

XVIII

THE TUNED DECK

Give a trick all the advantages to be derived from well thought out and acted remarks which prepare, and almost convince beforehand, the mind of the spectator of the possibility of the magical results that follow and it is then true magic. This is the philosophy of magic. It must first be understood, then practiced. The greatest tricks ever performed are not done at all. The audience simply think they see them. But the art is to make them think so.

—J. N. H.

FOR many years Mr. Ralph Hull, the famous card wizard of Crooksville, Ohio, has completely bewildered not only the general public, but also amateur conjurers, card connoisseurs and professional magicians with the series of card feats which he is pleased to call "The Tuned Deck." So great has been the interest aroused by Mr. Hull's masterly performance of his card creation that he has finally consented to reveal its secrets in my book. I am proud to be able to present to my readers the correct and only explanation of the trick in Mr. Hull's own words.

Mr. Ralph Hull speaking . . .

This is my most cherished trick, THE TUNED DECK. For years I have performed this effect and have shown it to magicians and amateurs by the hundred and, to the very best of my knowledge, not one of them ever figured out the secret. At various times descriptions of the effects have appeared in magazines, and I have hundreds of letters from magic lovers in many lands desiring to purchase the secret.

I feel that I owe it to the members of the magical fraternity to pass the trick on, that they too, may derive some of the pleasure from it. No doubt I could have marketed this effect and brought in a few "hundred" for it but, after carefully considering the matter, I have decided to let my friend, Mr. John N. Hilliard, use the effect as a feature of his book, *Greater Magic*, thus placing it in a permanent form that will fall only into such hands as should have it.

The first admission that I desire to make is that nothing new is involved in the effect. The boys have all looked for something too

hard. As is usually the rule, the best tricks are the simplest. It is the *ROUTINE* and the combination of well known principles that will throw the spectator off his guard as he endeavours to solve the secret of this trick. It is unlike the average card trick in this respect—the more often it is performed, the more perplexing it becomes. It is for this reason that it is one of the best of all card tricks, because it defies detection. Each time it is performed, the routine is such that one or more ideas in the back of the spectator's head is exploded, and sooner or later he will invariably give up any further attempt to solve the mystery.

The exact method of performing the trick will depend upon whether you are using your own deck, or the deck of a spectator. It is this possible variation that helps to keep your spectators off the track. Sometimes they see you do it with your own deck, at other times with a borrowed deck and, naturally, they come to the conclusion that the cards have nothing to do with it. On several occasions I have had a spectator throw out a new, unopened deck and I have taken it, opened the case and proceeded to do the trick in the usual way. But back of all this remains the fact that the trick can really be performed a little better, and more easily, with your own cards.

THE KEY CARD

Of course a key card is used. If reason were allowed to step in and fill its appointed place, this would be deduced at once. It is the manner in which the key card is handled in the trick that causes this fundamental fact to be lost sight of. I will first give the routine that I

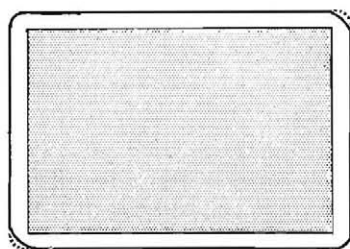


Fig. 1

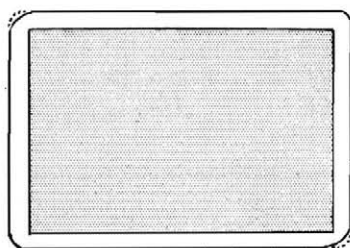


Fig. 2

follow when using my own cards and afterwards explain the variation that comes into play when a borrowed deck is used. I have said a key card, perhaps I should qualify this by saying key cards, for I

ordinarily use two key cards and, on occasion, even four key cards.

The use of two cards in this capacity, however, fills all ordinary requirements. Prepare any card that suits you as a key card by trimming off a very small portion of the two rounded corners just above the indices of the card. This you can do with a sharp pair of scissors, and just the smallest portion possible to trim off is all that is needed. This will still leave the card with nice looking rounded corners and will never be detected by looking at the card in a casual manner, Fig. 1. The second card is trimmed in exactly the same way except that it is the two corners opposite the index corners that are cut, Fig. 2. With these two cards in the deck you are all ready to perform the effects at any time or place. I always prepare in this way every deck I open and am, therefore, always ready to do the trick.

