUS POSTURE

Sit flat upon the floor, bend the right knee, grasp the right foot and place it on the left thigh. Bend the left knee, grasp the left foot and place it on the right thigh, as in Fig. 91. The arms may be folded or used to make some oriental dance gestures. Half of oriental dancing seems to be done with the hands and arms. If there is trouble in picking up the feet, squat like a cross-legged tailor, as in Fig. 92. Push the knees down with the hands to free the leg muscles. From position in Fig. 91 lie flat on the back, with the arms folded over the head, as in Fig. 93. Pull the legs flat upon the floor. From position (Fig. 91) lie forward till the fore-arms and head touch the floor, as in Fig. 94. From position (Fig. 91) put the hands on the floor by the hips, raise the body, as in Fig. 95, and waddle about the room.

From position (Fig. 91) hop on the knees, as in Fig. 96, and walk about the room. From position (Fig. 96) tip forward to a balance on the hands, as in Fig. 97, then see-saw so that first the head then the knees touch the floor. From position in Fig. 95, pitch forward to a balance on the hands and head, as in Fig. 98, then work the knees up and down as shown. From position (Fig. 91) place the hands on the knees, as in Fig. 99, and pull the abdomen in and tense the muscles. With the breath blown out, try to make the abdomen touch the backbone. Do this out and in fairly fast. This may also be done standing, as in Fig. 100. This sucking in of the abdomen will be used freely in getting through rings.

The complete lotus posture is made by squatting in position (Fig. 91), then reaching the left hand behind the body to catch the left foot, and the right hand behind the body to catch the right foot, as in Fig. 101. This one gave the author trouble, but the others are quite easy. For those interested in physical and mental philosophy, yoga is worth some study.



FIG. 91.



FIG. 93.



FIG. 94.



FIG. 92.



FIG. 96.



FIG. 95.



FIG. 99.

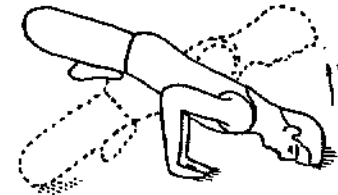


FIG. 97.



FIG. 100.



FIG. 98.



FIG. 101.

JUMPING OVER ONE FOOT

Loop a cord around the toe of one foot and hold the foot up, as in Fig. 102. Give a little hop, pass the free foot over the one held, as in Fig. 103. Practice jumping back and forth till it becomes easy, then keep shortening the cord until the toes can be held in the hand as in Fig. 104. Hold the toes of either foot and practice till it is easy to jump back and forth fast. After a little practice, this can be done in street clothes, but watch for the shoe heels catching.

FOLDING

Kneel, as in Fig. 106, sitting flat upon the floor between the feet. Lie back flat upon the floor, as in Fig. 105. Swing forward to position (Fig. 107) to lie flat as possible on the floor. With a little spring, come to a balance on the hands, as in Fig. 108. Turn the feet under to come flat footed on the floor and finish, as in Fig. 109. This may also be finished with a forehead stand, as in Fig. 110. From this position, arch the body well and roll like a chair rocker to come flat upon the floor, as in Fig. 112. Keep the body well arched or the knees will rap the floor hard. From position (Fig. 112) raise the body on the hands and drag the feet to a jackknife position (Fig. 111). Each of these positions should be held long enough for the audience to appreciate it. In time you know intuitively whether or not the audience is following the act.

FREEING THE HIP JOINTS

Stand straight with the hands on the hips, as in Fig. 113. Keep the head directly over the feet and bend sideways to carry the hip around in a great circle as A, B & C in Fig. 113. Do it several times in one direction, then several times in the opposite. These gyrations not only free the hip joints but give all the internal organs a general toning. It is a splendid morning exercise, especially for those who have trouble getting started at that time. As this trick makes no noise, and requires only standing room, there is no excuse for not practicing it.



FIG. 102.



FIG. 103.



FIG. 104.



FIG. 105.



FIG. 106.



FIG. 107.



FIG. 108.



FIG. 109.

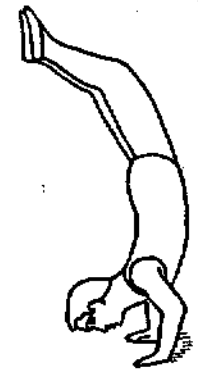


FIG. 110.

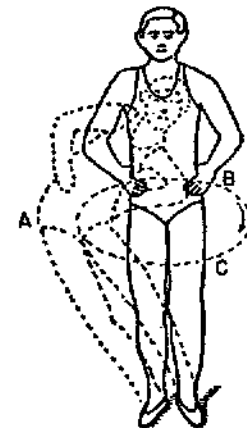


FIG. 113.

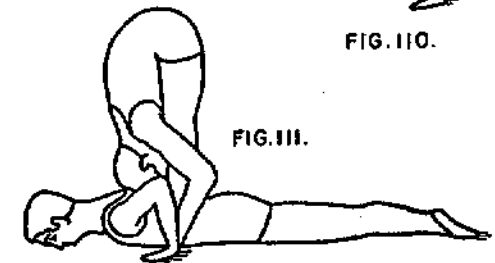


FIG. 112.

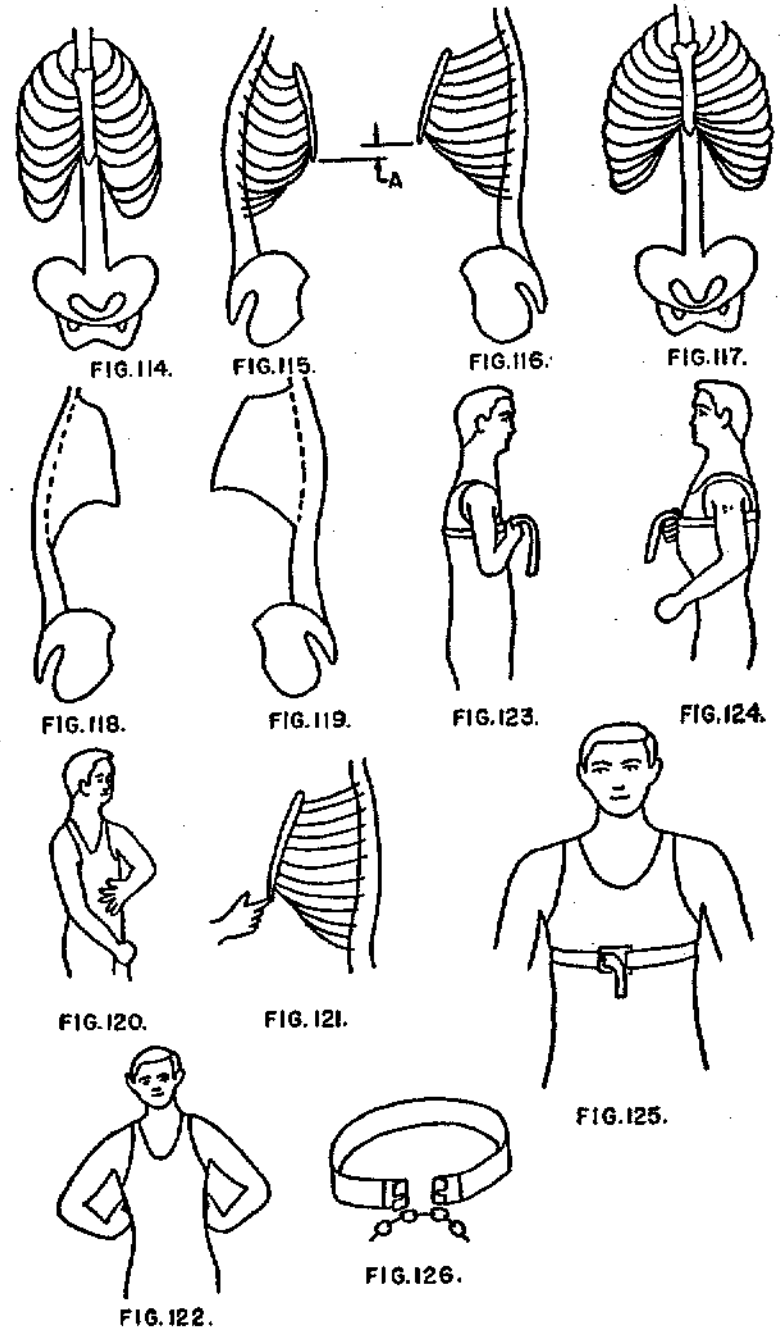
BREATHING

Start by exploring or getting acquainted with the chest in a mirror and trace the ribs with the fingers. Fig. 114 shows a schematic front view of the rib cage and pelvic bones with the air expelled. Fig. 115 is a schematic side view under the same conditions. The ribs, leaving the spinal column, slope downward as they come forward to turn up and fasten to the breastbone or sternum. Figs. 116 and 117 are schematic views of the rib cage with a full breath. In Figs. 114 and 115 the ribs are low, and in Figs. 116 and 117 the ribs are high. These movements, which are controlled by the intercostal muscles, change the size of the rib cage or lung space. Helping to shape and make the floor of the thoracic cavity is a muscular sheet known as the diaphragm. Fig. 118 shows how the diaphragm arches up to help expel the air from the lungs and Fig. 119 shows it flattened to aid drawing air into the lungs. If the hand is placed on the abdomen so that the thumb rests on the tip of the breastbone and the little finger reaches down to the navel, as shown in Fig. 120, the movements of the diaphragm can be felt. By holding the chest still and breathing deep, the wall under the hand will be pushed out as the breath is drawn in and will return to position as the breath is expelled. Sharp coughing, sneezing or hiccoughing produces a very noticeable movement of the diaphragm.

Place the tip of a finger under the end of the breastbone, as in Fig. 121, and the breastbone can be felt to rise with the inhalation and lower with the exhalation. This is also shown at A between Figs. 115 and 116. Place the thumbs against the ribs, as in Fig. 122, and the raising and lowering of them can be felt at inhalation and exhalation.

The flexibility of the chest walls can be measured readily. Expel all the air possible, place a tape measure around the chest, as in Fig. 123, and take the reading. Now draw in all the air possible, expanding the chest fully, and read the tape, as in Fig. 124. The difference of the reading is the measure of the chest expansion. About six inches is a good expansion.

Buckle an old belt around the chest, as in Fig. 125, and burst it by expanding the chest. The intercostal muscles of the ribs are strong enough to break cords or light chains, with a little practice. If this is to be an exhibition trick, have a broad leather belt with



hooked metal ends, as in Fig. 126, made so that chains or knotted cords can be put in place quickly. With a little spiel, this generally goes over big.

BREATHING EXERCISES

There are several different ways of breathing, each of which has its place. Collarbone breathing is one used by desk and bench workers most of their working hours. While it is to be avoided as much as possible, it has a place in acrobatic work. Here the diaphragm and ribs are used little or not at all and only the upper lung is filled. The breaths are short and fast. Many times in back bending, collarbone breathing is the only way to breathe. If one does the crab (Fig. 312) and his partner does a handstand on his stomach, he cannot use the diaphragm or ribs. Then collarbone breathing must be employed during the trick.

Rib, or intercostal, breathing combines collarbone breathing and chest expansion and is commonly used by non-professionals. Here the chest is expanded and often the abdomen is drawn in. All but the lower part of the lungs are used. Intercostal breathing is used in going through rings, as will be shown later in the text.

Low, or abdominal, breathing is done while holding the ribs stationary and breathing deep or way down, as in Fig. 120. This will be discussed again under ring work. With the chest raised and fixed, orators, singers and wind-instrument players get the push to produce tone and volume. The diaphragm is very flexible and easily contracted.

For general work, assume a position like Fig. 4 and breathe in, filling all the lungs comfortably from bottom to top. Breathe through the nose whenever possible. Mouth breathers are invariably round shouldered, short winded and easily catch colds and other contagious diseases. Air taken in through the nose is warmed, filtered and checked for foul odors.

In some tricks, mouth breathing is imperative. When playing a wind instrument, a large amount of air must be gulped without missing or even cutting short some notes or unseating the mouth-piece. Thus, air must be sucked in quickly, at or near the corners of the mouth. The author plays a clarinet and can say there is no substitute or better way. On some sheet music, breathing places are marked so that the player will be sure to have air for the music to follow.

Several times a day, draw in all the air possible, filling the lungs from bottom to the top and expanding to the limit. Hold it a few moments, then empty the lungs comfortably and flatten the chest completely. This increases the chest expansion and adds to the lung capacity so necessary for ring work. On rising in the morning, take a good stretch and breathe freely several times. At night, if you have difficulty in going to sleep, lie on your back, place your hands on your stomach, breathe deeply, and you will soon sleep. When it is not easy to concentrate, try deep breathing to free the mind of irrelevant matter.

The breath is the common ground between the conscious and unconscious minds. Breathing may be done consciously or unconsciously. Breathing may be controlled mentally or automatically governed by the bodily mechanism that controls the beating of the heart. Some occult and yoga systems make much of breathing. If one wishes to study breathing, these theories are worth some careful consideration from both mental and physical viewpoints.

Take a full, deep breath and hold it as long as comfortable. Three minutes is good. Exhale and hold as long as possible. When walking, especially in the parks or country, breathe with counted steps. Draw in, say, for ten steps, hold a step; then breathe out for ten steps, hold a step, then repeat. Draw in for ten steps, then blow out for twenty steps. Draw in slowly for twenty steps then, with mouth open, exhale all the air with a gush. Draw in for ten steps, pucker up the lips and whistle steadily and as long as possible. Draw in for ten steps, hold the lips tight and force the air out through them. When walking assume a good posture, swing the arms freely, breathe deeply, rhythmically and smoothly without jerking. Counting is great for conditioning mind and body.

STRAIGHTENING THE SHOULDERS

Fig. 128 shows the bone structure of the chest and shoulders. The shoulders are hung on the rib cage by the shoulder blades (A) at the back and the collarbone (B) in front. The collarbone (B) in turn fastens to the sternum or breastbone (C) at the front. Looking down on the shoulders of Fig. 128 the bone structure would appear as in Fig. 130. Looking down on the shoulders, as in Fig. 131, shows how shoulder braces are worn to straighten the shoulders. These are made with or without elastic at (A) to suit the wearer. These braces must pull against the collarbone to swing the shoulder blades back around the rib cage. In Fig. 121 it was shown how the sternum or breastbone raises and lowers with breathing. If the chest is dropped, as at A, Fig. 132, the collarbone pulls the shoulder from the correct position (B) to the round-shouldered position (C). If the chest is raised to the correct position of Figs. 127 and 134, the shoulders will automatically go back to their proper places and remain there as long as this position is held.

If shoulder braces are to straighten such posture as in Figs. 129 and 133, they must be strong and tight enough to lift the chest through collarbone and breastbone. When they are too tight for comfort, the wearer should loosen them. Braces can only make the wearer conscious that he is slouching. Flat chest, round shoulders, protruding abdomen, tipped pelvis, and sprung knees are all caused by the interlocking of the bony structures. Give the body its proper carriage and the chest will be out, the shoulders back, the abdomen in, the pelvis and knees straightened up and the slouchy appearance gone.

Try sitting stooped as much as possible and note how the shoulders come forward. It is impossible to put them back while in this position. Straighten up and the shoulders go back freely. If necessary, make a conscious effort to acquire a good posture. Remember that round-shouldered people don't make acrobats. Brace up and carry the professional look.

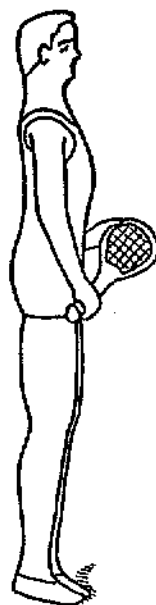


FIG. 127.

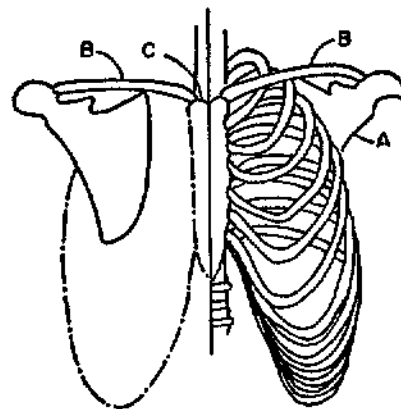


FIG. 128.



FIG. 129.

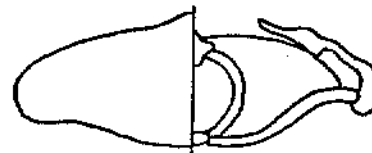


FIG. 130.



FIG. 133.

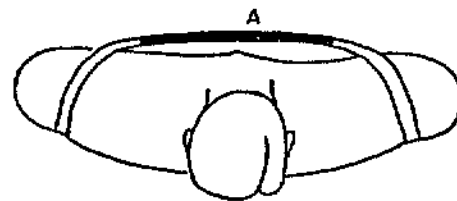


FIG. 131.

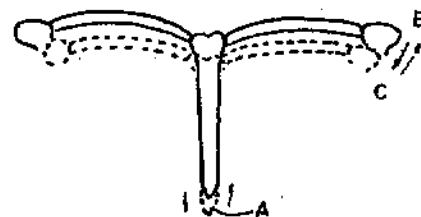


FIG. 132.



FIG. 134.

BREATHING FOR HEALTH

Fig. 136 is a human torso in which A is the lungs, B esophagus, C heart, D diaphragm, E stomach, F spleen, G splenic flexure, H transverse colon, J descending colon, K small intestines, L rectum, M appendix, N ascending colon, O navel, P hepatic flexure, Q liver. In the stooped torso, Fig. 135, R is the rib cage; S, the fold in the abdomen; T, the pelvic bones. When there is a slouching, as in Fig. 135, the fold S crosses the navel O, putting pressure on the transverse colon H, and holding the fecal matter in the ascending colon N, at the bottom of which is the appendix M.

When a large gas-producing meal is eaten, the stomach swells and expands. The bowels cradled in the pelvic bones cannot descend, the heart and lungs capped by the rib cage cannot ascend. This condition causes a distressing, full feeling. If the diaphragm is strong, it cramps the bowels; if weak, it raises, cramping the heart and lungs and causing shortness of breath and heartburn. Sometimes the gas is belched up through the esophagus for relief. If the pressure raises the diaphragm against the heart, then death from acute indigestion is reported.

The small intestine (J) is about 20 feet long and the colon (G, H, J, K and N) about 5 feet long, all folded with the liver (Q) and spleen (F) to go into the abdomen. The bends are sensitive to pressure like the bends in a garden hose. Bend a garden hose (Fig. 139) to see how the flow is reduced. Bend it as in Fig. 140 and the flow stops all together. Fig. 136 gives an idea of the many bends and the resistance offered by pinching each and all of these bends. The use of obesity belts and girdles (Figs. 137 and 138) results in much cramping of these bends.

Pinching and cramping the appendix invites appendicitis; the colon, colitis; the rectum, constipation; the spleen, diabetes; the heart, heart trouble; the lungs, shortness of breath; the liver, cirrhosis of the liver.

Straighten up and breathe deeply to avoid the common ills of the flesh.

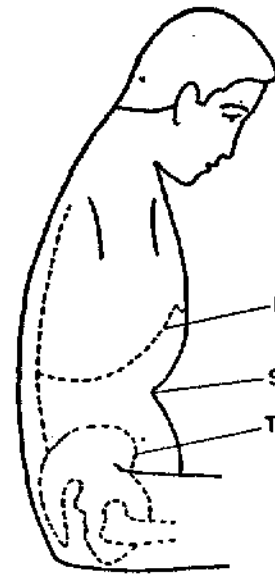


FIG. 135.

