

The Card Sword



Maigret

The Card Sword

Danny Crauwels aka MAIGRET

Version 2.0

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USAGE

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I want to apologize for the way I misuse and violate the English language in the texts of this article.

I am from Belgium and English is not my native language. I am very adept at my own language (Dutch) and this has always been a helpful asset in my career.

So I hope you will appreciate my frustration if I sometimes fail to express myself correctly in English or miss out on subtle nuances.

I owe many thanks to:

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Magic Christian (Christian Stelzel) - [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_\(magician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_(magician))

3 times 1st prize winner FISM, historical researcher and authority on Hofzinsler

for translating the texts from Old German and above all:

it is he who came up with the information about Döbler that we now have.

About the author



Danny Crauwels (aka *Maigret*)

Before his retirement a Chief Constable (hence his artist name) and at the end of his career he held the position of Public Prosecutor at the courts of Mol, Turnhout and Herentals (Belgium).

He also taught at the Antwerp Police Academy and at the University of Antwerp the subjects environmental and special criminal law.

Lover of good wine and good food. He wrote five books on gastronomy, but above all he has been a passionate hobby magician for more than five decades. He has been disabled for over forty years due to an incurable disease (memorized deck addiction).

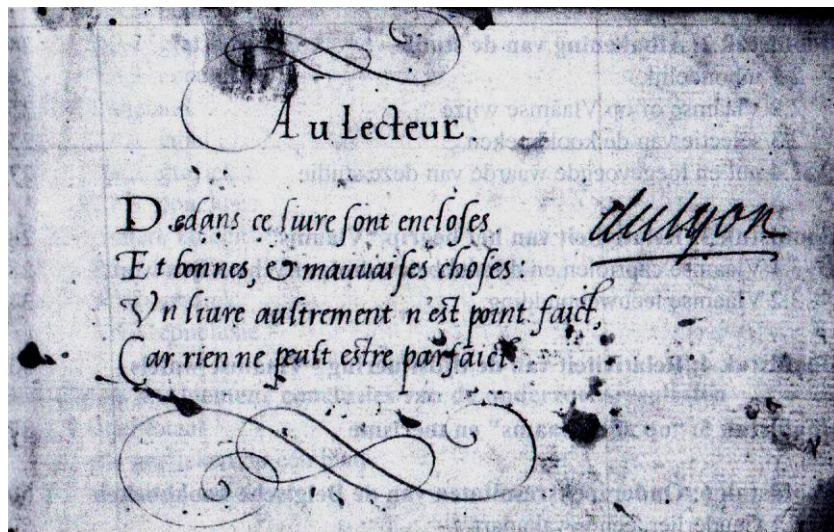
He is an official FISM judge and also a FISM consultant. In his magic career he performed together with Tommy Wonder who was a good friend and with Richard Sanders, David Williamson, Trevor Lewis, Mark Leveridge, David Harkey, Patrick Page, Dick Koornwinder and others. He performed twice for members of the royal family of Belgium.

He doesn't see Magic as a hobby, but as an **Art** with a capital letter.

Magicians such as *Norbert Ferré* and *Shimpei Katsuragawa* embody that image in his eyes.



<https://memdeck.be/>



Manuscript 1550 – 1560 by unknown writer – French language

Free English translation:

To the reader.

**In this book are included
Good and bad things:
Another book is not possible
Because nothing can be perfect.**

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What can you expect in this article?

One stabbing trick is not the other. There are four distinguishable ways to achieve this effect.

In this article we try to make the differences clear.

An extensive book can be written of every magician mentioned in this book. That is not the purpose of this article.

We try to focus on the historical timeline of the card stab and of the card sword in particular.

This article, by our standards, does not pretend to be academic at all. Some aspects have not been explored in depth enough for this.

On the other hand, we have tried to provide accurate information based on reliable references.

In almost all book references, the page number is also mentioned.

A lot of work for the author, a blessing for the reader who wants to look up something. You're welcome, dear reader.