PSYCHOLOGY

An element of psychology enters into the performance of the feat, especially when doing it before magicians who are familiar with the secret ways and means ordinarily used in card magic. The actual working out of the trick is designed to allow the performer to keep just one step ahead of the spectators. By sensing the reactions of the human mind this routine is planned to counteract each impulse as it arises. If you follow the trick through carefully you will see that this accounts for the success of what would otherwise be merely a simple trick. Of course, those who are not magicians do not even get a look in.

THE BEGINNING OF THE TRICK. LOCATING THE KEY CARD

Remove the deck from its case and allow a spectator to shuffle it, as you take it back say, "This is the famous tuned deck. Let's see if it is thoroughly tuned up before we start the demonstration."

At this point you hold the deck face down in the palm of your left hand with the fingers and thumb around and over the pack. Place the cards close to your left ear and, with the left thumb holding the bottom edge of the deck, your left forefinger flips past the fifty-two cards on the corners where the indices are. Riffle through the deck in this way a time or two and you will soon locate the key card. Cut the cards at this point and you will have your key card on the top of the deck. You will always hear a small "click" when you pass the key card. In case you do not hear it the first time or two, cut the cards, for it may have been close to the top or the bottom and such a position makes it a little harder to locate. If there are still any skeptics, they may shuffle again and you must tune again.

THE FIRST TEST

To those who have had some experience with cards this first test is of the utmost simplicity. It consists merely of forcing the key card on a spectator. Should you have any magicians around you, pick an outsider so that you may be sure of this force. Of course, if you should fail you are not beaten any way, for you would immediately proceed with the third test to be explained later. But the trick starts off better by successfully forcing the key card at the start.

The moment the spectator removes this forced key card from the deck, tell him to look at it and remember it and immediately hand him the deck, telling him to replace his selected card anywhere in the pack that he may choose and then shuffle the cards to his heart's content. Assure him that he is privileged to use any kind of shuffle that he may desire and continue to shuffle until he is certain that the card is hopelessly lost among the others. When he is satisfied, take the pack back, square the cards neatly, and hold them in the position already described under the heading "locating the key card." Place the deck to your left ear as therein described and quickly flip through the cards until you hear the one with the short corner, which of course you will be able to distinguish easily.

I should add further that your left forefinger will be along the left edge of the deck as you hold it to your ear and the face of the deck will be towards the audience, about one-fourth of the top part of it protruding from the closed left hand. In this position, when you pass the key card or, in other words, when you hear the little "click," immediately close the left forefinger on the edge of the deck and then continue the riffle right through the whole pack. You will thus have a tiny break held by the fleshy part of the tip of your forefinger.

Bring the deck down in front of you, face downwards, and you will have the key card as the first card under the slight break that you are holding with the left forefinger. Immediately push all the cards above this break to the right with the left thumb and with the right hand put them on the bottom of the deck. Then remove the top card and hold it face down while you say to the spectator, "What was your card?" As soon as he names it, turn the card you are holding in your right hand and show it to be the correct one. Replace the card on the top of the deck and it will be in the right position for test No. 2. The spectators naturally think the trick is over and they never pay any further attention to this card, it simply passes out of their minds, but not so with you, for you must follow it with precision and certainty.

Now before passing on to test No. 2, it will be best to give the patter with which I accompany the trick thus far.

PATTER

As you take the deck from the spectator after he has selected a card, replaced it in the deck and thoroughly shuffled the cards, you say, "This is a TUNED DECK. Perhaps you are not aware of the fact that every card in a deck has a certain specific rate of vibration. The cards of a low denomination throw off a high rate of frequency, while the cards of a high denomination throw off a low rate of frequency. The deck was in perfect balance, in perfect TUNE, but the instant you touched that one card that you selected you imparted a slight amount of voltage from your own body to it and thus threw it slightly off balance. I have found that, after performing this feat thousands of times, I am able to locate the one card in the deck that is out of balance merely by its vibrations." Here you place the deck to your ear, as already explained, and flip through the cards until you locate the proper one.