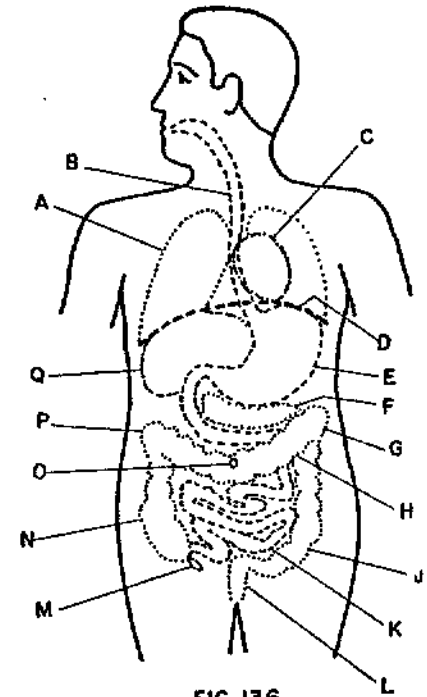


FIG. 136.



FIG. 137.



FIG. 139.

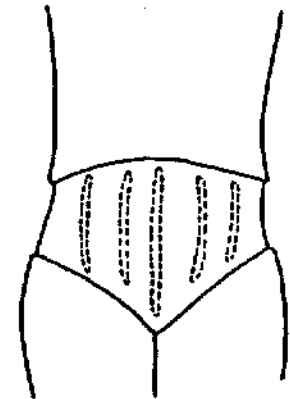


FIG. 138.



FIG. 140.

LA PLANTE

Use a strong chair, place one hand on the seat near the back, rest the hipbone on the elbow and tip forward to a horizontal balance, as in Fig. 141. Practice tipping so first the fingers then the toes touch the floor. On the floor lean on the elbow to strike a balance, as in Fig. 142. For the two-hand balance, hold the elbows tight against the hipbones and tip forward to a balance, as in Fig. 143. After some practice, it will not be necessary to hug the hipbones at all. The two-hand "plante" is much more difficult than the one-hand version.

GOING THROUGH RINGS

Controlled breathing is very essential for ring work. Hold the arms over the head, exhale all the air possible, flatten the chest, let the abdomen expand, as in Fig. 144, and breathe short, shallow breaths. Next, raise the chest high, draw in the abdomen, as in Fig. 145, and breathe a little deeper than indicated above.

Get a piece of steel rod, $3/16$ inch in diameter and 54 inches long, bend it into a 16-inch circle, and tape the ends with electrician's tape, as in Fig. 146. As progress is made, keep reducing the circle and retaping it.

Step through the ring with one foot, flatten the chest, as in Fig. 144, and push the ring over the head and shoulders just past the tips of the shoulder blades, as in Fig. 147. Now draw in a full breath, swell the chest, flatten the abdomen as in Fig. 148, and push the ring on over the hips. Positions of Figs. 144-45, 147 and 148 give the key to going through small rings.

Step both feet through a ring and go through it, as in Fig. 149. Step each foot through a ring and both feet through a larger one and go through all three at once, as in Fig. 150. Do the split, lie flat on the forward leg and go through the ring as in Fig. 151.

When the sizes are determined, get regular plated contortion rings. They look good and slip easily. The author, weighing 150 pounds, with a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -inch chest expansion, used 12- and 14-inch nickel-plated rings.

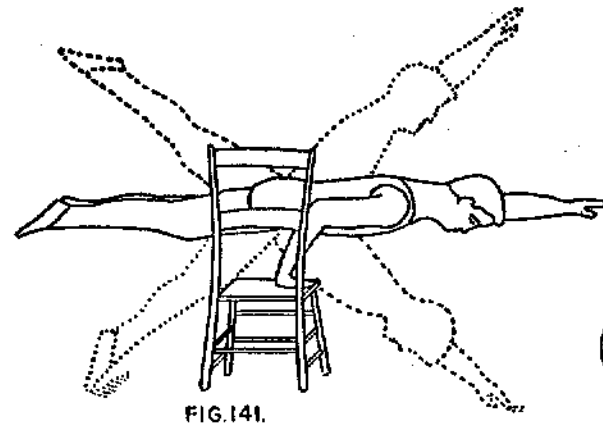


FIG. 141.



FIG. 142.



FIG. 143.



FIG. 144.



FIG. 145.



FIG. 146.



FIG. 147.



FIG. 148.

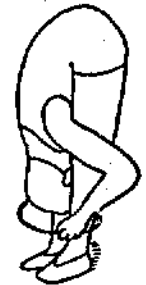


FIG. 149.



FIG. 151



FIG. 150.

HIGH KICKING

Let someone hold his hat high above his head, stand close, as in Fig. 152; with the knees straight, swing the leg up, bending the ankle so the foot misses, as in Fig. 153. Coming down, straighten the ankle so that the toe touches the hat for a surprise effect.

SHOE-TYING

Stand straight, keep the leg straight and swing it up, as in Fig. 155, to tie or pretend to tie the shoe.

BALANCING SPLIT

Set one foot on a chair or stool, slide the other back to a split as in Fig. 156 and balance up and down.

FOREARM STAND

Squat about thirty inches from a wall. Place the forearms on the floor, the head in the hands, and raise the legs to a stand, as in Fig. 157. If you miss your balance, the wall will stop you.

HEADSTAND

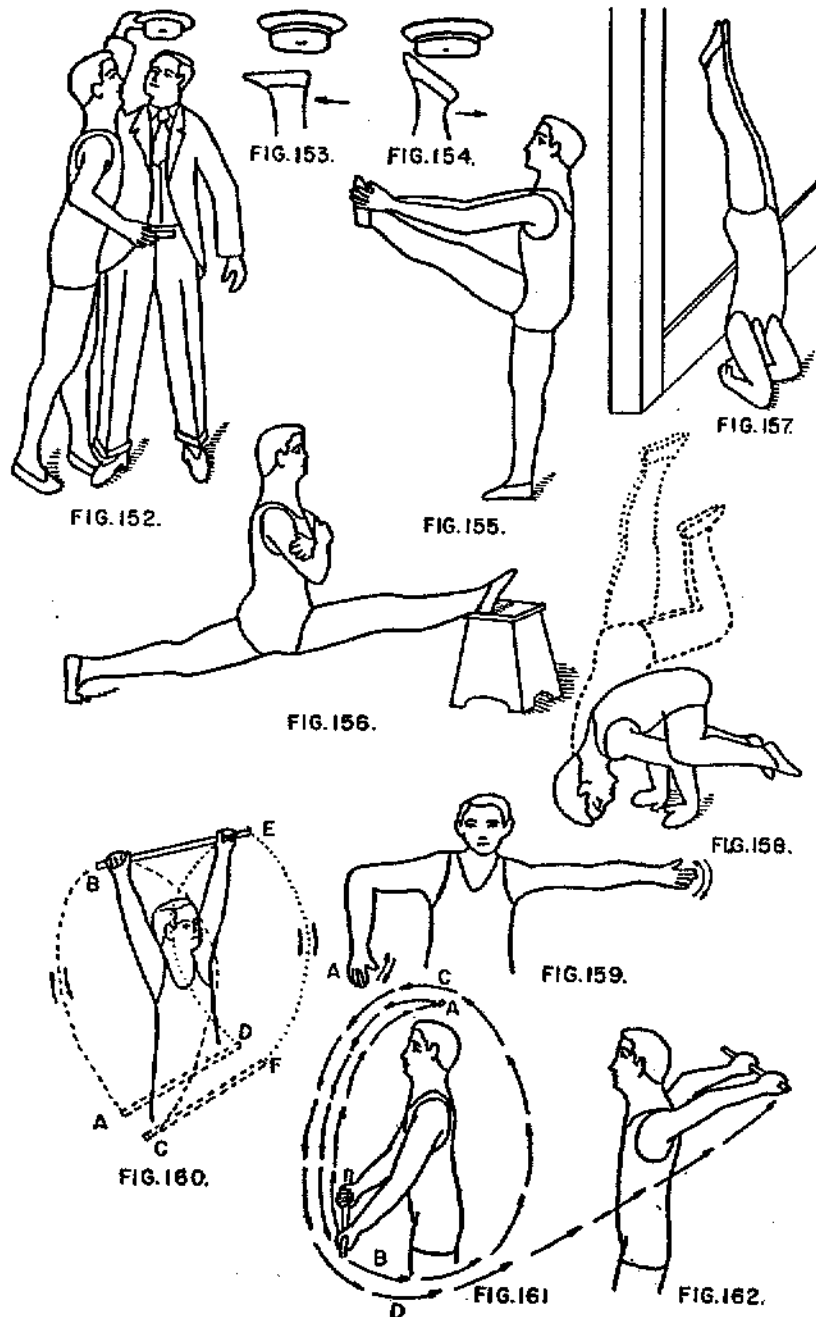
Squat, tip forward till the head touches the floor and raise the legs up to a balance as in Fig. 158.

SHOULDER DISLOCATIONS

Catch a long stick, knuckles up, hands about 36 inches apart, as in Fig. 160, and put it back and forth over the head, with the hands making great circles, as A, B and C, and D, E and F.

Catch the stick with the thumbs up, as in Fig. 161, raise it to A, bring it down in a circle to B, step over it, continue the circle up to C, down to D; step over it again and raise it high as in Fig. 162. Shorten the distance between the hands often.

The author used the balancing split on swinging rings, the dislocations on both rings and trapeze effectively.



HAND EXERCISES

Bend the second and third fingers forward and touch the first and fourth together back of them, as in Fig. 163. Lock the thumbs together with the fingers of the left hand over the right wrist and pull the right thumb to the wrist, as in Fig. 164. Place the tips of the fingers of the left hand in the palm of the right and bend them back until the fingers of the right hand touch the wrist of the left, as in Fig. 165. Place the knuckles of the left hand in the palm of the right and bend the left wrist until the fingers touch it again, as in Fig. 166. Catch the fingers of the left hand and bend the wrist and knuckles at right angles, as in Fig. 167. Bend the elbow to put the knuckles and wrist at right angles on the shoulder, as in Fig. 168 and hook the chain over the wrist and pull down.

Open the hand, hold the second, third and fourth fingers together and move the first up and down, as in Fig. 169, also close it tight in the palm. Hold the third and fourth fingers together. Work the first and second up and down, as in Fig. 170, closing them tight in the palm. Hold the first three fingers together and wiggle little finger up and down, as in Fig. 171, also closing it tight in the palm. Spread the thumb and fingers wide, as in Fig. 172. Close the thumb and fingers tight together, as in Fig. 173. Take a small ball or a wad of paper and hold it in the palm of the hand by gripping it with the fleshy part of the thumb, as in Fig. 174.

Take a half dollar or card and hold it between the first and little fingers, as in Fig. 175. Bring the third finger a little ahead of the second and pass through forward, as in Fig. 176. As they come through, straighten them, as in Fig. 177, which will leave the coin or card out of sight back of the second and third fingers as shown. Practice all exercises with each hand.

Tricks with the hands are always good for parties and banquets, etc. Learn some.



FIG. 163.

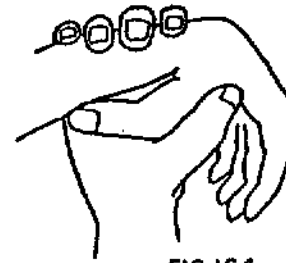


FIG. 164.

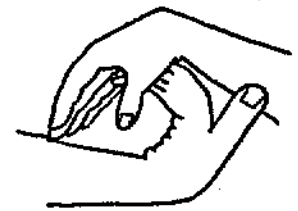


FIG. 165.



FIG. 166.



FIG. 167.



FIG. 168.



FIG. 169.



FIG. 170.



FIG. 171.



FIG. 172.



FIG. 173.



FIG. 174.

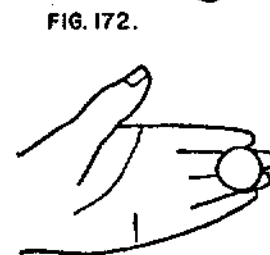


FIG. 175.



FIG. 176.

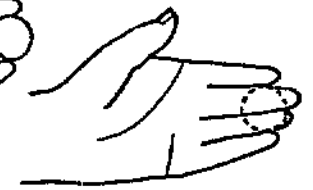


FIG. 177.

LIMBERING THE WRISTS

Hold the hands open on edge and shake them rapidly up and down, letting them hinge at the wrists, as in Fig. 178. Hold the hands open and shake them so they hinge back and forth at the wrists, as in Fig. 179. Hold the hands as in Fig. 180 and wring them clockwise, then counterclockwise, rapidly.

GUN SPINNING

The author used to spin the old Springfields, a nine-pound army rifle, in exhibition drills. Spinning can be taught as follows. Start practicing with a piece of gas pipe about 42 inches long. It is much easier to handle than a gun with its sights, trigger guard and crooked stock.

From position of attention, Fig. 181, come to port arms, Fig. 182. Fig. 183 shows an enlarged view of the hands of Fig. 182. From position (Fig. 183) turn the bar clockwise, letting it go with the left hand until it is held by the thumb of the right hand, as in Fig. 184. Place the open left hand across the right wrist to receive the bar, as in Fig. 184. As the right thumb lets go, the bar swings into the left hand, as in Fig. 185. Keep it turning until the left hand is in position (Fig. 186) when it is received by the right hand, bringing the hands to position (Fig. 183). Spin until the right hand is in position (Fig. 187), then, with a hard upward swing, bring it to position (Fig. 188) and toss it up to turn over twice. As it comes down, catch it in the left hand, as in Fig. 189. Keep it turning and pass it, as in Fig. 190, behind the back to the right hand, Fig. 191. Keep it turning to swing up to port arms, Fig. 192. From position Fig. 191 one leg may be raised and the bar passed under it to a port arms, Fig. 193. Just roll the bar through the positions indicated by Figs. 183 to 192 and the work will come easy.

One intending to go gun spinning should learn the manual of arms and bayonet exercise. Also, he should learn to spin the common broom for quick calls and clowning.



FIG. 178.



FIG. 179.



FIG. 180.

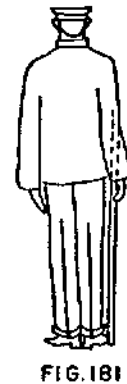


FIG. 181.



FIG. 182.

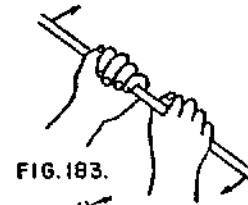


FIG. 183.



FIG. 184.



FIG. 185.



FIG. 186.

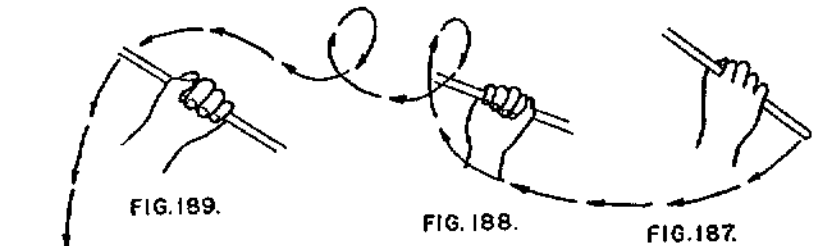


FIG. 187.

FIG. 188.

FIG. 189.

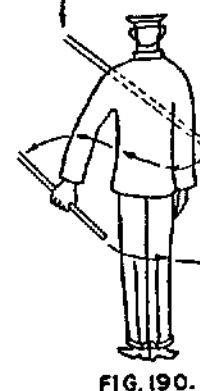


FIG. 190.

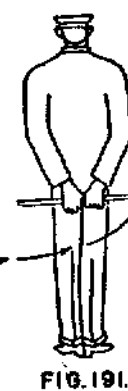


FIG. 191.



FIG. 192.



FIG. 193.

ONE-HAND GUN SPINNING

Hold the bar in the left hand, as in Fig. 194. Turn it rapidly clockwise, twisting the hand to position A, then let go and quickly turn the hand back to B. Hold the bar in the right hand, as in Fig. 195. Turn it rapidly clockwise until it is in position A, then let go and quickly turn the hand to point B. Its weight keeps the bar turning while the hand is being reversed.

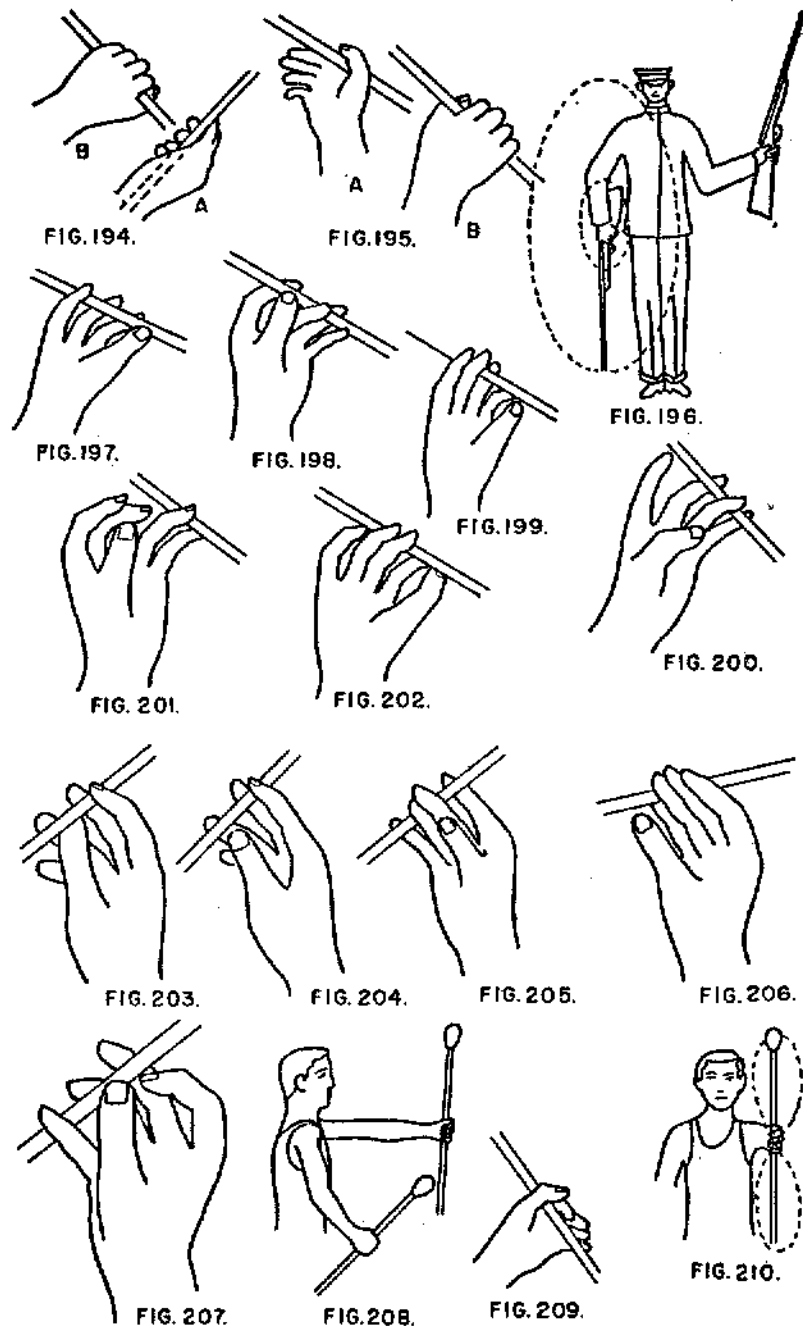
GUN SWINGING

Rifles, being barrel-heavy, can be swung like Indian clubs when caught at the stock grip, as in Fig. 196, the stock passing inside and the barrel outside the arms in great circles as shown. The weight is no trouble but the length of the barrel does limit the tricks.

BATON SPINNING

Wands, drum majors' and majorettes' batons are light and small and can be spun with the fingers. Catch the baton with the thumb and fingers, as in Fig. 197. Revolve counterclockwise to position (Fig. 198). Let go with the first finger so it will swing between the second and third fingers, as in Fig. 199, to position (Fig. 200). Let go with the second finger so it will swing around the third to Fig. 201, and as it swings around the fourth finger to position (Fig. 202), the thumb cooperates to bring it to Fig. 197. Catch the baton with the right hand, as in Fig. 203. Start it turning clockwise to position (Fig. 204). Hold the second and third fingers together to catch it, as in Fig. 205. Place the first finger so it turns between the third and fourth fingers, as in Fig. 206, and comes to position (Fig. 207). Run the baton through your fingers and you'll find the way that suits your hands for the weight and size of your baton.