Not unimportant, this article does shift some data that were previously generally accepted. We dug up the first known image of a probably card sword, set an earlier date for a performance with a card sword, and set an earlier date for the first publication explaining a card sword. This article also questions the obvious use of 3 playing cards with a card sword.

This article can best be described as a solid working document and starting point for further research.

What's in a Name?

What do we mean by the term "*Card Sword*" ?

The name one gives to a trick or magic device is not a legal definition and comes about by the name given to it by the creator or the magic community over time.

For most tricks and devices, that's pretty clear and unanimous.

Every magician knows what is meant by a chop cup, a paddle, a shell, a pull, a billet switch, the zig-zag illusion, an ambitious card routine or an acaan.

With the term "*card sword*" that is not so clear.

In our opinion there are 4 categories of tricks that are completely different from each other in their method and presentation, but where the name of the trick sometimes refers to a different category.

The definitions we use in the texts below:

Card stab trick

= find a chosen card with a pointed object from scattered cards on the floor or at the table or from a hand-held deck, whether or not wrapped in the card case, newsprint, or other covering. The selected playing card(s) is pierced or located just below or just above the pointed object. (In an exceptional case, the chosen playing card is even split by the pointed object.)

The cards are in a **STATIC** state (the cards themselves don't move)

Physical card stab trick

= dribbling the cards **DOWN** on the table or on the floor with one hand and grabbing the chosen card with the other empty hand or between two other cards which are held in the free hand.

Card sword trick

= the cards are thrown **UP** in the air by the magician, the spectator or a mechanical device and the chosen card is pierced in mid-air by a sword.

The authentic version is with a sword or with a similar stab weapon, hence the name. Nowadays, there are lots of variants like an umbrella, tie, pocket knife, handkerchief, shoe lace, hoodie, mouse trap, car vacuum cleaner, sharpie, balloon, drill, clarinet, etc.

Physical card sword trick

= Just like with a real card sword, the cards are thrown **UP** into the air and the chosen card(s) is grabbed from among the falling cards with the hand only and this without any other props. The magician's arm and hand act as (are) the sword.

The main difference between a "*normal card stab trick*" and a "*card sword trick*" is that with a "*card sword trick*" the cards hang freely in the air during the piercing or the catching and are not touched or held by anything. The playing cards are in a **FREE, uncontrolled** fall. The playing cards are also always thrown in an upward direction.



Postcard from 1915 (front) – private collection

Chapter I

Card stab

Find one or two chosen cards with a pointed object from scattered cards on the floor or at the table or from a hand-held deck, whether or not wrapped in the card case, newsprint, or other covering. The playing card(s) themselves are pierced or the pointed object is just above or just below the chosen card(s).
The cards are in a STATIC state (the cards themselves don't move)

The *card stab* is a popular trick to this day and has countless variants and presentations.

We deliberately do not mention examples here because there are so many and because the emphasis of this article is on the card sword.

The "*physical card stab*" (see definitions on page 2) is not discussed in this dissertation because this would lead us too far. The procedure (dribbling the cards) is always the same, but the methods are very different and range from easy to very difficult.

A not self-working example, what a humorous understatement is, is the performance of Kostya Kilmat in 2015 on the Penn & Teller show *Fool Us* ¹.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SCFXV6o7cro>

The earliest mention of a “sword” (or a similar name) in relation to a card trick:

Similar names: saber, sabre, rapier, espadin, épée, dagger, short sword, knife

ASTI manuscript (unpublished)

Author: unknown

somewhere between 1670 -1730

Owner: Biblioteca di Asti (Italy)