THE SECOND TEST

Now if you have in your audience any who knows about the force and the old short card principles, they will probably look wise and think to themselves that they know the trick. The second test is arranged partially to upset the idea of the card having been forced which may be sticking in the back of their heads. At this point begin dealing the cards from the top of the deck one at a time. Hold the deck in the left hand and take the cards in the right, one on top of the other, holding the cards dealt off in the hand just as you would do if you were counting off a certain number of cards. At the same time you instruct the spectator to select another card by merely telling you to stop at any moment. Emphasize "at any time" and insist that it makes absolutely no difference to you what card is selected (and it doesn't this time) and that he is entitled to all the latitude in the world in making his selection.

This procedure will naturally place the key card at the bottom of the cards that you deal off before the spectator calls, "Stop." At the instant that he calls, slide the next card a little over the edge of the deck and lift the cards up so that he can see his card, for this is the one he has to remember this time. Just as soon as he has had time to note the card, slap the cards you had dealt off back on top of the deck, thus placing the key card right on top of the selected card and in such

a manner that no one even thinks of this simple move. As you do this, say to the spectator, "This time I am not going to allow you even to TOUCH the card, but I will depend entirely upon the light waves that passed between your eyes and the card you looked at, to throw it off balance. This is a much more delicate feat than the first one I showed you, wherein you actually touched the card."

Here you begin shuffling the cards, doing so in such a way that everyone, even magicians will feel sure that the shuffle is a fair one. The chances are that the card will have been selected somewhere before twelve or fifteen cards have passed. When you throw these cards back on the deck you merely note the approximate location of the card, and, as you begin an overhand shuffle, all that is necessary is to undercut the larger portion of the deck that lies below the selected card, in fact, I generally begin the shuffle two or three cards below it, and genuinely shuffle these cards on top of the upper portion of the deck. Of course this is done in a fair and open manner and the moment the shuffle is completed, you start right at the top and shuffle the larger portion of the deck in the same way, again in the overhand style, taking care that the bottom portion is thrown intact on the top at the end of this shuffle. In other words you follow the card approximately. After this I give the pack a number of quick cuts, just pulling part of the pack from below and slapping it back on top. This whole procedure has not separated the key card from the selected card.

At this point I always offer the deck to the spectator to shuffle it again and then add "or at least cut the cards so that you will be sure that I have not tried to follow your card in the shuffle." I find that nine times out of ten he will not even want to cut the cards unless I insist upon it. However, I always do insist on the deck being cut at this point, saying as this is done, "You see, if it had been possible for me to follow your card in shuffling, this cut would lose it, for there is no one who can tell how many cards the gentleman is now cutting to the top of the pack." Even though a spectator should take the pack and shuffle it, the chances are greatly against the cards being separated, and even if they should be parted, I can follow the routine as outlined in test No. 6 and thus end this part of the feat successfully.

After the spectator has cut, or even shuffled the pack and handed it back to you, you merely locate the key card as before and this time, as you push over the cards with the right thumb, you push all the cards above the break held by the left index finger, and one card more, the key card, so that when you pick off the next card, it is the selected

card. Always make the spectator name his card before you turn it over. This always makes the trick more effective.

The reason the spectator does not care to shuffle the deck in this case is a psychological one. He reasons to himself thus—"I shuffled the deck before and it didn't do any good, he is shuffling quite fairly"—and so he passes up the opportunity this time. This is the way it *works* if you present it properly as I have tested it thousands of times.

THE THIRD TEST

The key card is naturally on the bottom of the deck as this third test begins. When you cut the upper part of the deck to the bottom, just before you showed the selected card in test number two, the key card was put there. Now offer a free selection of another card. Just run through the cards slowly, emphasizing the freedom of choice allowed. Remark, "It makes absolutely no difference to me what card is selected," and if there are any magicians looking on I add, "There is no force." (See final observations.)

By this time the spectators have given up the idea of a force and thus, from now on, the moves are calculated to dispell the key card idea. Some of them may still think that a key card is being used until test number four is performed, but they give up that idea too and from then on are completely at your mercy.

When the card is selected, as already referred to under this test, it is returned to the deck in a slightly different way from before. As the spectator holds the card selected by him, begin shuffling the deck in the usual overhand way. Now and then as I shuffle the deck in this fashion, I indulge in a little variation from the orthodox method. Instead of shuffling the whole deck in the usual way, a few at a time on top of those already shuffled off, now and then I tilt the cards already shuffled off to an almost vertical position and shuffle a few cards from the top of the deck to the face of the packet already shuffled off, instead of to the back of them as in the usual presentation. When you get the deck pretty well shuffled through, when you have shuffled off about three-fourths of the cards, for example, slow up and allow the spectator to drop his card on top of those already shuffled off. If you shuffle cards in the usual way you will find that you have the remainder of the deck in your right hand and the bottom card of that portion will be the key card. The cards you have shuffled off will be in your left hand and on top of these the selected card is dropped.