Catch the baton in the middle, as in Fig. 208, and revolve it so the ball end makes great circles, passing first inside then outside of the arm, as in Fig. 210. If there is not enough suppleness in the wrist open the fingers, as in Fig. 209. The shortness of batons permits many Indian-club tricks.

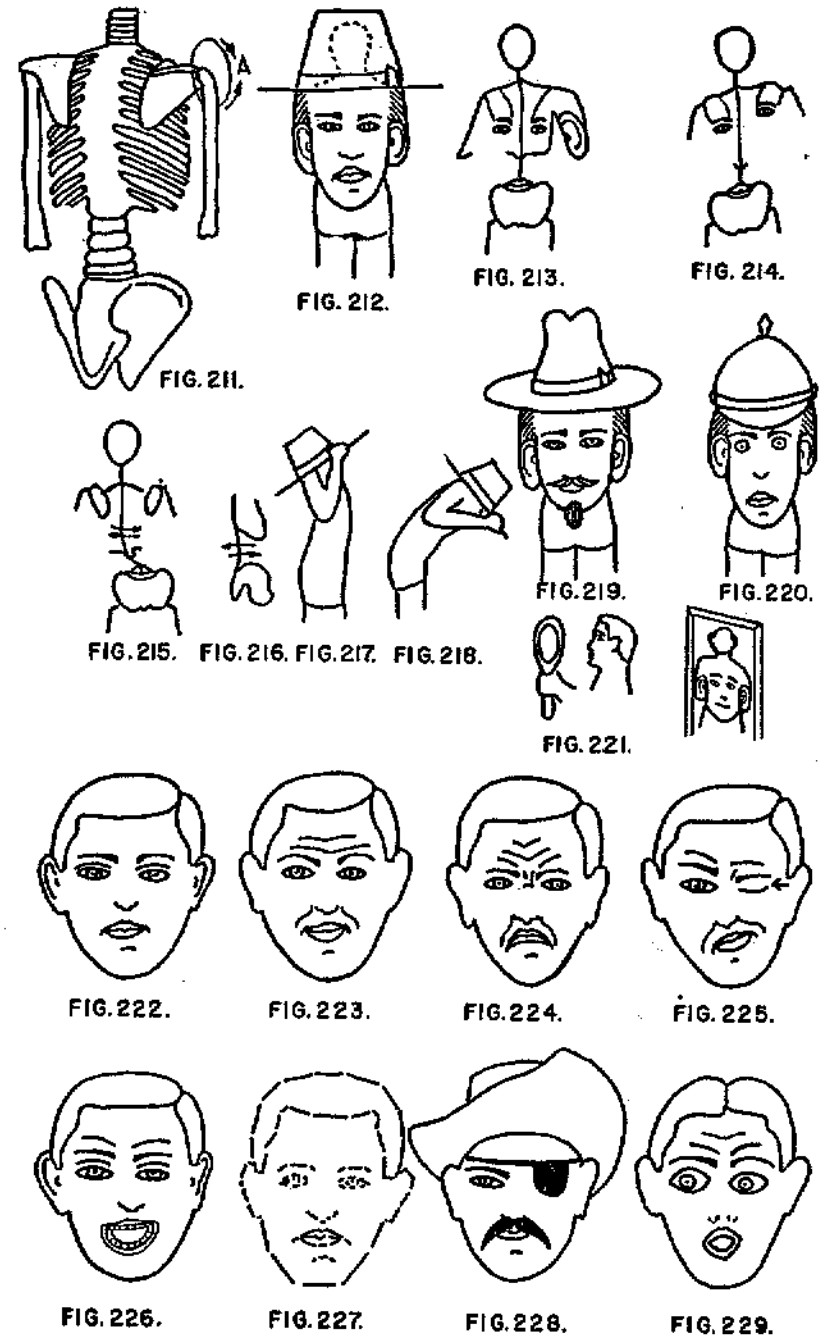


CLOWNING WITH FIGURES ON THE BACK

A face may be drawn on the back of a shirt and manipulated with the movements of the body. To understand the possibilities, the bone structure of the torso is shown in Fig. 211. Practice revolving the shoulders in a circle, as A of Fig. 211, until each can be revolved in either direction, singly, together or one opposite the other. Also pull them back and forward far as possible. In Fig. 212 the hat rests on the shoulders and can be moved by them, the head or hands. The eyes are on the tips of the shoulder blades and are worked by moving the shoulders, as in Fig. 214. The ear is drawn on the arm and moves with it, as in Fig. 213. The tip of the nose is on the lower edge of the rib cage and is moved by holding the hips still and moving the ribs sideways, as in Fig. 215. The mouth is on the upper crest of the hipbones and is worked by moving the hipbones, as in Fig. 214, or tipping them forward and back, as in Fig. 216. The face is shortened by bending back, as in Fig. 217, or lengthened by bending forward, as in Fig. 218. Fig. 219 shows how a beard may be drawn on or one of real hair used. Fig. 220 shows a helmeted type with banjo eyes.

A large variety of characters is possible, with careful planning. For study and practice, the figures may be drawn on the skin with makeup pencils and the movements worked out with two mirrors, as in Fig. 221. For actual presentation, the figures may be drawn on a full-sleeved shirt with some fabric paint, batik colors, embroidered on or woven in knit goods. Any theatrical costumer will make such an outfit on order.

A clown has the figured suit under his jacket. At the opportune time, he or someone jerks off the jacket. He puts on his hat as he turns his back to the audience and does his tricks. It's the surprise that counts. Figs. 222-229 give some facial suggestions. Here is a fine opportunity to work up some new and novel ideas.



EYE EXERCISES

Fig. 230 is a cross-section of the eye, Fig. 231 a front view of same. There are four sets of muscles to be exercised for the eye. A marks one of the six muscles shown that roll the eyeball in all directions. B is the ciliary muscle, controlling the lens for seeing at any distance. C are the muscles that control the lids. D are the muscles of the iris, the colored part of the front of the eye which opens and closes the pupil to suit light intensities.

Hold the head still, look as far to the left as possible, as in Fig. 232, then as far to the right as possible. Look as far up as possible, as in Fig. 233, then look far down as possible, as in Fig. 234, making plenty of white show. Hold the hand at arm's length in front, thumb up, look steadily at the thumb nail and bring the hand back to the face, as in Fig. 235. Look first at the tip of the nose, then at a spot between the eyebrows, as in Fig. 236.

Hold both hands out in front, level with the eyes, thumbs up. Let the left eye watch the left thumbnail, the right, the right thumbnail, as in Fig. 237. Keep each eye watching its nail and swing the hands apart in great circles as far as the eye can follow. This wide-angle vision (Fig. 238) is useful especially in juggling and club swinging.

Open the eyes wide. Make a lot of white show, as in Fig. 239. Practice winking, as in Fig. 240, until the face can be screwed up or held straight.

Stand a few feet from a wall and throw a ball against the floor to make movement, as shown in Fig. 241. Also throw it against the ceiling to make movement as shown. Keep the eyes on the ball. Hold the hands wide apart and pass the ball back and forth between them as in Fig. 242. Watch the ball without turning the head.

Look at a strong light till the pupil contracts, then cover the eyes with the hands, as in Fig. 243, until the pupil dilates. This may also be done with a hat, as in Fig. 244, or by switching the light off and on.



FIG. 232.



FIG. 233.

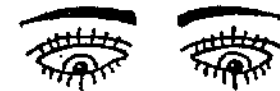


FIG. 234.

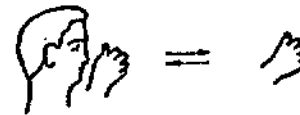


FIG. 235.

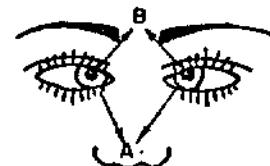


FIG. 236.



FIG. 237.



FIG. 238.



FIG. 239.



FIG. 240.

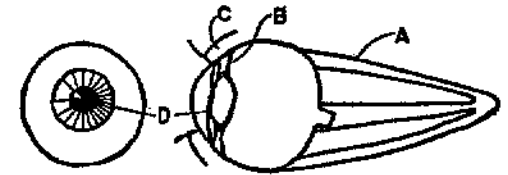


FIG. 231.

FIG. 230.

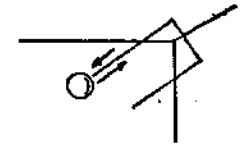


FIG. 241.



FIG. 242.



FIG. 243.



FIG. 244.



SCALP EXERCISES

Place the hands on the head, as in Fig. 245, and work the scalp so that it will move with its own muscles, as in Fig. 246. Set a glass of water on the forehead and balance it by moving the scalp when walking, as in Fig. 247, getting up or lying down, as in Fig. 248.

FACE EXERCISES

Close the eyes to mere slits and pull the eyebrows down, as in Fig. 249; then hold the brows together and raise them to wrinkle the forehead, as in Fig. 250. Open the eyes wide, wrinkling the forehead, as in Fig. 251. Tip the head back and tense the cords in the neck so they stand out, pulling the corners of the mouth down, as in Fig. 252. Pull the mouth sideways till it twists the nose, as in Fig. 253. Keep the mouth closed and pull the corners back, as in Fig. 254. Pucker the lips, as in Fig. 255. Stretch the corners of the mouth up, as in Fig. 256, then down, as in Fig. 257. Hold the mouth still and pull down the lower lip to show the teeth, as in Fig. 258, then up as in Fig. 259, making ugly snarls. Separate the lips and pull the corners back, as in Fig. 260.

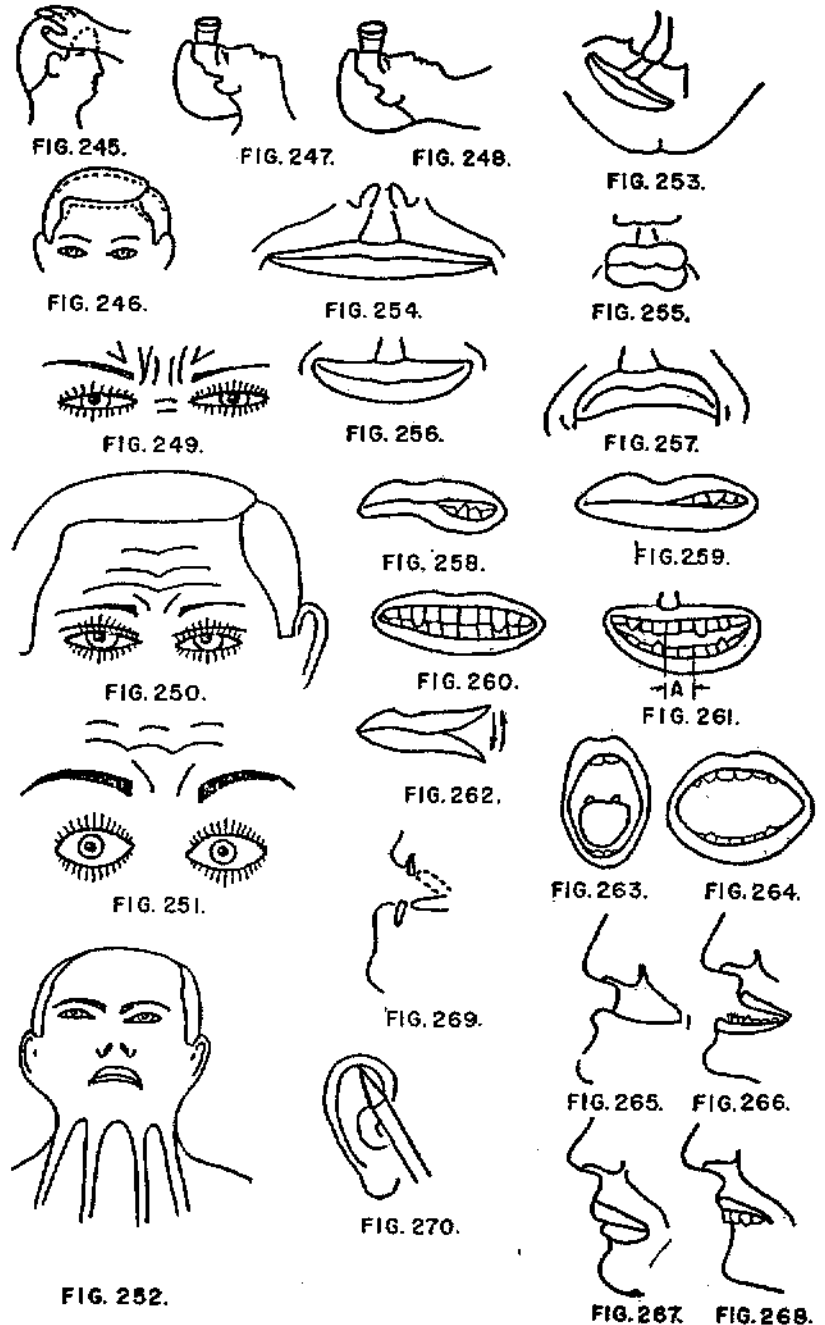
Open the mouth and move the lower jaw back and forth, as in Fig. 261. Keep the mouth closed and work the corners up and down, as in Fig. 262. Open the mouth wide without spreading at the corners, as in Fig. 263; then open it wide, spreading the corners, as in Fig. 264. Bring the lower jaw forward and the upper lip in, as in Fig. 265; then pull the jaw forward and show the teeth, as in Fig. 266. Bring the jaw back and the upper lip forward, as in Fig. 267; then show the upper teeth, as in Fig. 268.

TONGUE EXERCISES

Separate the teeth and flip the tongue up and down, as in Fig. 269. Say "tick" separating the word as ti-ck. This will start the tongue to roll the r's or to do staccatoing, double and triple tonguing for wind instruments.

EAR EXERCISES

Place a sharp pencil against the ear as in Fig. 270 to help wake up the muscles to move it.



THE SIT-DOWN

Reach the hands well down to the toes, as in Fig. 271, and fall to the sitting position (Fig. 272). If there is any fear, set up a slanting board, as in Fig. 271, to lessen the fall. The main thing is to keep the knees straight and body well bent. It's a good starter for many tricks.

THE BODY TURN-OVER

Lie back on the hands, as in Fig. 273. Then turn over, as in Fig. 274, and pick up a handkerchief with the teeth. This is a good party trick.

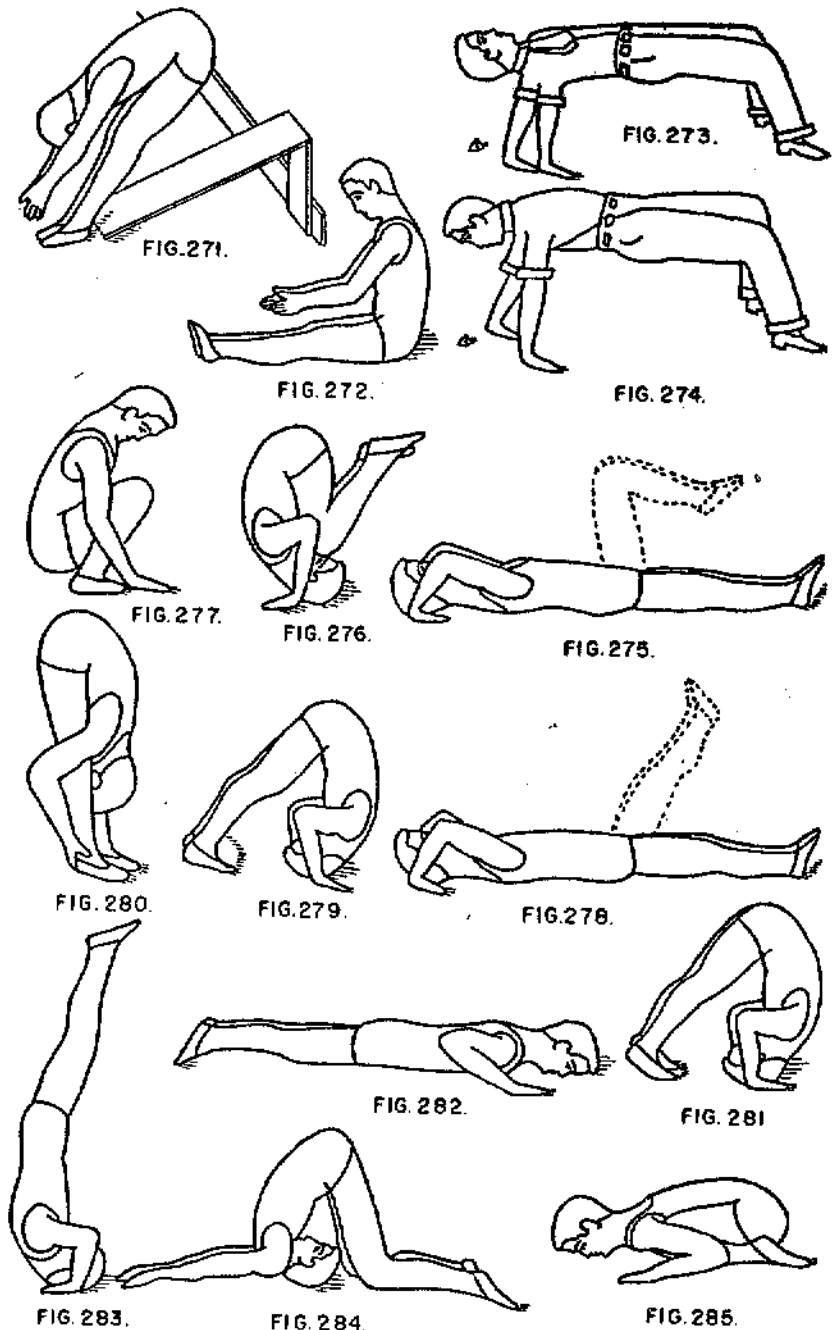
THE BACK ROLL

Lie flat upon the back, as in Fig. 275. Place the hands on the floor beside the head, bring the legs right over the head, rolling to position (Fig. 276). Keep well doubled and roll to a squat (Fig. 277), which is right for another or a series of rolls. Practice until this can be done smoothly and with no apparent effort.

Lie on the back, as in Fig. 278, place the hands on the floor beside the head, keep the knees straight and swing the legs with a smooth sweep over the head to land in position (Fig. 279). Keep the feet from slipping on the floor and push up with the hands to position (Fig. 280). From position (Fig. 281) straighten the ankles to slide out on the floor, as in Fig. 282. From position (Fig. 279) straighten the legs up for a shoulder stand (Fig. 283). From position Fig. 283 bend the knees to the floor and slide the arms out to position (Fig. 284). From position Fig. 284 swing back raising the head and arms to finish in position (Fig. 285).

Do the lotus (Fig. 91), lie back to position (Fig. 93) and back roll to position (Fig. 96). This makes a good trick.

Practice all the back rolls until they can be done gracefully and easily at any time. They can be used as a series across the stage, or used to get on the feet, or from face up to face down. Some tricks that go across the stage keep the audience watching closely, but they should be done so smoothly that it will be said, "He rolls like a ball."



THE SPLIT

Do the split, bend the rear knee to raise the foot in reach of the hand. Grasp the toes and pull the foot against the back of the head, as in Fig. 286. At first it may be necessary to tie a cord to the foot and carry it over the shoulder to the hands. Do the split, catch the rear foot with the hand, bring it up under the chin, as in Fig. 287. After a little practice, the toes can be held with the chin and hand swung free. When the position can be held with the chin, bring the foot to the shoulder as in Fig. 288. Hook the chin over the instep and face the audience. This will generally get a hand. Do the split, bend over backwards, as in Fig. 289, as far as possible. This is great for freeing the spine and hip joints.

THE INVERTED SPLIT

From position (Fig. 290) come up to a headstand (Fig. 291). Start the legs in opposite directions to do the inverted split (Fig. 292). A variety may be shown by swinging the legs to alternate forward and backward.

It takes time to condition the muscles, cords and joints for graceful execution of the split. But audiences are so pleased by it that mastering it is time well spent.

THE SIDE SPLIT

Almost anyone can master the forward split in a short time, but the side split is different. Here the feet are slid out sideways until the legs rest on the floor, as in Fig. 293. Doing the split, as in Figs. 83, 84 and 90, is excellent practice for the side split and will gradually condition the legs for it. However, much depends on the bone structure of the hip joint. Figure 294 shows how the bone structure may limit the side split. It was always slightly painful for the author. Work carefully a short time to see whether the cords in the legs or the hip joint cause the trouble. If it is cord shortage, that will pass with practice; but if it is the hip joint, you may never do it comfortably.



FIG. 286.



FIG. 287.



FIG. 288.



FIG. 289.

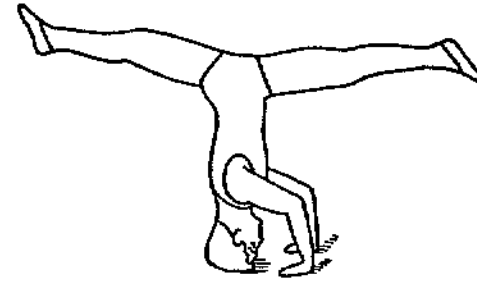


FIG. 292.

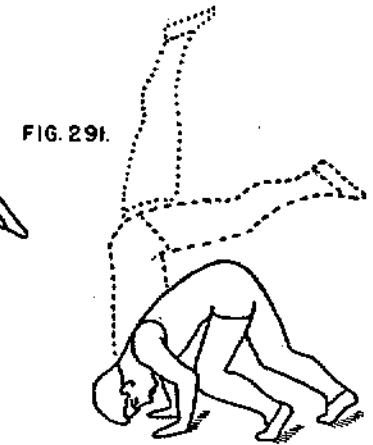


FIG. 291.



FIG. 290.

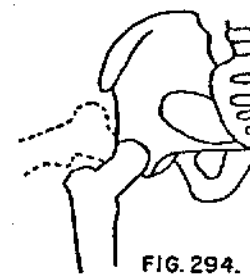


FIG. 294.

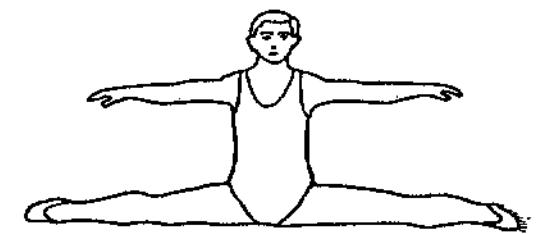


FIG. 293.

BACK ROLL WITH GLASS OF WATER

Lie flat upon the back and balance a glass of water on the forehead, as in Fig. 295. Place the hands on the floor beside the head. Bring the legs up to position (Fig. 296). Pick up the glass between the knees and hold it there as you straighten out on the floor, as in Fig. 297. Reverse the movement to set the glass back on the forehead, as in Fig. 295. Holding the glass up and spilling a little water invariably pleases the audience. This trick must be done without jerks or any apparent effort. If the glass tends to slip from perspiration on the forehead, cement a felt ring on the bottom, as in Fig. 298. This will absorb the sweat.

FISH FLOP

Stand straight and fall forward on the hands as in Fig. 299. From the toes and hands give a good spring in the air and turn over to land on the back. Land on the heels and elbows as in Fig. 300 to cushion the fall, so that there is no shock.

ROCKING ROLL

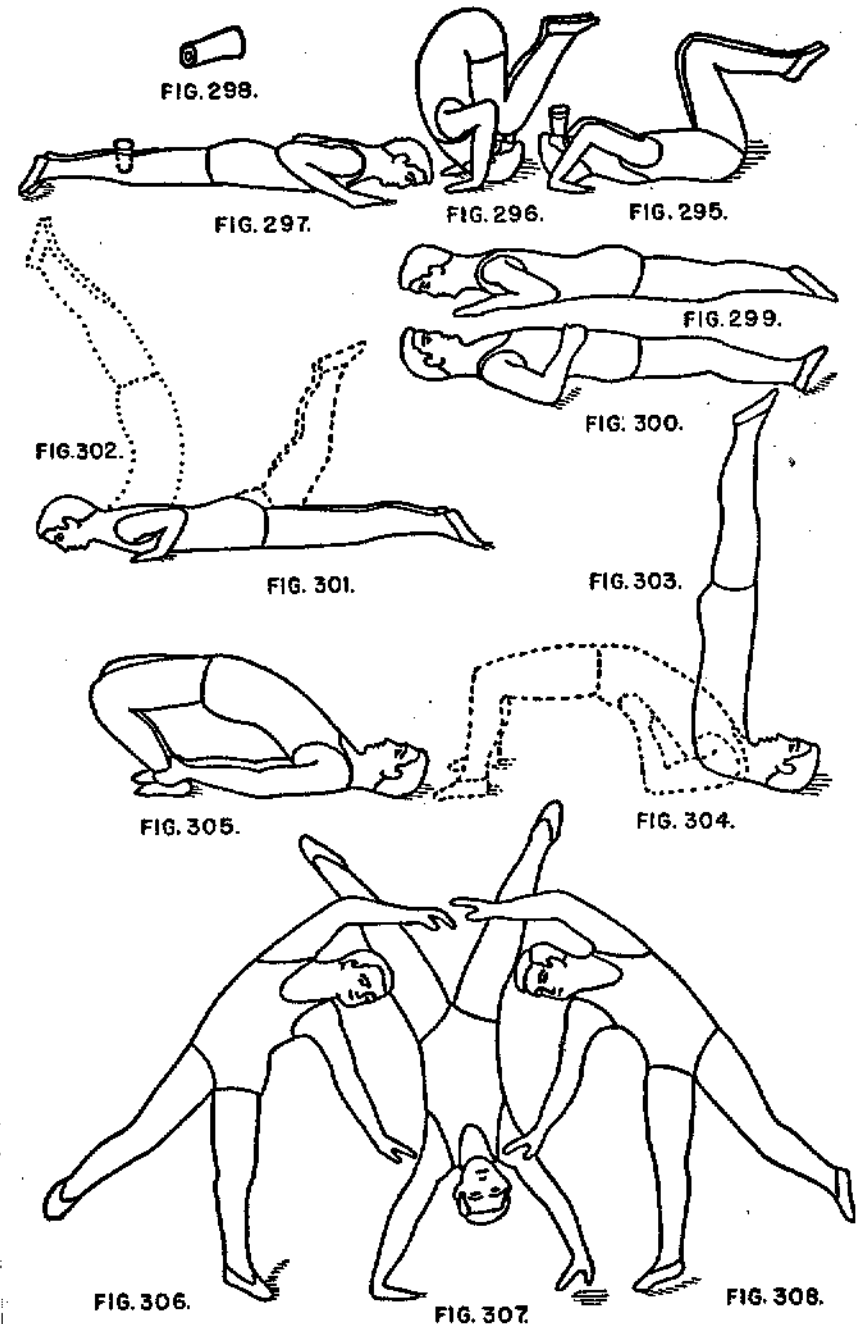
From a face-down position on the floor, as in Fig. 301, swing the legs up to a balance on the chin, as in Fig. 302. Keep the body well arched to roll back on the floor.

THE BRIDGE

Do a shoulder stand, as in Fig. 303. On coming down, put the hands under the hips to bridge as in Fig. 304. From this position catch the feet with the hands as in Fig. 305 pulling them back until the body reaches the floor.

THE CARTWHEEL

Stand with the feet about twenty inches apart, arms out sideways, and pitch over sideways on the hands as in Figs. 306 and 307, then on over to the feet, as in Fig. 308. Soon several cartwheels can be turned across the floor. The arms and legs can be held out at about ninety degrees with each other to roll stiff like a pinwheel. This is fine for a series or covering distances rapidly. Again the body may be constantly flexed, so there is very little travelling. Perfect the cartwheel before coming to the handspring and the latter will be easy.



BACK-BENDING, OR THE CRAB

Sit sideways on a chair, lie back across the seat so that the head, hands and feet are on the floor, as in Fig. 309. Carry the weight on the hands and feet, lifting the body in an arch high as possible. Lie face up on the floor. Bring the heels up against the buttocks, the hands beside the head, as in Fig. 310, and raise the body up to an arch, as in Fig. 311. You may feel a little dizzy in this new position, but a little practice will stop that.

Stand about two feet in front of a wall, bend over backwards to touch the nose to the wall, as in Fig. 312. If the balance is lost, the wall can always be touched with the hands to prevent a fall. Power to balance in any position smoothes the work and makes it look professional. From position of the crab, Fig. 313, walk the hands towards the feet as shown. With a little practice, one can walk across the floor forward or backward in this position.

Stand about thirty inches in front of a wall or door, bend backwards, as in Fig. 314; put the hands against the door and slide down to the floor. Practice until you can go up and down freely without touching the door.

Bend the crab, as in Fig. 315; raise one foot and hand, twisting the body, as in Fig. 316, to finish in position (Fig. 315). The hands may be kept in one place as a pivot and the feet walked around as the body turns over.

Set a handkerchief on the floor and bend over backwards to pick it up with the teeth, as in Fig. 317. Catching hold of the thighs with the hands will help steady you.

Bend over backwards until the head touches the floor as in Fig. 318, then slide on the head till the body lies full length on the floor. Reverse the movements and come back standing. Swing the hands freely. All backward movement requires more caution in learning than forward movement, because we are more accustomed to moving and bending forward. Back work puts new stresses on the body, so work carefully, keeping a firm, steady balance.

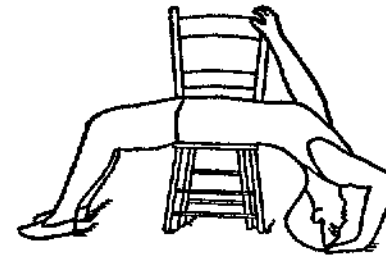


FIG. 309.

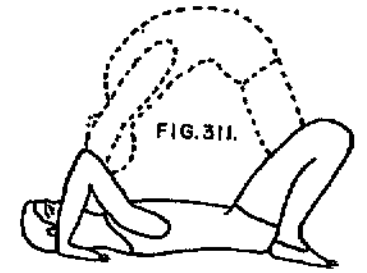


FIG. 310.

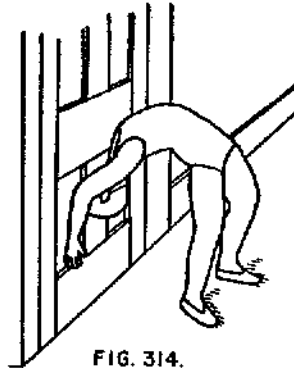


FIG. 314.

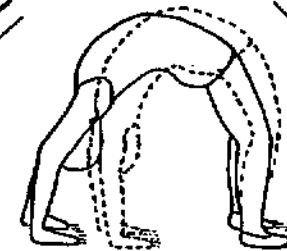


FIG. 313.



FIG. 312.

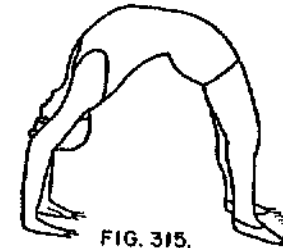


FIG. 315.



FIG. 317.

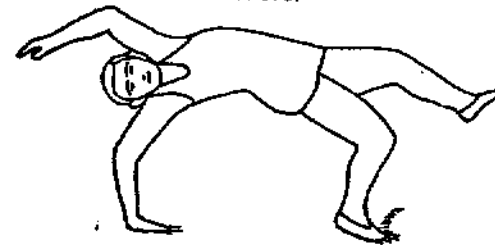


FIG. 316.



FIG. 318.

THE HANDSTAND

Stand before a wall, pitch forward so the hands strike the floor about twenty inches in front of the wall and throw the feet up against it, as in Fig. 319. Steady up, then take the feet away from the wall. When the balance is fairly steady, begin walking around the room on the hands to help get control. Get a good balance on the hands, then lower the forearms to the floor, as in Fig. 320. Practice going up and down on the forearms several times, as fast as your balance will permit. Do a handstand before a door, as in Fig. 321, and arch the back as much as possible. This is not only good balancing practice, but, by feeling the panels occasionally, you will know how much you are bending.

ONE-HAND STAND

Get a steady balance on both hands, then begin shifting all the weight to one hand. Let the free arm and leg go anywhere for balancing, as in Fig. 322. Gradually, as control develops, the position approaches that of Fig. 323. The one-hand stand is harder than it looks and it will take some practice before it can be done gracefully.

THE HEADSTAND

At the beginning, lay a folded bath towel or cushion on the floor for the head. Stand on the head and hands, as in Fig. 156, with the head on the cushion. Gradually shift the weight all to the head for a balance, as in Fig. 324.

THE TWISTING CARTWHEEL

This can be learned by turning a series of cartwheels in a circle and gradually diminishing the circle. Another method is to go at it boldly by standing, as in Fig. 325, turning one hand back, the other over the head, and twisting the body to land on the hands, as in Fig. 326. Keep going and twisting to come up on the feet, as in Fig. 327. Keep twisting and turning (Fig. 328) to finish in position (Fig. 325).

This is not difficult when one gets the knack of twisting and turning. It usually takes several rounds before the audience gets it. Knowing when the audience gets the trick comes from intuition which develops with time and practice.

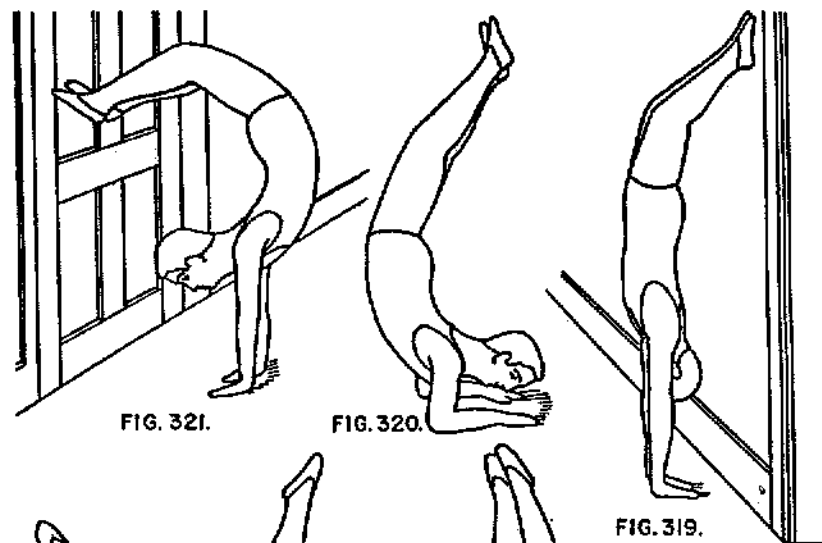


FIG. 321.

FIG. 320.

FIG. 319.

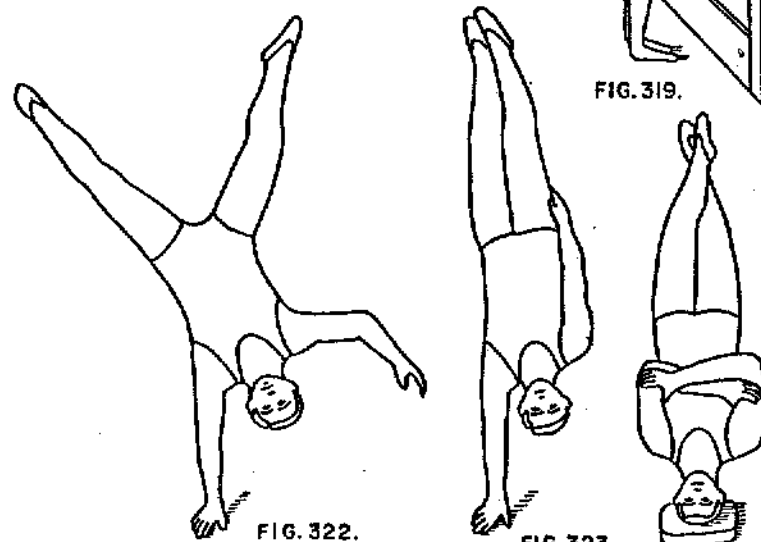


FIG. 322.

FIG. 323.

FIG. 324.

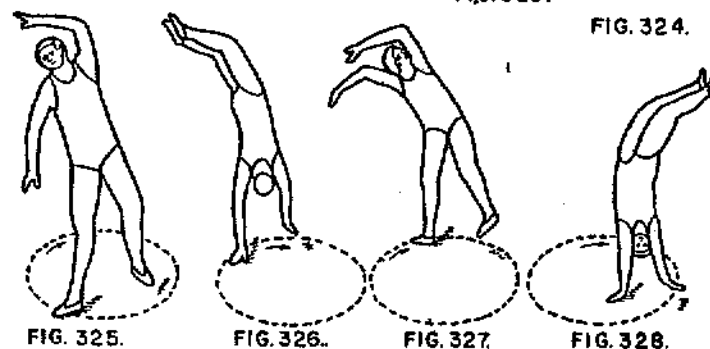


FIG. 325.

FIG. 326.

FIG. 327.

FIG. 328.

FOOT EXERCISES

Fig. 330 shows the longitudinal arch and Fig. 331 shows the transverse arch of the foot. These cushion the feet for all activities. Fig. 332 shows how the weight at the ankle, D, is distributed to heel, A, and ball of the foot, B and C, in a three-point suspension for a footprint like Fig. 333.

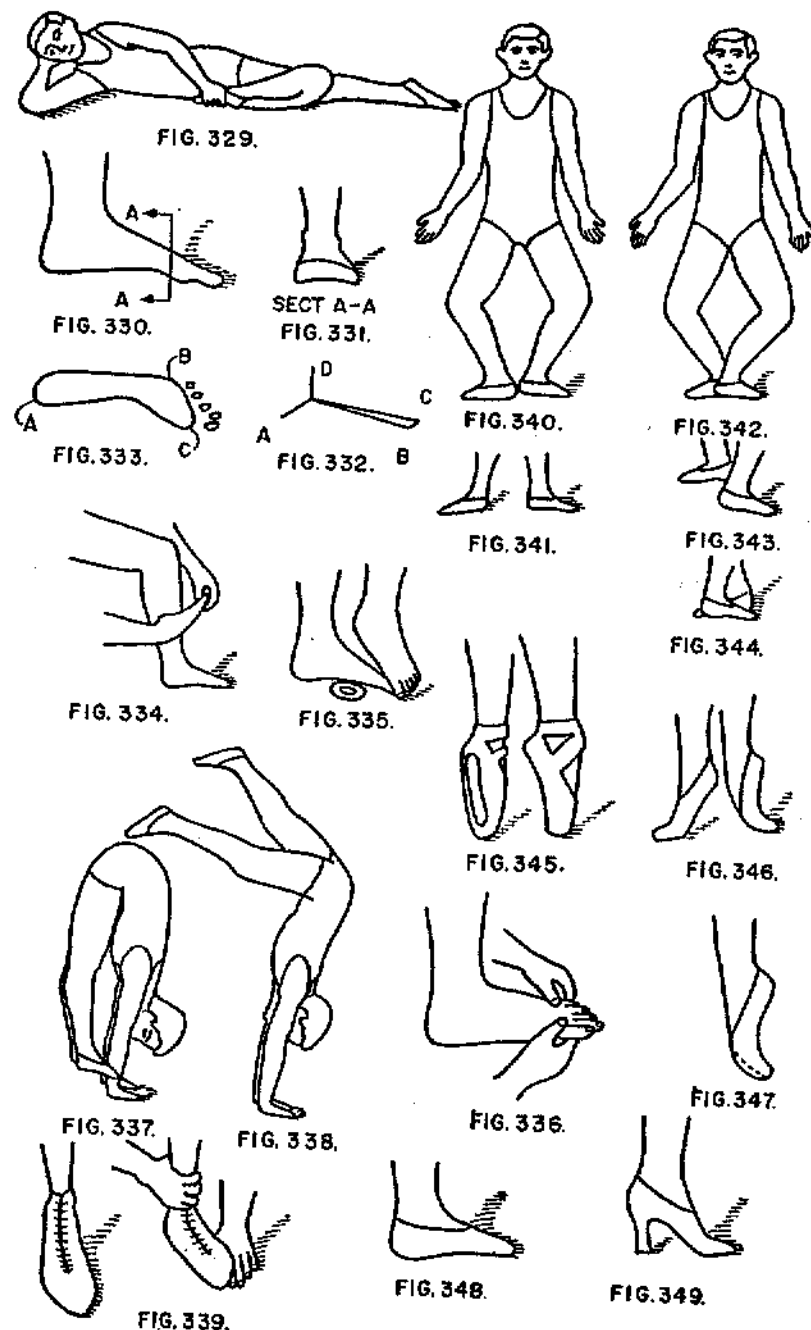
Lie on the side, catch one foot and pull the toes to the floor, as in Fig. 329, to stretch the ankle and instep. For the longitudinal arch, set one foot across the shin and bend it as in Fig. 334 or across a roll as in Fig. 335. For the transverse, work each toe section with the hands, as in Fig. 336.