Immediately continue the shuffle as soon as the card is dropped in, but here a new little maneuver comes into play. Pretend to shuffle the next batch of cards from the top of those held in the right hand on top of those held in the left hand, but simply make a sweeping motion with the left thumb across the backs of the cards, creating an optical illusion. To all appearance the cards are taken off by the left thumb as before but, in reality, the right hand lifts away the whole packet intact. Tilt the deck again to the nearly vertical position and deposit all but a few cards, say from three to six, on the face of the deck and bring the last few cards to the top of the deck, throwing them there to complete the shuffle.

This is extremely deceptive if you follow it carefully, and will never be detected by the spectators, but just the same you have placed the key card directly on top of the selected card. By removing eight or ten cards in the first lot as you immediately begin another overhand shuffle, you can genuinely shuffle the deck right to the very bottom and repeat the same shuffle, merely taking care to throw the last few cards on top in a bunch. No one can possibly follow this shuffle and there is no way for anyone to detect the fact that you are following the card. However, in the most unlikely case that a spectator should suspect this, never mind, for your next test will fix him.

Stop shuffling, offer the pack to be cut, then place the cards to your ear, riffle through, locate the key card and break the deck at that point as already explained. Pull out the card below the break and once more you have succeeded in finding the card which is "off balance." Now for the next test.

THE FOURTH TEST

This time you locate the other key card and force it on some unsuspecting victim. What an unprincipled trickster you become! You wait until your victims forget all about a force and then you cruelly use it. The spectators will be quite unsuspecting as far as a force is concerned, for thanks to the routine, they have dismissed this idea as quite inapplicable to a solution of the mystery. I generally locate the other key card by merely riffing down from the opposite corner of the deck to that which I have been using up to the present. Use your most successful method of forcing and choose your subject carefully. Again hand the deck to the spectator who has so kindly selected (?) your second key card and tell him to put the card into the deck while you turn your back and then shuffle the cards to his heart's content.

Ofttimes at this point an idea comes to the spectator to try to beat you at your own game by slipping the card into his pocket and handing you the pack minus the card. If anyone does this, the moment you detect that the key card is missing, you announce dramatically, "This deck contains only fifty-one cards. The Queen of Clubs (or whatever the key card may be) is missing from it. You must have placed it in your pocket." Many a time I have had this happen and the consequent effect has been quite astounding. However, if the spectator replaces the card in the deck in a bona fide manner and then shuffles it, you are prepared to find it by the vibrations in the regular way.

By this time you will have killed every idea that the wise ones among your spectators may have entertained and they will be entirely at a loss to explain the mystery. They have abandoned the force explanation, also the key card solution, and they KNOW that the shuffling has nothing to do with it, for did not one of themselves again thoroughly shuffle the cards? They see a different card being used every time and they say to themselves, *How can it be done?*, such is the trend of their thoughts.

THE FIFTH TEST

For this test I use a variation which is always mystifying. The new key card is now on the bottom of the deck. Have another card freely selected. Begin shuffling the cards as outlined in test number three and have the card thrown on in a perfectly fair manner and then shuffle any number of cards you may desire, say nine, on top of the selected card as soon as it is replaced on top of the cards in your left hand. Run these cards off singly and then turn the cards in the left hand vertically and drop some on the face of the packet, finally throw the remainder on top. Now cut the cards rapidly several times and use any false shuffle at your command that will keep the cards in order. I myself use the Charlier shuffle.

You are now ready to locate the card as before by the supposed vibrations. Here is the difference this time. Flip through the deck two or three times and comment on the weakness of the signals. Locate the key card and cut the deck, bringing it to the top. Act as though you are still uncertain and again flip through the deck, listening very carefully, then suddenly stop and say, "Sorry, but this time I must ask you what card you selected?" You must be ready with your answer to make this part of the trick fully effective. Your answer will always be just two more than the number of cards you shuffled singly

on top of the selected card, thus in this case it will be "Eleven" (nine plus two). The very moment the spectator names his card, in fact almost before the words are out of his mouth, you call with a voice of authority, "Eleven deep." Whereupon you proceed to count down from the top of the pack, turn up the eleventh card and, sure enough, there it is.

Now there is one more test that I usually perform and it will be the last I am going to describe, although on some occasions there are still other variations that I use "to confound the quidnuncs" as Mr. Hilliard says.

THE SIXTH TEST

Start this test with the key card on the bottom of the deck. When you finished the last test, if you just place the cards counted off the bottom without reversing them, you will naturally have the key card in this position. This test consists of allowing a spectator to merely name a card in the pack as you run through it, then immediately close up the deck and locate the card in the usual manner.

Hold the pack face up in the left hand just as if you were about to deal the cards. With the left thumb push the bottom card, the second key card, off the deck to the right and receive it in the right hand between the thumb and fingers, the thumb on the face of the card, the fingers at the back. Bring this hand to such a position that the index side of this card will be right under and touching the first joint of the left second and third fingers which are underneath and hold the pack. Holding the key card in this position, with your left thumb push the cards off the face of the deck to the right, the right hand edges of these cards striking the key card a little to the right of center on its face, and then going right on over until they come flush with the right hand side of the card. Push just one card after the other in this way and hold the cards securely in this position with the right thumb. This allows you to show the faces of all the cards right through the pack, one at a time. Perhaps I should say that you show the index and a little more of the cards. Begin the movement and have the key card out of sight before you start to explain the procedure to be followed.

Instruct a spectator to note the cards as you thumb past them and call aloud the name of any card that he selects. You name a few as you pass them and then stop, letting the spectator understand he is to name any card he wants as you come to it. The instant he names a card, separate your hands just a trifle, the key card will slide off

the tips of your left fingers and take its position directly back of and next to the card just named. You have now merely to close up the deck and quite unknown to the spectators you have the key card in its proper place locating the selected card. This time you shuffle the cards yourself as everyone now is past the point where they think the shuffling has anything to do with the execution of the trick. Usually I make a false shuffle at this point, although it is possible to hand out the deck and allow a spectator to shuffle with very little likelihood that the key card and the one selected will become separated. If you do allow a spectator to shuffle, watch him and as soon as he has shuffled through the deck once, interrupt him and say, "Now cut the cards, please." This throws him off the track and stops him from shuffling any longer. After the cut has been made, simply take the pack and locate the card in the usual manner. In this case you emphasize in your patter that any card in the deck can be called and that if you are able to locate a card just called for at random, it is surely proof that you can instantly locate any card in the deck.

I usually employ the vibration patter, this time by saying, "In this instance I am going to rely upon sound waves or 'audio' waves to throw the card off balance. The mere mention of the name of the card by the gentleman will be sufficient to effect this, etc." You will find that all this properly presented will completely bewilder any audience of laymen or even magicians.

CONCLUSION

And now you will ask "How about doing the trick with a borrowed deck?" Well, that is very simple too. Just take the deck and place it to your ear. Riffle through the cards two or three times, stating that you will tune the deck. Need I tell you that as your fingers run along the corners of the deck in this instance, when it reaches the last card of the deck, it bends the corner back a little, either breaking it slightly or just bending it up a little. Just a very small part of the corner is all that is needed. From this point on use this card as your key card. You will find that it gives the same familiar click which you have learned from your experience with the other method. Then as you proceed, opportunity will offer to get the opposite corner of another card bent up and this will give the two necessary keys in the spectator's deck.

I have worked the trick hundreds of times in this way and have never been detected in it. However, in nearly every instance the first method, as described above, is the one to use, as spectators rarely re-

quire the use of their own cards and then, too, you can hand out your own deck with perfect safety. In fact, such a small amount is trimmed off the corners that you can hardly tell the card yourself by merely looking at it. I have had magicians square the deck, look it over critically, seeking for short, long, wide, narrow, thick, thin, double or slick cards and never yet have I had anyone find the true secret after the closest examination.

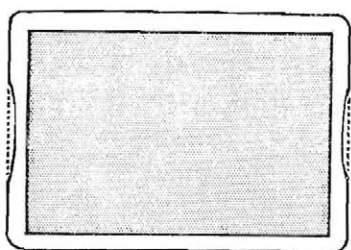


Fig. 3

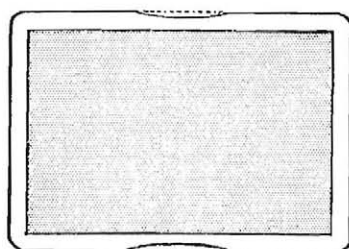


Fig. 4

When I wish to use four keys, in addition to the corner trim, already explained, I trim a very small amount out of the top and bottom of a card, just a small concave section about one inch in length is all that is needed, Fig. 3. In a similar fashion trim a small section from each side of another card and you will have one that you can find by riffling the sides of the deck instead of the ends, Fig. 4.