FOOTWORK FOR CLOWNING

Place the hands on the floor near the feet, raise like Fig. 337, catching the toes in the sleeve. Struggle some, then come to an awkward stand, Fig. 338. On coming down, land one foot on the hand, as in Fig. 339; struggle, then lift the foot with the free hand. Dance steps are good for clowning. Stand with the heels together, toes turned out sideways and bend the knees, keeping the heels on the floor, as in Fig. 340. Stand with the feet apart, as in Fig. 341, and bend the knees. Stand with the feet parallel, heels passing as in Fig. 342, and bend the knees. From position of Fig. 342 set one foot forward, as in Fig. 343, and bend the knees.

Ballet dancers wear a stiff reinforced shoe, Fig. 345, to stand on their toes, as shown. For comedy turn the toes under and stand on them, as in Fig. 346, for a pose or a few steps. A piece of sponge rubber placed in the shoe (Fig. 347) will protect the toes. Elk skin pumps, as in Fig. 348, are good for this and all contortion work, being light, neat, good looking, comfortable. They wear well, and there is nothing to catch when jumping on a foot or hands. When the soles get slick, rub them with powdered rosin. People wearing shoes such as shown in Figs. 345 and 349, squeeze the blood out of their toes and are always complaining about their feet.

In comedy, remember a clown must be GOOD before he can be BAD enough to be funny.



HANDSPRINGS

Run a few steps, pitch from one foot, as in Fig. 350, onto the hands, as in Fig. 351. When a falling sensation is felt, as in position Fig. 352, give a hard push with the hands, arch the back and land on the feet, as in Fig. 353. If one is working alone, he can use a barrel, as in Fig. 354, and turn over it. This catches him if he does not make the balance. The easy way is to do a handstand, as in Fig. 360, and bend till the feet touch the floor, as in Fig. 361, and stand up. After some practice, the handspring can be done off one hand. A novelty trick is done by holding a cane, as in Fig. 362, pitch forward to land the end on the ground and turn a handspring over it.

BACK HANDSPRING

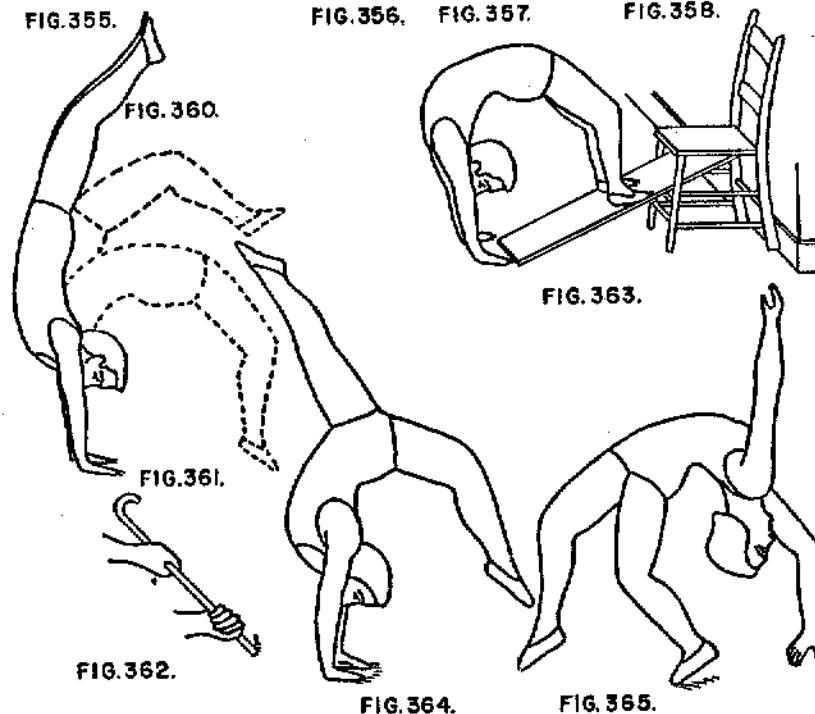
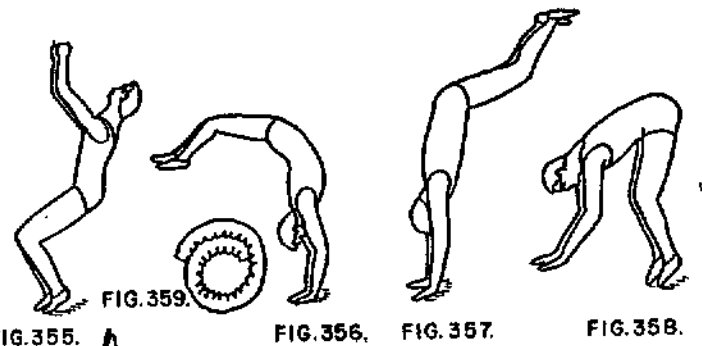
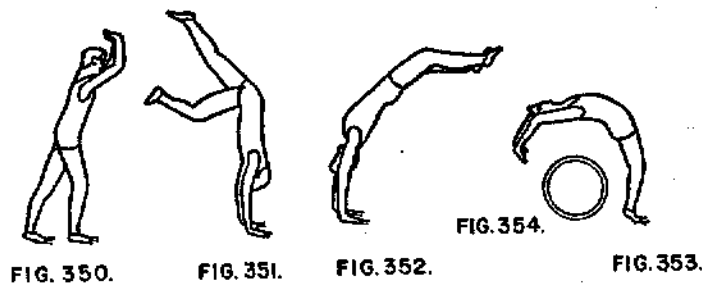
Jump up, as in Fig. 355, throw the arms and body backwards to land on the hands as in Fig. 356. When a falling sensation is felt, in position Fig. 357, give a spring from the hands to land on the feet as in Fig. 358. When working alone, a coiled mattress may be placed, as in Fig. 359, until one gets the knack of landing on the hands. The easy way is to bend in the crab position and pitch over backward onto the feet. To learn this way, place a chair and board against a wall, as in Fig. 363, lie on the board, raise up in the crab position, shift the weight onto the hands and turn over. Keep coming down the board to do it on the floor. Turning the back handspring by bending to land in the split always goes over well. Do the back handspring on one hand.

HALF WALK-OVER

Do the handstand with the legs well separated, as in Fig. 364, and pitch on one foot first. A series of these may be done to travel across the stage or move forward very little.

FULL WALK-OVER

If one has mastered the cartwheel this is just a cartwheel turned straight forward or back, as in Fig. 365, to travel across the floor or stay in one place.



THE SNAP-UP

Roll to a balance on the head and hands, as in Fig. 366. Give a quick whip with the legs, and when the body begins to fall, as in Fig. 367, give a hard push with the head and hands to land on the feet in the position of Fig. 368. At first it will be hard to get far enough over to stay on the feet.

THE HEAD SNAP-UP

Roll to a balance on the head and shoulders, as in Fig. 369. Give a quick whip with the legs and, when the body starts to fall, as in Fig. 370, give a hard push with the head to land on the feet as in Fig. 371. For a long time the landing will be more like Fig. 368 than this ideal one.

ROCKING THE CRADLE

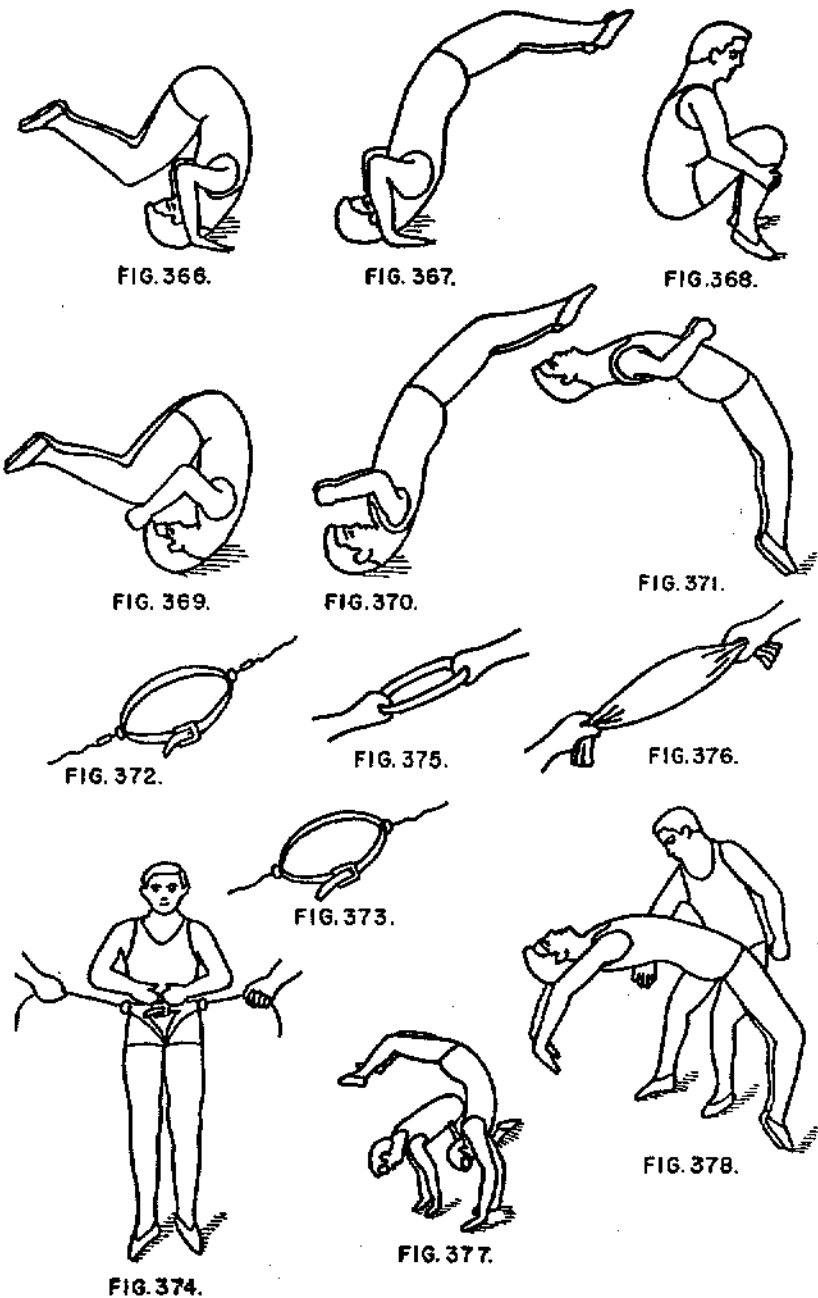
Do the snap up and, when landing on the feet, as in Fig. 368, spring back to the position of Fig. 366 and repeat back and forth.

THE HAND LUNGE

As some get a shaking up learning these tricks, some safety measures will be discussed. The lunge is a belt with lines on each side, as in Fig. 372, for helpers. Some supply houses stock them. If it is just for one, sash cord can be tied to each side of a strong belt and the lines kept from slipping with electrician's tape, as in Fig. 373. If it is to be used much, especially for aerial work, it should have crotch straps as in Fig. 374, then the assistants cannot pull it up on the short ribs. With this and two assistants, a student can try anything safely.

AIDS

Two assistants can hold a strong belt, as in Fig. 375, or a bath towel, as in Fig. 376, and let the student turn over it. One can get down on his hands and knees and the student can turn over him, as in Fig. 377. Another good way is for the catcher to stand, as in Fig. 378, to keep the student from falling on his head. If the student is heavy, there may be a catcher on each side. Whatever is used, it should not be enough to make the student always want it. Leaning on someone or other help are hard habits to break.



PULLEY-TYPE LUNGE

Take three good-sized pulleys, A, B & C, fasten them to the ceiling and string them with sash cord, as shown in Fig. 379. D is an adjustable weight to be lightened as progress is made. It may be lowered to rest on the floor, so it will be of no help until the student is dangerously close to the floor. E is a small weight, just enough to keep the lines from sagging when the weight, D, is on the floor. This type can be placed in a hallway when there is a limited floor space available. The author used this type. If the space for the weight, D, to travel is limited, the rigging can be as at F, which cuts travel in half.

Fig. 381 shows a lunge with ropes going off at the side. Fig. 380 shows a bridling for the lines so there will be no slipping. Either type can be used, with a weight or an assistant.

BACK SOMERSAULT

Get into one of the lunges, as in Fig. 379 or 381, and stand, as in Fig. 382. Jump up high, catch the legs with the hands and start turning, as in Fig. 383. Hold the legs and keep turning, as in Fig. 384, to land on the feet, as in Fig. 385. In the lunge one will come down in his own tracks instead of traveling, as shown in the drawings. In practice one may come down in his own tracks or travel some, either forward or backward as desired.

FORWARD SOMERSAULT

The forward somersault is just the reverse of the back one. It may be learned in the lunge or at a swimming pool.

Start as in Fig. 386, jump up and turn, as in Fig. 387, to land, as in Fig. 388. When doing the forward somersault at a pool, run a few steps, land on both feet, as in Fig. 386, and take off to turn, as in Fig. 387, to land feet first in the water as in Fig. 388. Soon it will not be necessary to touch the legs with the hands.

In a straight contortion act somersaults are not used, but in a troupe anything goes. The lunge will be good in chair balancing.

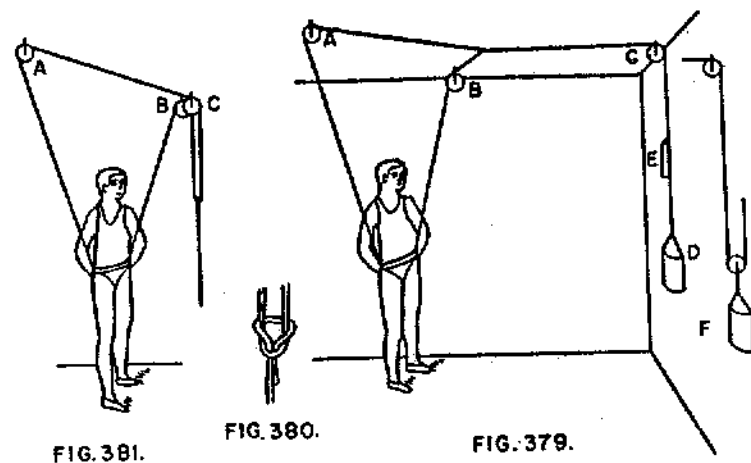


FIG. 381.

FIG. 380.

FIG. 379.



FIG. 384.



FIG. 383.



FIG. 385.



FIG. 382.



FIG. 387.

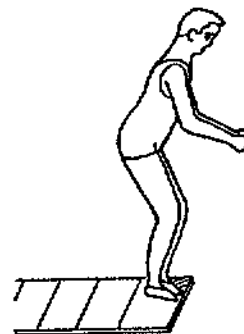


FIG. 386.



FIG. 388.

ARM TWISTING

Reach one arm up the back, the other over the shoulder, clasp the hands and pull down, as in Fig. 389. Reach one hand up the back to catch hold of the ear, as in Fig. 390. Reach one arm back of the head while the other helps pull it to reach around the throat as far as possible, as in Fig. 391. Reach one arm back and bring the hand around to reach the belt buckle, as in Fig. 392. Hold the hands together in front and swing the arms level to slap the hands together at the back, as in Fig. 393.

ESCAPES

Take a stout piece of cord, make a loop about two inches long, hook it on the second fingers of each hand and twist it tight, as in Fig. 394. Pass the right elbow over the left forearm, as in Fig. 395, and carry the right arm over the head and down in front of the face, as in Fig. 396; then pause, as in Fig. 397, for the audience to appreciate it. Raise the left arm over the head, as in Fig. 398, then down in front of the face; fold the hand flat upon the wrist while the right passes over the left elbow as in Fig. 399. Carry the right hand down behind the shoulder to the position of Fig. 400 so that the left hand passes behind the body. Let the left hand be raised so that the right arm can be turned, as in Fig. 401. Pass the hands down to the side, as in Fig. 402, so as to pass the left hand under the right elbow to a free position, Fig. 403, and turn the back to the audience so that it can be seen that the hands are free. Commence passing the hands in reverse, as in Fig. 404, and turn around slowly to face the audience when the hands come back on the head, as in Fig. 405. Hold the hands, as in Fig. 394, so the audience can see that the cord is still intact. Playing with the audience is as much as the trick. Keep the audience with you. Commence with, for example, a six-inch loop and gradually shorten it as progress is made in getting by the tight places.

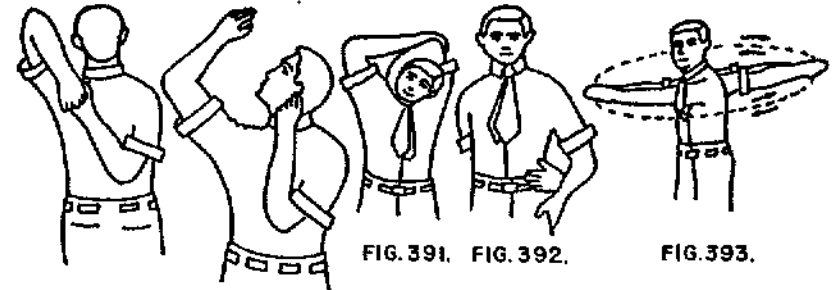


FIG. 389.

FIG. 390.

FIG. 391. FIG. 392.

FIG. 393.



FIG. 394.



FIG. 395.



FIG. 396.



FIG. 397.



FIG. 398.



FIG. 399.



FIG. 400.



FIG. 401.



FIG. 402.



FIG. 403.



FIG. 404.



FIG. 405.

CHAIR TRICKS

Use a very strong chair. Stand back of it, and tip forward over the top, as in Fig. 406. One should locate himself so he can stretch out his arms and balance, as in Fig. 407. From this position bend the legs and roll the body, as in Fig. 408, to slide down to the position of Fig. 409. Slip off the chair onto the head and hands to finish with a back roll, Fig. 410. From the position of Fig. 406, bend the arms, letting the chest down on the seat of the chair for a balance, as in Fig. 411. With a little spring, jump off the chair to a handstand, Fig. 412, and walk away or turn a handspring to the feet. If there is trouble in jumping off the chair get one low enough so that the hands will reach the floor as A, Fig. 411. From position Fig. 411, arch the body and try to pat the head with the feet, as in Fig. 413. The chair for this trick must have a really wide set of legs so it will not tip forward. Set the chair against a wall so it will not slide and tip, as in Fig. 414, to the feet on the floor. In time, rubber tips on the chair legs will be enough to keep the chair from sliding.

Sit on a strong chair about twenty inches from a table and tip back to a balance on its rear legs, as in Fig. 415. Should one start to tip over backwards, his feet coming up under the table will catch him. It is not a difficult trick to learn but it does take a lot of practice before one can be sure of himself. The author finds doing the same balance on a trapeze bar preferable and much easier.