Practice makes perfect. Learn this trick perfectly and always keep every deck of cards in your possession ready to do this one when you are called upon. There is no better impromptu trick.

Observations: There is little that I can add to Mr. Hull's lucid explanation of his great trick. In his hands it is a real marvel and although it has been seen by hundreds of magicians not one of them has ever penetrated the secret or attempted to duplicate it. If there were nothing else in this book I consider that the purchaser would be more than repaid in getting this one feat. In the whole range of magic exposition I know of no greater lesson in the art of misdirection and the disguising of the use of prepared cards. One small point will be disagreed with by many, however. I refer to the first paragraph of the third test where the use of the words, "There is no force" is advised. Speaking generally it is bad policy to suggest to the spectators any of the artifices of the magician. The majority of them know nothing

about such things so why give them a clue which a little later may put a difficulty in your way, while those who are acquainted with the force will be put off the track by the way in which the cards are handled.

The trimming of the cards has been exaggerated in the figures for the sake of clearness. The student should accustom himself to the use of cards that have the merest shaving trimmed off.

THE BARE BONES OF THE TRICK

THE FIRST TEST

Remove deck from case, hand to spectator to shuffle.
 Take deck, riffle at ear, locate key card.
 Force on spectator who notes card.
 Hand deck to him, card replaced, deck shuffled.
 Take pack, riffle at ear, locate key, cut at break.
 Take off top card, card named, show correct.

THE SECOND TEST

Take cards one by one off pack in left hand.
 Spectator calls "Stop." Turn face of next card to him.
 Drop left hand cards on top. Key on top of chosen card.
 Shuffle, not disturbing the two cards.
 Let spectator shuffle or at least cut.
 Locate key, cut, have card named.
 Turn over top card. Correct.

THE THIRD TEST

Key on bottom of deck. Card freely selected.
 Overhand shuffle three-quarters of deck.
 Card replaced on left hand portion.
 Make motions of shuffling on top, merely rubbing left thumb over packet.
 Drop last few cards on top of chosen card.
 Have packet cut, riffle at ear, break at short card.
 Pull out chosen card, named, show it.

THE FOURTH TEST

Locate second key. Force on another spectator.
 Hand deck to him and turn back.
 Card replaced and pack shuffled.
 Riffle at ear, take out card, card named, show it.

THE FIFTH TEST

New key card at bottom.
Card freely selected. Begin shuffle.
Card replaced, run nine cards on it.
Drop remainder on top. Card now tenth under key card.
Riffle, locate key, cut pretend to fail.
Have name of card called.
Instantly call, "Eleven cards deep."
Deal and show card at number eleven.

THE SIXTH TEST

Key on bottom. Hold cards face up in left hand.
Push key card into left hand, hold separate.
Push cards one by one into left hand showing faces.
Spectator calls any card he sees.
Instantly close hands, pushing key card back of and next to the card named.
Shuffle and cut.
Riffle, locate key, cut card to top.
Card named, turn over and show.

THE ROUGH AND SMOOTH PRINCIPLE

This is a modern adaptation of the old principle of the cards that will and will not slip, used by gamblers for nobody knows how many generations. In former days the pigments used for printing cards did not dry so perfectly as is the case with cards of modern manufacture, with the result that the greater printed surface of the court cards gave them a greater tendency to adhere to the next card than the spot cards. The skilled fingers of the gambler enabled him thus to distinguish the court cards when they arrived on the top of the deck and by second dealing retain them in his hands. Even with our cards, by taking a new deck and exerting pressure on the backs and making a twisting motion it is possible to break the pack at an ace, owing to the greater amount of unprinted surface. A skilled operator can in this way find the four aces infallibly.

In the modern way of using this principle the backs of some cards and the faces of others are roughened. If two such cards are placed together, the rough face of one on the rough back of the other, the two cards will cling together and can be handled as one card with perfect safety, yet when it is necessary, they can be taken off the pack singly