After one masters balancing, as in Fig. 415, the chair may be set on blocks or bottles, making the trick more spectacular. This is another one that can be practiced in a hotel room anywhere. Besides, it is a nice one to do on a moment's notice in street clothes, without taking the press out of them.

Balancing always has a strong appeal. Master it in as many places as possible.

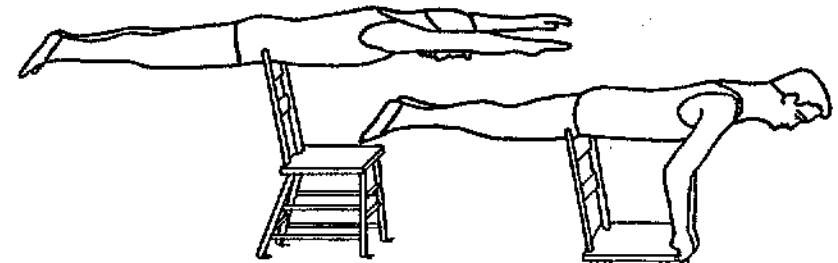


FIG. 407.

FIG. 406.

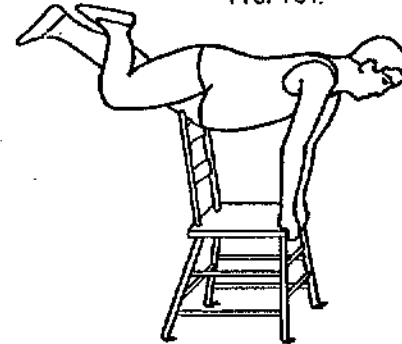


FIG. 408.

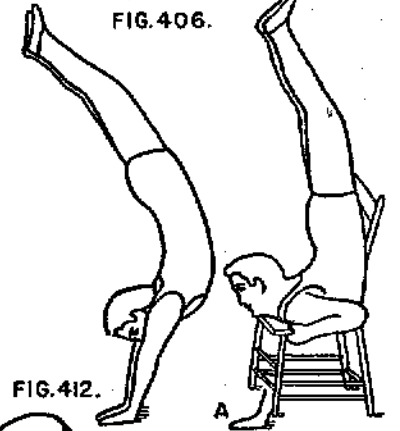


FIG. 411.

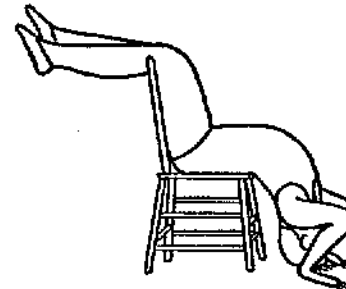


FIG. 409.

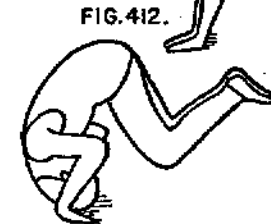


FIG. 410.

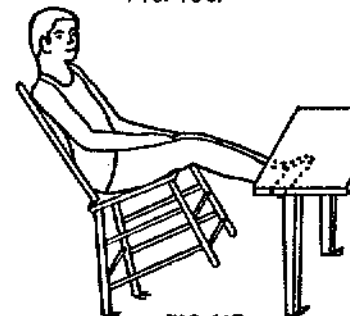


FIG. 415.

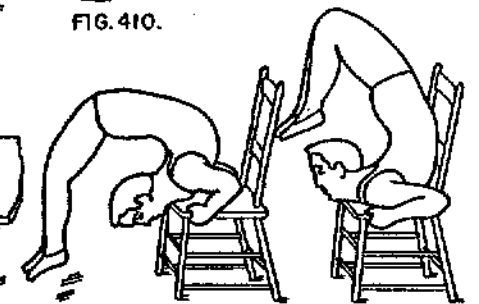


FIG. 414.

FIG. 413..

CHAIR BALANCING

Get a strong chair. Stand beside it, grasp the seat with one hand and the back with the other, as in Fig. 416. Drop the body forward and throw the feet up to a balance, as in Fig. 419. When steady, raise the body up to a stand, as in Fig. 420. Sit on the chair crossways, as in Fig. 418, lift the body on the hands and swing up to a balance, as in Figs. 419 and 420. Turn half around on the chair as in Fig. 417. Grasp the seat between the legs with one hand and the back with the other and swing to a balance, as in Figs. 419 and 420. In all of these exercises, practice until going up and down is easy and can be done with no apparent effort. This calls for a well-developed set of arms and shoulders along with a good sense of balance.

Put two pads on a chair back, as at A, Fig. 421, to keep the chair far enough away from the wall to clear the knuckles. Lean it against the wall, as in Fig. 421, and strike a balance as shown. When the balance is fairly steady, shift the weight so as to balance, as in Fig. 422. Here is a balance where one should have help. If the lunge shown in Fig. 379 is available, use it. Try it first with weights sufficient to let one get the position of Fig. 420 easily, and finally let the weight rest on the floor to catch one only in case of a spill.

CHAIR CONSTRUCTION

Chairs for balancing take a lot of abuse that will soon loosen the glue joints of commercial furniture. If this kind is used, have the joints reinforced before starting on the road. A chair made specially to suit is generally more satisfactory. Fig. 423 shows the way the author had his made and Fig. 424 shows how it would fold for crating. As it was used in three positions on a trapeze bar as well as on the floor, it was dimensioned to fit his build. Flattened tubing at the ends makes swing joints and a bolt with thumb nuts on the diagonal brace makes a solid job. As it is an odd chair, no one else wants to use or borrow it.

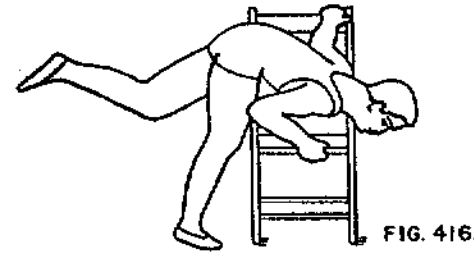


FIG. 416.

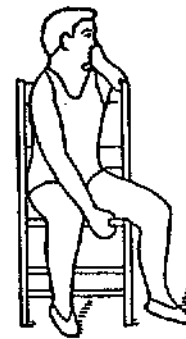


FIG. 417.

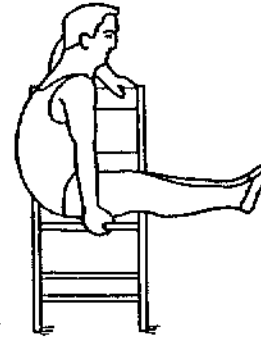


FIG. 418.



FIG. 419.

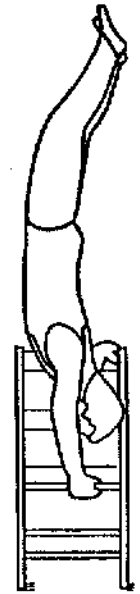


FIG. 420.



FIG. 422.

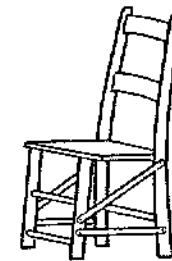


FIG. 423.

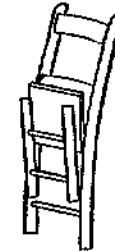


FIG. 424.

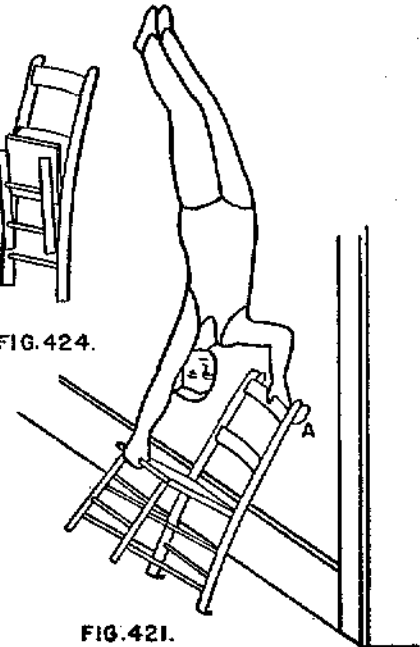


FIG. 421.

STUNTS (I)

The following is a group of special stage tricks that contortionists use in public performances. Nearly all are done by the acrobatic students in dancing-school recitals. They have been seen so often on the stage and in circuses that no attempt will be made to give names or dates.

The position of Fig. 425 is kicking the back of the head, done either working straight or in a dance number. The position of Fig. 426 is attained by lying face down on the floor, raising the arms, tipping the head back, spreading the knees and bringing the head and feet together. The position of Fig. 427 is generally performed on some sort of a pedestal as a feature. The position of Fig. 428 is achieved by lying face down and bending the knee enough to catch the foot with the hands to pull it over the head, as shown. The position of Fig. 429 may be obtained by bending over backwards to the crab position, then walking the hands towards the feet and lowering the chin and chest to the floor, or by lying face down on the floor and doing a rocker roll of the feet over the head to the floor.

One can do the position of Fig. 430 by bending the crab position, walking the hands towards the feet, resting the forearms on the floor and sticking one leg straight up. You can usually negotiate the position of Fig. 431 by bending the crab position and walking the hands to grasp the ankles before waddling about the room. Bending the crab position, walking the hands up close to the feet, and sticking one leg straight up will result in the position of Fig. 432.

The forward chest roll (Fig. 433) is done by bending the crab position, walking the hands up to grasp the ankles, rolling forward on the knees, then the stomach (as in Fig. 434), and then on over to the starting position (Fig. 433). Turn the head a little sideways to protect the nose so that it will not get bumped. The author speaks from experience. The feet may also be caught, as in Fig. 434, but the face is more exposed. A series of rolls across the stage generally makes a hit. Master it.

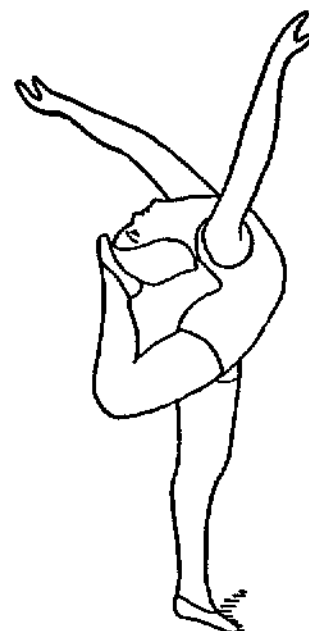


FIG. 425.



FIG. 426.

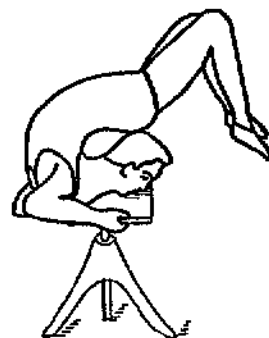


FIG. 427.



FIG. 428.



FIG. 429.



FIG. 430.



FIG. 431.



FIG. 432.



FIG. 433.



FIG. 434.

STUNTS (II)

One works up to the position of Fig. 435 from a handstand and then lowers the body to this pose, holding it until the audience responds. Done on a pedestal or table it makes a good feature. The position of Fig. 436 is arrived at from lying on the floor, raising one leg, supporting it with the other foot and catching the foot with the hand. The position of Fig. 437 is reached from a chair balance, either on a chair (as Fig. 413), on the floor or on a table. The audience generally applauds this one quickly. One can get to the position of Fig. 438 from a forearm stand or by bending the crab position and lowering the forearms to the floor. The position of Fig. 439 can be obtained from Fig. 434 by working the hands along the legs. It is usually not appreciated by the average audience.

The position of Fig. 440 is largely a balancing trick which does not require much suppleness. It shows off a good figure and does very well as a filler. The position of Fig. 441 can be accomplished by back kicking, as in Fig. 424, catching the foot and pulling it high as possible. It is another stunt that must be held if the audience is to get it. Ballet shoes (Fig. 345) or padded shoes, as in Fig. 347, are the best aids for the position of Fig. 442. It is a good one for acrobatic dancers. If it is done with some prancing, the audience gets it quickly. The position of Fig. 443 is a form of the split. It is a good little trick that the audience will enjoy quicker if the foot is swung to pat the head.

If the preceding exercises have been well mastered, many of these stunts will come quite easily. Your ability and the rest of the act will tell how, when and where these stunts will play the strongest part. A well-thought-out act has the best chances of going over.

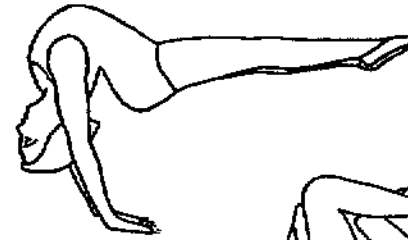


FIG. 435.



FIG. 437.

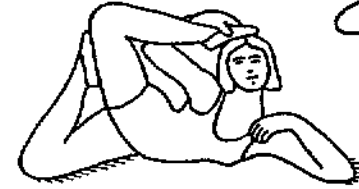


FIG. 436.



FIG. 438.

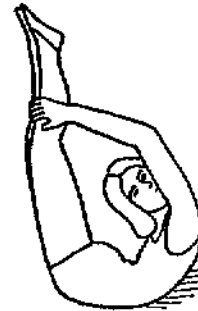


FIG. 439.

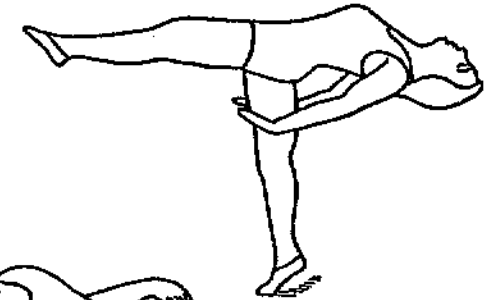


FIG. 440.



FIG. 441.



FIG. 442.

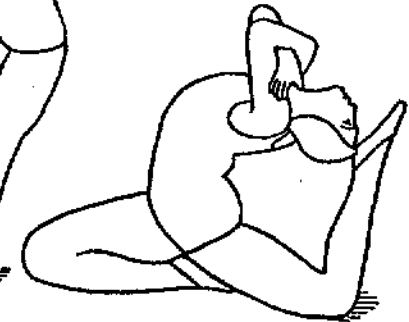


FIG. 443.

STUNTS (III)

To demonstrate the position of Fig. 444, start on one knee, slide the other leg forward and then bend backwards to a studied pose. The position of Fig. 445 emanates from a forearm stand. Patting the head with the feet and reaching around the throat with the toes always gets good response. The position of Fig. 446 is put over by lying on the floor face up and swinging one leg up to be caught with the hand and pulled down to the floor. The author used this on slack wire. Kneeling on the floor and then bending backwards account for the position of Fig. 447. This is a very good trick, but the audience will pass it up unless it is featured. One executes the position of Fig. 448 by lying face down on the floor, raising the feet to be caught with the hands and then rocking on the abdomen. It is a good clown trick.

The position of Fig. 449 is begun from a balance on the hands and chin and then the body is let down to sit on the head. It may also be had by bending the crab position, walking the hands towards the feet, and lowering the body down as shown. As the stunt is performed flat upon the floor, the audience is inclined not to appreciate it unless it is featured or announced. The position of Fig. 450 can be initiated from a balance on the hands and chin. Then sit on the head and slide the arms out flat upon the floor. Because the legs are upright, the audience will get this trick immediately. Start with a handstand for the position of Fig. 451 and then kink the figure, as shown. With plenty of bending, this makes a good trick.

The position of Fig. 452 is sometimes known as the Martinelli Bend from the name of the man who introduced it. The first professional contortionist the author saw was doing this trick. He bent the crab position, backed up, caught the mouthpiece with his teeth, struck a balance, and then, with his hands on the base, revolved himself. That was more than sixty years ago, but the trick is still being done today. The position of Fig. 453 is done from a hand stand. It is showy and takes well. If the audience does not respond, move around a little.

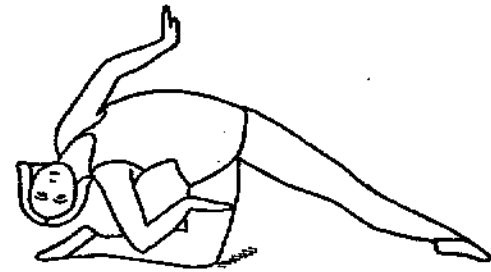


FIG. 444.

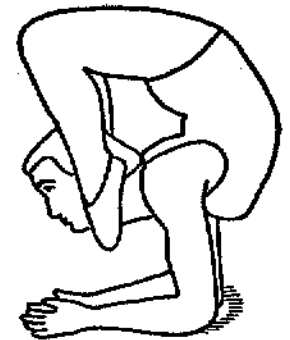


FIG. 445.



FIG. 446.

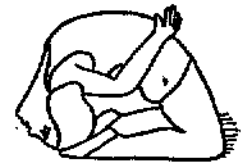


FIG. 447.



FIG. 448.



FIG. 449.

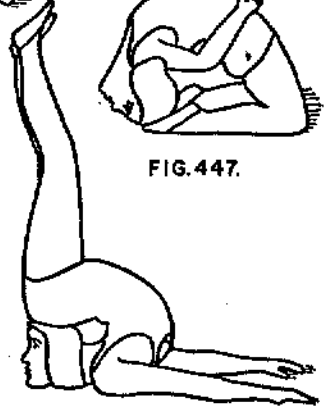


FIG. 450.



FIG. 451.

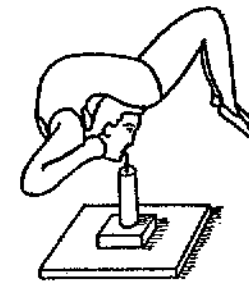


FIG. 452.

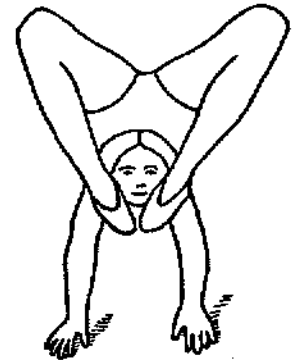


FIG. 453.

PART III

Exhibiting on the Stage

NOTE SKETCHING

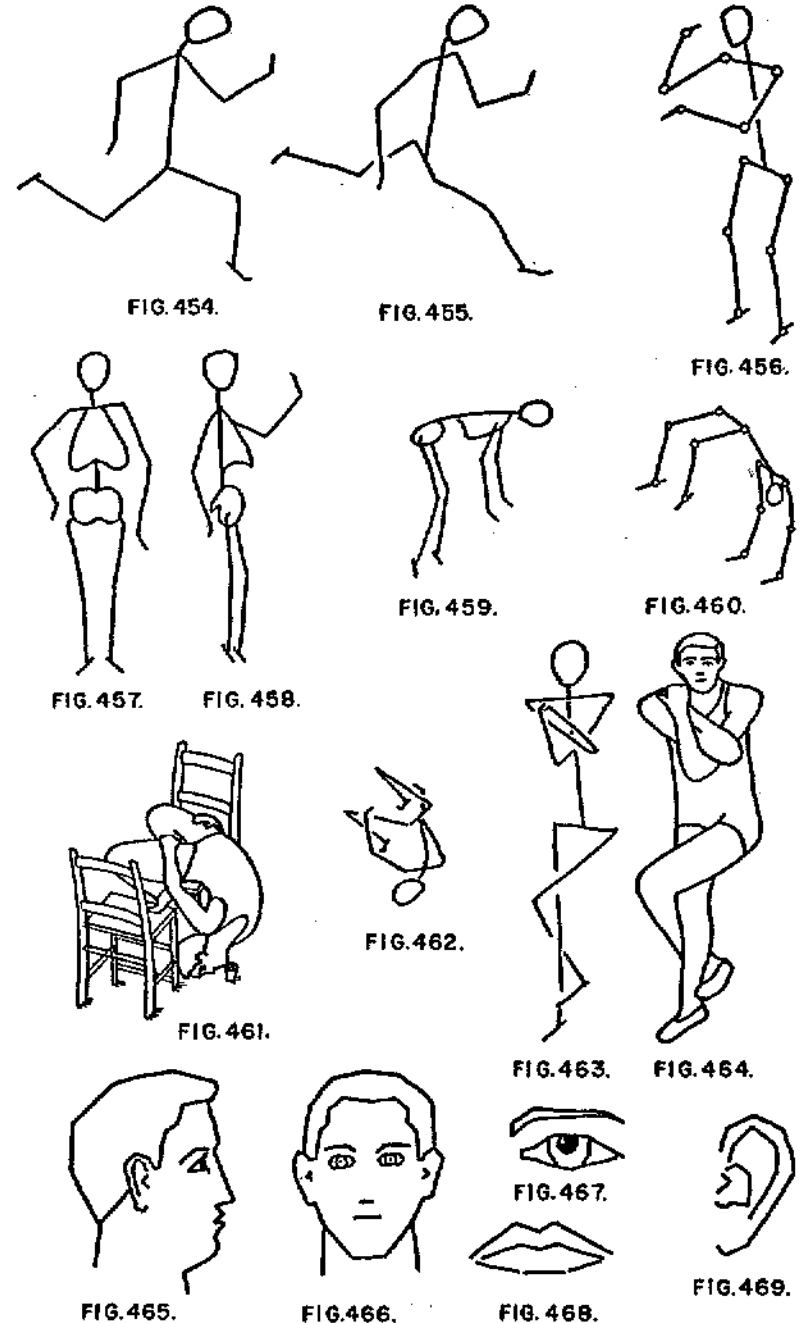
Those intending to follow contortion work professionally should start keeping notes of what they see, hear and think at an early date. The author found quick line sketches made a record that could be drawn with as much detail as desired at a later date. These are often called matchstick drawings. They are not beautiful, but they do tell the story and enable one to get proportion. Figure 454 is one of the simplest forms of drawing. It shows action and what the figure is doing. More pictorial is Fig. 455, suggesting the third dimension and showing which arm and leg are leading. In Fig. 456 small circles mark the working joints; and the sketch of a handspring would look like Fig. 460. Sometimes one can get better results by drawing areas for the head, rib cage and pelvis, as in Fig. 457, or the side view of Fig. 458. A figure in action would then be sketched, as in Fig. 459.

One may see an artist standing on two chairs, bending over backwards to pick up a glass of water with his teeth. This is quite a common trick and is shown in Fig. 461. A line memo of this would look like Fig. 462 and could be made while in the audience or waiting backstage and be expanded to Fig. 461 at any convenient time. By studying these, one would see if they would suggest anything suitable for his future use.

Again, if one wishes to create a new combination, such as Fig. 80 with Fig. 395, the matchstick drawing would look like Fig. 463 and the finished drawing like Fig. 464, which would give one a good idea of its worth before spending a lot of time perfecting it for presentation. Always think your act out well.

Figs. 465, 466, 467, 468 and 469 are all drawn with straight lines to show what they can suggest.

Use everything you see, hear or read to stir your imagination into creating new tricks and new ways of presentation. These will individualize you and your act into a class by themselves and you will never say, "If I had only thought, I could have done that in my act."



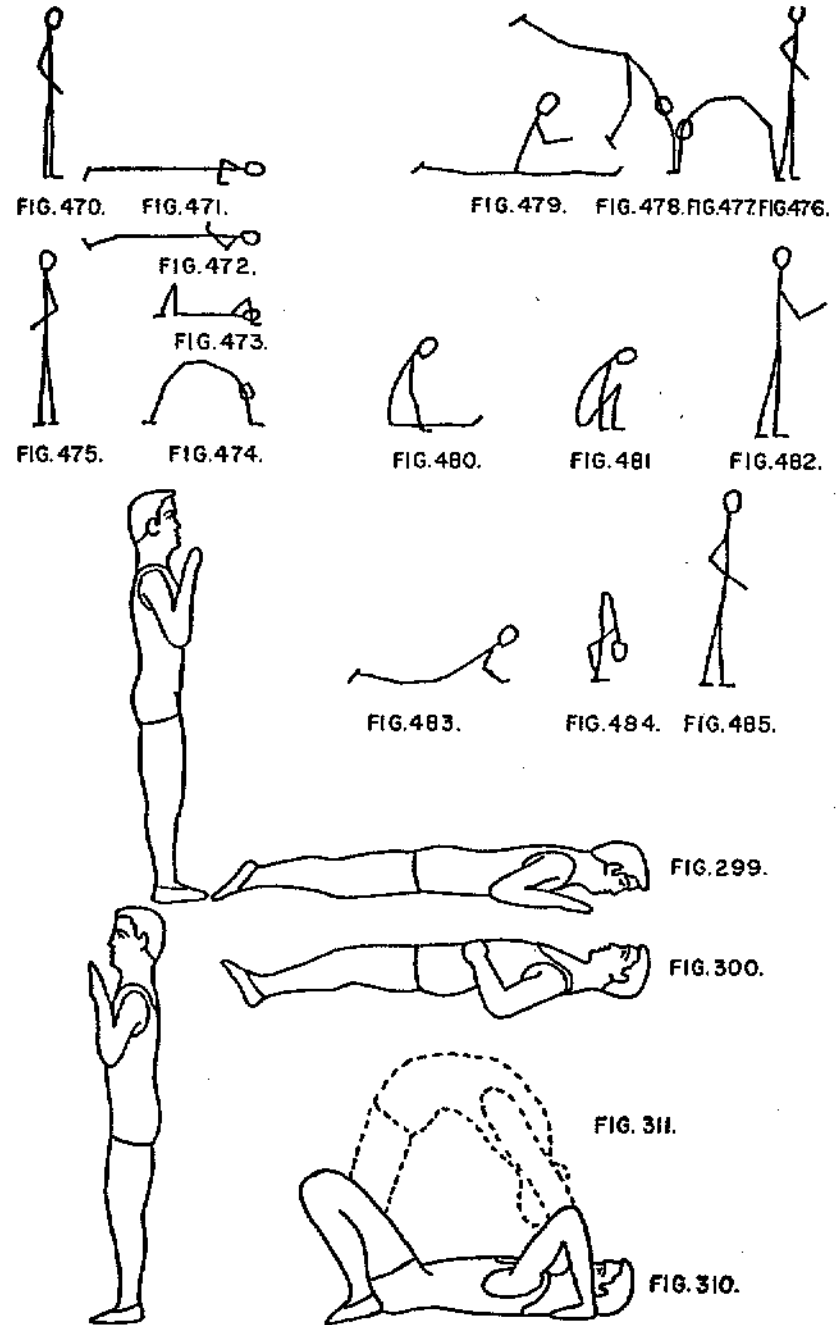
LAYING OUT TRICKS (I)

Laying out tricks is an art and science—an art to please the audience and manager, a science to organize your ability and talent so that your best will show and your shortcomings will be hidden.

Lay out each trick as a complete sentence, from capital letter to period. As you think through the movements, jot them down with matchstick drawings until you are satisfied with them. Now, for some actual examples. Fig. 470 is the standing start. Fig. 471, the forward fall; Fig. 472, the fish flop; Figs. 473 and 474, the crab to a stand; Fig. 475, the opposite of the starting position (Fig. 470). Go back in the text with a piece of thin or onion skin paper and, with a well-sharpened pencil, trace the figures corresponding to the matchstick drawings. The two standing and two lying figures were traced from the fish flop drawings (Figs. 299 and 300) and the crab from Figs. 310 and 311 of the text. From these tracings you know what the audience will see in your act.

Fig. 476 is the standing start; Fig. 477, the crab; Fig. 478, the back handspring; to finish in the split, Fig. 479. Pause for the audience to respond. As the split is an awkward position for a finish, swing the back leg forward to Fig. 480, sit up to Fig. 481, and stand in the starting direction (Fig. 482) or swing the forward leg back to Fig. 483. Jackknife to Fig. 484 to stand, as in Fig. 485.

Many times the figures in the text will not be facing right for your layout. In this case, trace them as they are, then turn the paper over and black them down, and they will be reversed. All the text figures were drawn heavily for just such tracing. At first this may seem just extra work, but remember your act is not going to be better than the picture you have of it. Clear thinking will make a perfect picture and practice a perfect act. Know all that has been done, then plan new or novel tricks with surprise effects. Originality is the path to stardom. Use your head for thinking as well as something to stand on in your career.



LAYING OUT TRICKS (II)

Fig. 486 is a standing start; Fig. 487, forward fall; Fig. 488, sea-lion crawl, if it produces the laughter desired, spring to a squat. (Fig. 489), jackknife as in Fig. 490, to come to a standing position, Fig. 491. If one wants to get onto his feet quicker, omit Fig. 490. Figure 492 is a standing start; Fig. 493, forward fall; Fig. 494, sea-lion crawl. If the laughter is meager, do a forward roll, Figs. 495 and 496, to a standing position, Fig. 497. Figure 498 is a standing start; Fig. 499, forward fall; Fig. 500, sea-lion crawl. If there is no laughter, and applause is wanted, start a forward roll, Fig. 511; a snap up to Fig. 502 and rock the cradle, Fig. 503, will nearly always bring down the house if done several times rapidly. Then snap to a standing position (Fig. 504). There are times and places where only a ripple of laughter is desired and others where a good hand is needed. By having this all thought out, one can better play to the taste of the audience.

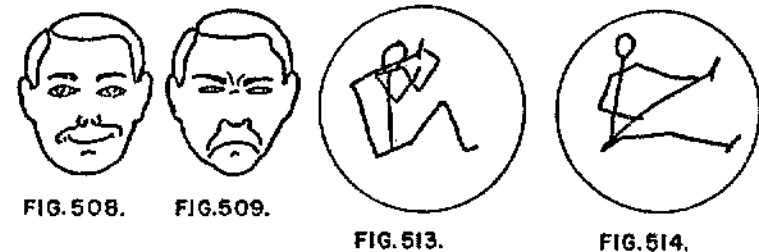
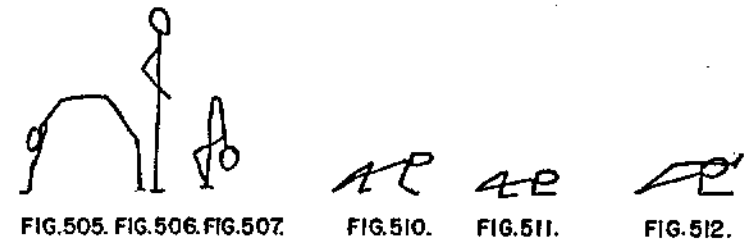
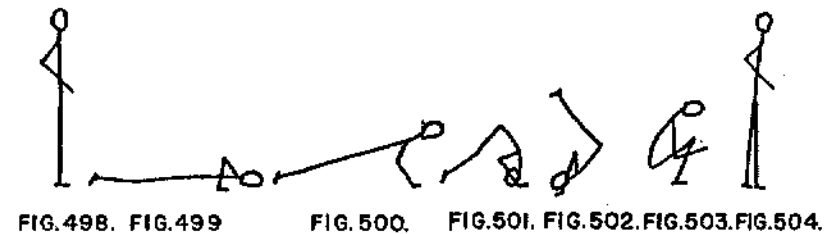
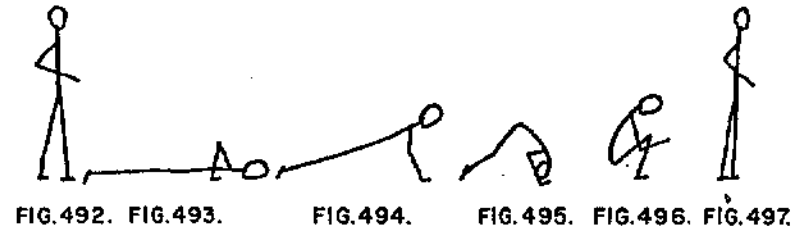
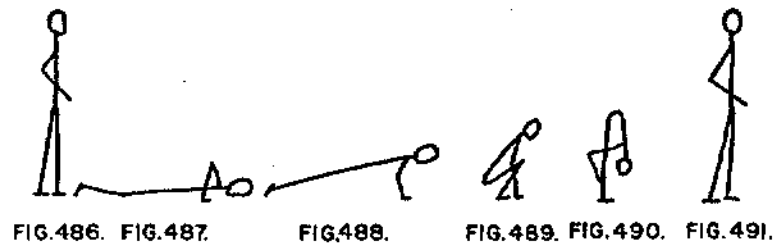
Fig. 506 is a standing start; bend the crab position, Fig. 505; swing up standing, then jackknife to Fig. 507 without any jerks. Repeat a few times and the audience will applaud.

On television, close-ups can be caught any time, so faces like in Figs. 508 and 509 can be used especially where there are many children.

Run your face for all it is worth.

Forward benders and frog impersonators start many tricks from a squat, as in Fig. 510, and drop their forearms on the floor, Fig. 511, where they pretend to be feeding or scratching the ear, as in Fig. 512. A pose with the leg over the back of the neck, as in Fig. 513, can be made more attractive with a front spotlight for which the operator should be given the color, size and cue.

Pose Fig. 514, with the leg used as a banjo, can be helped with a spotlight. As the ankle is fingered and the thigh strummed, croaking a few measures of such a song as "Old Man River" adds novelty. The orchestra or any instrument will play with you, if you give them the musical setting.



ARRANGING AN ACT

If all you do is laid out as in the preceding pages, you have a complete inventory of your stock of tricks. From these you must arrange an act suitable for a stage presentation. The modern short story offers a good parallel for doing this. A short story begins with an attractive and interesting opening. Then it proceeds with narration and description to carry the reader along and have him ripe for the climax. An act should have an interesting opening that will get the audience's full attention. Some use a snappy musical number for a fast curtain raiser, others come on a set stage, still others have the curtain open on a pose of the cast.

The author found that for him it was best to come on the stage with a bang, doing some trick and, as that finished, bow to the audience. The speed carried an amount of surprise that usually brought a good welcoming hand and a good reception for the whole act. If you do not get the audience with you, it is tough all along. A cold audience is worse than working to empty seats. Empty seats can only give an inanimate stare such as a rehearsal atmosphere, but a cold audience gives an atmosphere as chilling as an icicle down your back. Give your opening plenty of attention. Then keep moving along, entertaining and preparing the audience for the climax of a feature trick.

With a complete layout of tricks as in the preceding pages, you will have the beginning and finishing positions of each so that you can see what is necessary to join them together. Here is the place to decide whether or not to use comedy, where and how much. Like pepper, comedy in right amounts adds flavor. Also decide here where you want a little ripple of laughter or a good hand, but, by all means work for a good applause at the feature. If the audience likes the act and it fills the house, the manager will hold it over or give it a return engagement. Plan to please the audience till it will applaud. Think and plan now for your acting later on the stage.

PRESENTATION

It is one thing to have a good act and quite another to put it over so that the public will like it. For instance, on one circuit was a musician with a set of chimes weighing half a ton, playing light opera artistically, and another musician with a handsaw and zoot-suit playing Hit Parade stuff. Each was an artist in his num-

ber but the first was stiff and never got his audience. The latter was a mixer, a jolly good fellow on and off stage, and the audience was with him from the start. Fortunate is the one who has ability to command attention but everyone can help himself by observation and practice. Fellow actors, musicians, managers and people from the audience will drop many suggestions, some of which you cannot use. But for one good one it is worth going through many.

In an audience there is usually one or more spectators who like your type of act and is in close harmony with you. These sympathetic people can be recognized almost at once by shielding the eyes, stepping forward to kill the glare of the footlights, and looking over the audience quickly. They follow the act closely and usually start the applause. When you have done a good trick and want recognition, look, or even nod, to one of these trigger people and he will start the house.

Books on selling often give good pointers to an actor. For in reality he is a salesman trying to sell his act the same as an automobile salesman is trying to sell a car to the whole family.

In the entertainment fields always expect the unexpected and be unruffled at the good or bad, for you are sure to get many surprises. One must always watch union restrictions closely so as not to get tangled and fined. One must know the unions of stagehands, teamsters, musicians, picture operators, actors, and hotel employees whom he will contact continually.

PREPAREDNESS

In the entertainment fields one must not only be able to entertain but also to obtain contracts until he becomes so popular that he can choose his booking. Before such time he will have to do many things of an advertising nature to get work. For that reason one should work over the several phases offered in the text. Knowledge and a good assortment of tricks never come amiss. Many times affairs like lodge banquets, Fourth of July celebrations, or homecomings are available if one can shape an act to suit. Again for publicity, the entire troupe puts on a show at some hospital, children's or old peoples' home and, as a member of the troupe, one must frame his part according to the time and place. Of course, children like plenty of action, color and noise and since adults are only children gone to seed, one can select a few tricks and get by with the rest.

It often pays to do the best one possibly can, because one never knows there there may be present a member of some entertainment committee, a manager or even a talent scout whose impression may mean a future contract. At a banquet, tricks with the hands or some funny faces, already described, fill in dull moments. For a quick call at a lodge or dance, one can spin a broom, do the manual of arms along with a few jokes and put on a good number. In small places, jumping over the hands or one foot, the elephant walk, shoulder dislocation, or leg lock can all be done in street clothes without disturbing them.

Many times when one is contacted for a circuit, there will be a clause stating what small time he can work. Between contracts it is better for one to do something rather than get rusty.

One should consult books that contain good ideas for advertising and promoting. These can be modified to suit the act. Also valuable are books on getting along with people or handling men, which touch on the psychology of human behavior with its likes and dislikes.

A street vendor is well worth watching. He comes out with a pocket full of fountain pens and no money. In a few minutes he leaves his audience with no fountain pens but plenty money. Information assimilated will be used unconsciously, as a hand; unassimilated, it is like a swagger stick, just showy.

PROPERTIES

If one uses anything special that is not usually found backstage, he should carry it as baggage. For instance, frog impersonators often work on a stump without ever coming to the floor. In such a case, the actor should carry a stump of a size to suit his tricks and colored to suit the act, for the ones backstage usually would not be the right size or color.

Stands, chairs, pedestals, or platforms should be fixed so that they will pack with the other baggage or have crates of their own. If special pieces are required they should be made by a stage carpenter, property man or someone acquainted with stagecraft. They will then meet stage regulations and go as theatrical baggage with transportation companies. There is an art to making backstage equipment so that it will stand up on the road, pack well and have hand holes, so that all the lighter pieces can be

picked up with one hand. All stage carpenters and property men know these things. Show them what you need in the act and they will take care of the building.

All pieces should be kept in good condition. Chairs, tables, or pedestals should be cared for like parlor furniture, with all plated work polished until it is spotless. When any of the joints start weakening, repair them or they will require new parts.

GROUND CLOTHES

Ground clothes are usually made from heavy canvas or duck, left plain dyed, or painted to go with the set. They cover a large amount of the stage and are kept for big acts or ones using much space. For most work they should be stretched and tacked around the edges to keep them from wrinkling or slipping. For many contortion acts, a rug 4 by 6 feet will suffice, or a runner 3½ by 15 feet for acts doing chest rolls, forward falls and rolls. Rugs or a carpet strip can be had with nap and color to suit. Something of this sort is needed to keep one's costume clean.

The stage setting gives the audience its first impression. Make it best possible. Watch when the stagehands strike your set to see that they fold the dirt side out or you will soon have a dull rug or runner and need some dry cleaning.

STAGE TERMS

A general knowledge of the stage is good for anyone. Fig. 515 is a plan and Fig. 516 a sectional view of the house and stage with parts as follows: A is the stage, going from the orchestra pit to the back wall, B the orchestra pit for the musicians, C the house, or the part for the audience, D the stage apron, F the footlights, E a strip of hard wood for dancing. The rest of the floor is soft wood for pegging scenery fast. G is an entrance, H a drop or full curtain (a leg drop is a drop with the center part removed), J the traveler, a curtain on a track that is pulled on and off stage, K a curtain going around three sides of the set called the "cyc" (cyclorama); L is the pin rail; M is the switchboard for house and stage lights, N the motion-picture booth, O the front light, P the concert strip, Q border lights numbered for apron back, R borders to keep the audience from seeing the light, S temporary light, T proscenium strips and U the substage.

STAGE DEPARTMENTS

The stage crew is union-regulated in this order:

The carpenter builds and repairs the scenery, brings in and hangs the show, puts up sets and carries out the show. He is the head man.

The flyman stays on the pin rail, brings in and flies the drop on signal.

The property man receives all baggage, places it in dressing rooms, has charge of furniture, passes out and collects items such as canes, flags, swords, or spears.

The electrician works the switchboard, controlling the house, orchestra and stage lights, special lighting and scenic effects. As the show is hung, he arranges his lighting as much as possible. Each act may tell him the brightness and color of lights desired and cues for changes, or all this may be set in a light or dress rehearsal.

When a motion picture is to be run, there is a picture operator in the booth. He handles the picture and slide machine and spotlights in the picture booth. He co-operates with the stage electrician. Many spotlights and special effects require an operator who is an assistant to the electrician. Some crews are very co-operative; other times, each department is very sharply defined.

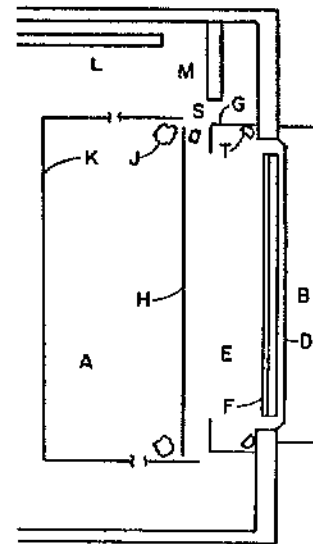


FIG. 515.

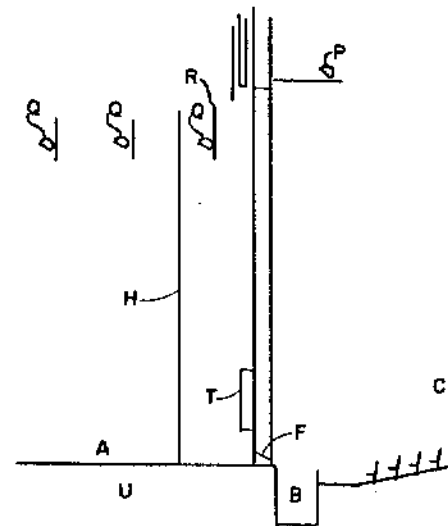


FIG. 516.

STAGE LIGHTING

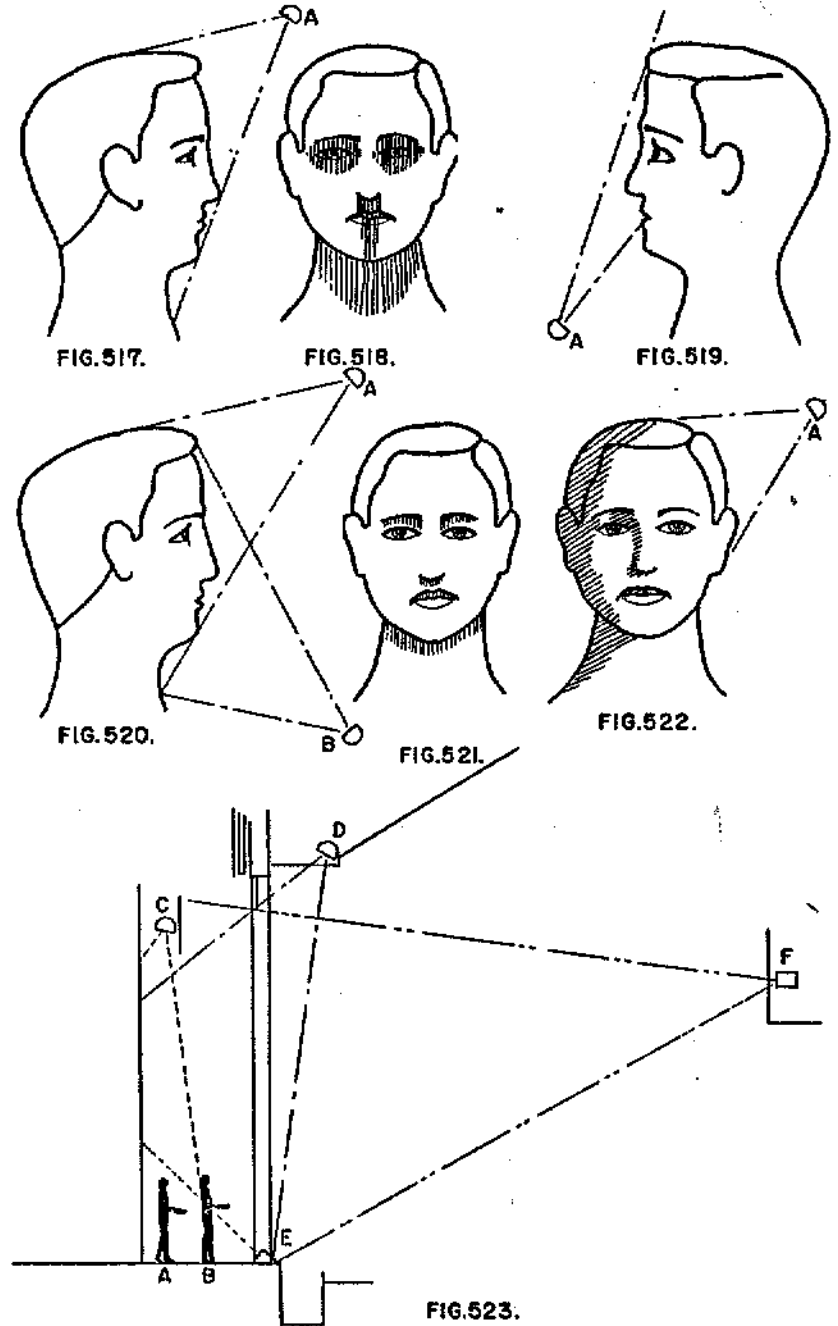
Stage lighting is so important that everyone should have a general knowledge of it.

In Fig. 517, the light, A, is above the head and the lines show where the rays strike and cast shadows from the fixtures. Fig. 518 is a front view of Fig. 517, showing how the eyebrows cast shadows obscuring the eyes to the audience, the nose casting a shadow down to the tip of the chin, the chin a heavy shadow on the neck. Fig. 519 shows the light, A, placed below. The face is well lighted but the highlights and shadows are reversed from normal and it is unsatisfactory. Fig. 520 shows light, A, above and light, B, below the head, sending their rays to light the features. With the lights on dimmer, the intensity can be varied so as to soften and control the shadows, as in Fig. 521. Adjusting these two, the highlights and shadows can be satisfactorily controlled. Fig. 522 shows a face with the light at one side, which is often very satisfactory for some effects. Foot and overhead and front spots are standard equipment and are preferable.

Fig. 523 is a cross section of a stage showing border light, C, lighting backdrop and part of stage; concert strip light, D, lighting stage floor and back drop; spotlight, F, lighting the whole stage or narrowed down to just a head spot; footlights, E, lighting the stage floor and up the back drop.

This is standard equipment to be found in some form in most houses.

If an act is working at A, it gets some of all the lights but if it moves forward to B, the head and shoulders are out of the foot light. By stepping on the lighted stage an actor can tell how deep he must work. By looking at the shadows on the actor's features the electrician can determine his setting. The front light is necessary in some work, but it casts heavy shadows that limit its use. When one stands at B, border light, C, lights up his back and, when other lights are dimmed, the figure will be silhouetted to the audience. This is desirable when the figure is better than the face. Know what you need and ask for it.



COLOR MEDIUMS

There are a few things everyone should know about getting colors with a gelatine medium. Fig. 524 shows a medium holder which is made of folded sheet metal with a large hole in the center for the light. It is pinned together with split pins, shown at A. A sheet of the desired colored gelatine, Fig. 525, is slipped into the holder and pinned. Many times it is desirable to have one color for the face and a different one for the costume. Select the face color, as sheet Fig. 526, and a supplement, so that the two will be the costume color and clip out a piece, as in Fig. 527. Assembled, these cover a person, as in Fig. 528. Often the costume color can be selected and just a pinhole punched to cover the head, as seen in Fig. 529. Sometimes it is necessary to place several colors in a holder, as in Fig. 530. The laps must be narrowed enough not to cast shadows yet wide enough to be lightproof when heat curls the edges of the gelatine. The tag wire is bent, as shown at A, and placed as shown. When special shapes are required, such as in Fig. 531, it is best to have them in one slide and numbered the way they work. This will save the operator trouble. For rehearsals, cutouts of cardboard will do, but for the road metal is best. Fig. 532 is an iris. The lever at the side controls the circular opening in the center. A skillful operator can use it for sizing the spot and as a dimmer at the same time.

Fig. 533 is a color wheel usually carrying six spots which may be used singly or in sequence by rotating the wheel for effect.

Fig. 534 is a frame of openings in which color mediums with names are mounted. Some supply houses will give them to the theatres. Otherwise you can make one with the colors that you use. The electrician can usually get a shade quicker with sample than when you just say straw or pink. Besides, with a set of colors one can have what his face requires. In buying goods or arranging color schemes, he can also be sure what are the suitable color mediums.

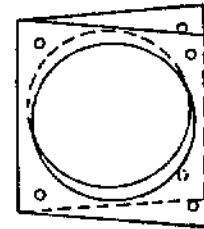


FIG. 524.

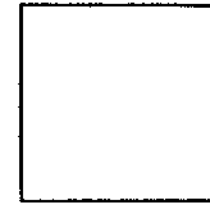


FIG. 525.



FIG. 526.

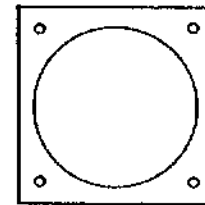


FIG. 529.

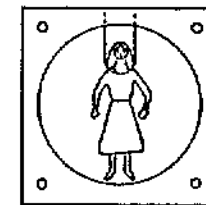


FIG. 528.

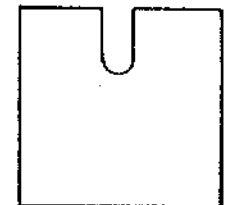


FIG. 527.

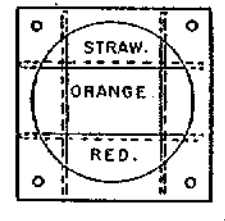


FIG. 530.

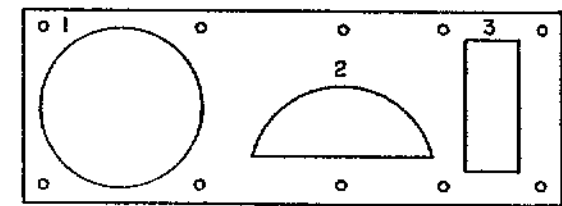


FIG. 531.

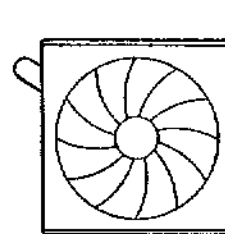


FIG. 532.

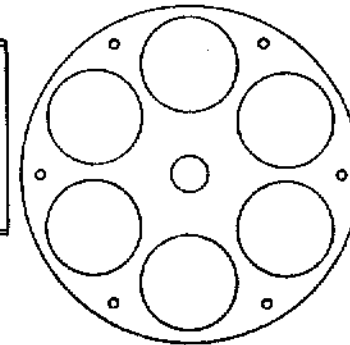


FIG. 533.

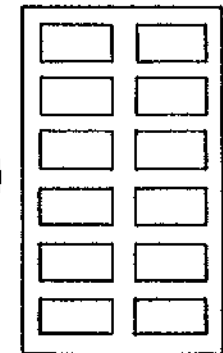
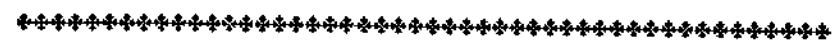


FIG. 534.



PART IV

Keeping Fit



CARRIAGE AND BREATHING

For those who do not care to do exhibition work but prefer exercises that can be done daily for health and vitality, the following work is suggested.

Everyone should carefully consider all that has been said on body carriage and take care never to assume or maintain a slouched or lax position while working or lounging. Breathing and body carriage are so related that one cannot breathe properly without a good position. Read the text as often as necessary to keep position and breathing constantly in mind until right habits are formed. Every day, breathe deeply, filling the lungs comfortably full from the bottom up. Reverse this in breathing out. Breathe slowly, using all the lungs.

EYES

All the exercises given in the text are good for old and young alike. Looking first into a bright light and then into darkness keeps pupils flexible. Judicious exercise of the muscles of the eyes will keep *them* young and flexible, the same as it does the other muscles of the body. When the eyes are tired from close work or reading, looking at the thumbs, as in Fig. 237, will ease the effects of the strain. The judicious practice of looking in all directions strengthens the muscles and increases one's range of seeing. Wide-angle vision is good to cultivate.

HANDS

As the hands cooperate closely with the eyes in all work, they need the exercises given in the text, especially the ones for the fingers. Supple fingers play a strong part in all the trades, crafts, writing and playing musical instruments. As the finger exercises in Figs. 169, 170, 171 & 172 can be done any time and any place, they should be done often, especially if there is a cramped feeling from holding them in one position over a long period.

BALANCING

Balancing is so important that it should be practiced at every chance and in all positions. The following are recommended: the tipping balance, Figs. 52 & 53; forehead stand, Figs. 47, 48, 49, 50 & 51; swing balance, Fig. 55; one-foot balance, Fig. 81; head stand, Fig. 157, and forearm stand, Fig. 158; handstand, Figs. 319, 320 & 321; chair tricks, Figs. 406, 407 & 415; and chair balancing, Figs. 416, 417, 418, 419 & 420. All of these are good for the arms and shoulders as well as balancing. Chair balancing, Fig. 420, is good for relaxing after eating or after becoming tired from reading.

SIDE BENDING

Bending sideways, as in Figs. 34 & 35, massages all the abdominal organs and helps keep the spine supple. Freeing the hips, as in Fig. 113, is an excellent morning exercise for all the internal organs as well as the hip joints.

STRETCHING AND TWISTING

Stretching and twisting, as in Figs. 36, 37, 38 & 40, pulls all the joints apart and lets them readjust themselves so that they do not become set and limited in their movement. Twisting is fine for all the internal organs, after one has been sitting at a desk, bending over a workbench, or a machine.

FORWARD BENDING

Bending forward, as in Figs. 28 & 29, frees the muscles in all the back part of the body and legs. The elephant walk, Figs. 45 & 46, puts one in the infant position of going on all fours before being able to stand upright. It shakes or stirs up the abdomen.

BACK BENDING

Bending backwards, as in Figs. 309 & 312, tends to correct the crooked position of sitting at a desk, working over a bench or just slouching, by stretching the muscles in the fore part of the body and legs. Fig. 312 is excellent for holding and balancing. Enough of these should be taken to correct the tendency of stooping.

SQUATS

All the squats are excellent exercises for the legs and balancing. The following are easy to do night and morning, toe squat, Figs. 12, 13 & 14, and one-foot squat, Fig. 79.

ROLLS

All the rolls are fine for the back. One should have a room twice as long as one's height for the best practice; however, he can still get good results with a smaller room. For general practice, do forward rolls, Figs. 60, 61, 62 & 63, and back rolls, Figs. 275, 276 & 277. All of these stress the back and neck.

FEET

While the feet are our natural transportation system, they are little understood and much abused. This abuse comes mostly from vanity. There is a great desire among women to cramp their feet into the smallest shoes possible, to make them look small and neat, at the expense of comfort.

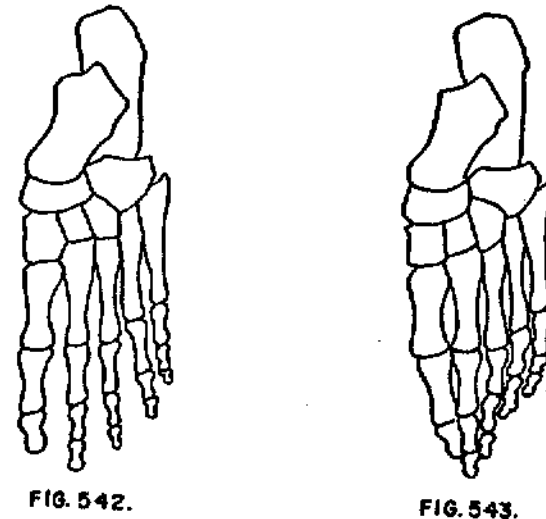
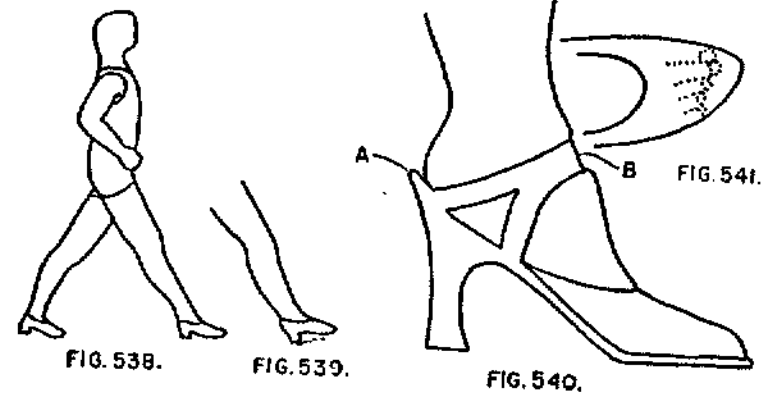
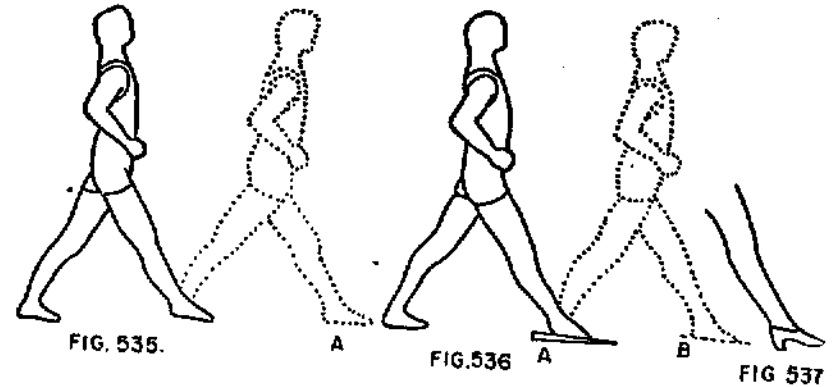
As an experiment, stride-stand, as in Fig. 535, and notice the position of the forward ankle. Then take a standard thirty-inch step forward, as at A, to see how the body swinging forward tends to make the foot slide forward. Set the foot on an incline, as at A, Fig. 536, or, better still, on a ramp, as at B, to see the foot's tendency to slide forward. An elevated heel, as in Fig. 537, produces this same condition. With the high heel, stride-stand, as in Fig. 538, and notice how much more the foot wants to slide forward here than in Fig. 536. The heel striking hard first, as in Fig. 539, jars the whole body, although the steps are short and the knee is bent.

Fig. 540 shows a shoe often seen with foot sliding forward until there is a big projection showing at A. Fig. 541 shows how the toes are pinched in such a shoe. This pinching stops circulation in the toes and kills the spring in the transverse arch.

Fig. 542 shows the natural disposition of the bones of the foot and Fig. 543 shows their condition when jammed as in Fig. 541. When shoes like Fig. 540 must be worn, straps like B on the vamp are so fitted that the blood will not be pinched out of the toes. No wonder the wearer will truthfully say, "My feet are just killing me." Hurting feet will make one miserable all over.

The exercise given for the feet will correct deformation, start blood circulating through the toes and restore the spring of the arches.

Proper selection of footgear for the work one is doing, along with judicious fitting, will make walking, running and jumping a pleasure. There is nothing better for resting and keeping the feet in shape than Indian moccasins. They should be worn as much as possible.



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