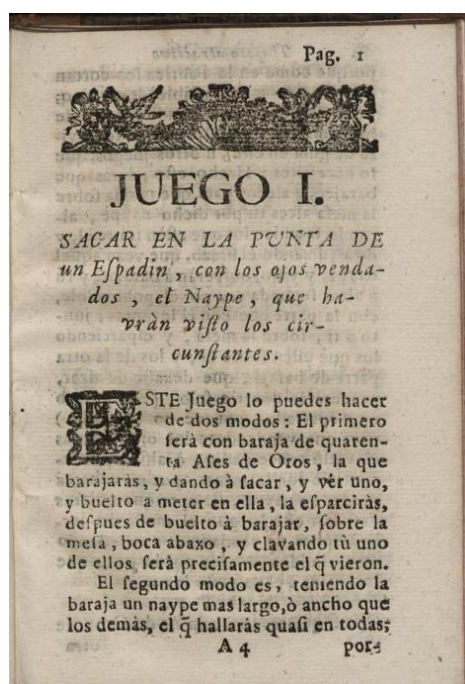
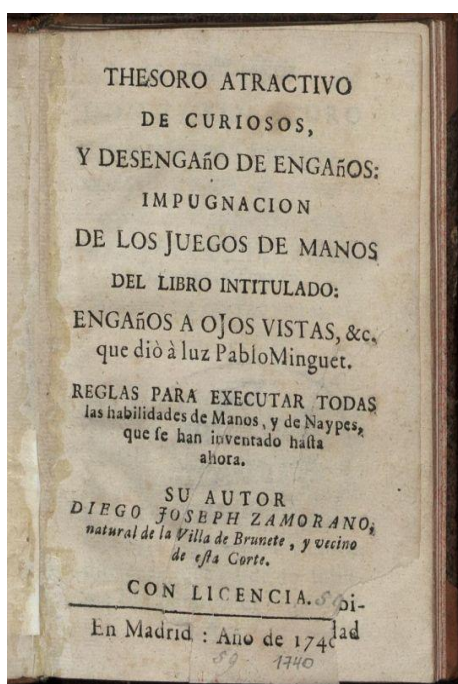
Translated into English: Conjuring Arts Research Center, *Gibecière 15*, Winter 2013, Vol. 8, No. 1 page 77

The earliest published mentions of a “sword” (or similar name) in relation to a card trick:

Thesoro atractivo de curiosos, y defengaño de engaños

Author: Diego Joseph Zamorano

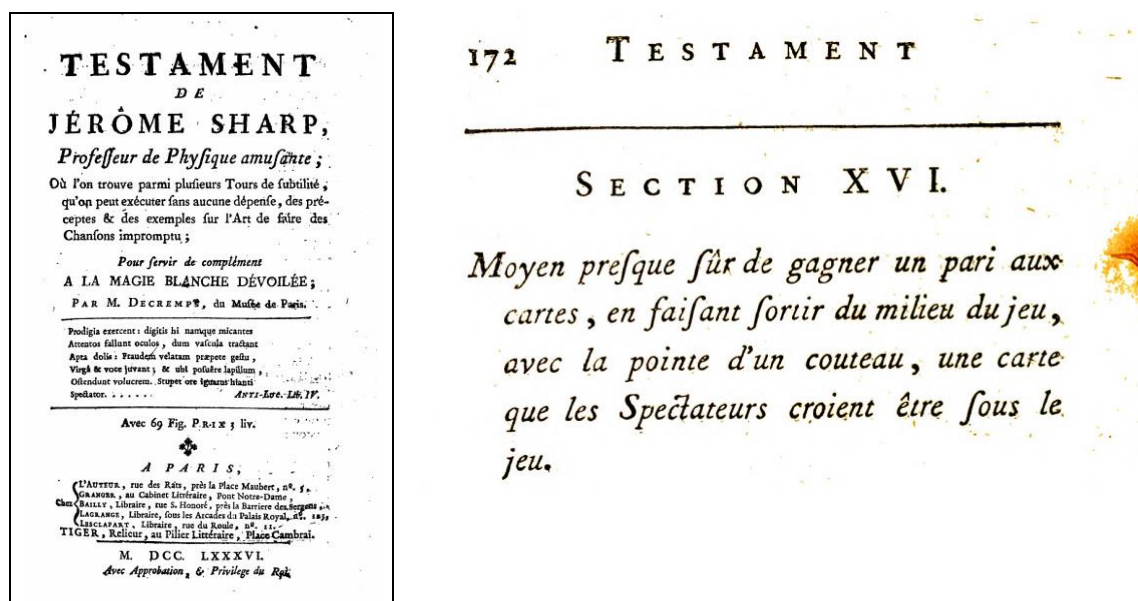
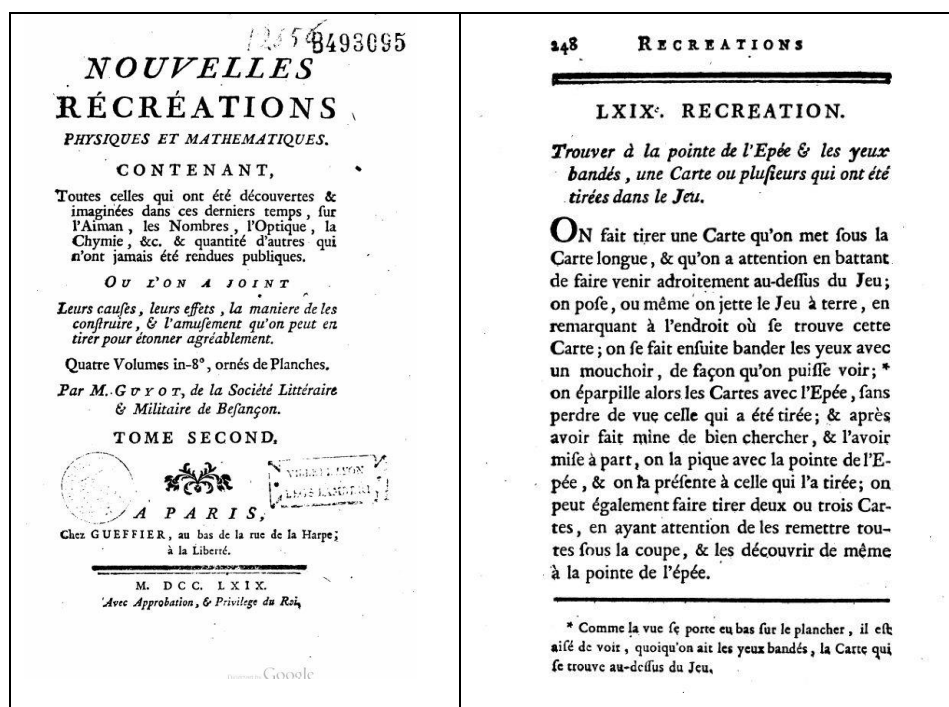
Madrid, 1740, page 1



an espadin

The word "espadin" in the title of the trick means a Spanish narrow sword.

An espadin is rooted in 17th century Spanish rapier fencing. It includes features of the French and Italian schools.



All the above-mentioned sources (17-18th century) mention a sword or similar pointed object in connection with a card trick, but all deal very clearly with a trick where the definition of a "card stab trick" applies and NOT that of a "card sword trick". In all these cases, the playing cards are in a static state (motionless) and are not thrown in the air.

Conclusion:

Before 1799, to our findings, there is not a single document, book, or image that describes or depicts a trick that meets our definition of "the card sword". Namely that the playing cards are thrown into the air and that the chosen card(s) are pierced by a sword or other pointed object while the cards are whirling on the ground (cards are in motion).

From this we may conclude that the trick "card stab" (playing cards in a static state) is the predecessor and therefore older than the trick we describe as "the card sword" (playing cards in motion and in mid-air).

Card stabbing tricks were certainly performed in the first half of the 18th century and possibly as early as the second half of the 17th century.
--



Reproduced from a drawing by A. C. Corbould.

2



3

² Bertram Charles, *Isn't it wonderful?*, Swan Sonnenschein & CO, London, **1896**, frontispiece

³ Photo, Magic Christian performing a card stab, **2019**, private collection

Chapter II

Neither flesh nor fowl

In this chapter, three famous magicians each perform a trick that is neither a card stab nor a card sword.
Notwithstanding that, the tricks still evoke the association with a card sword.

Pinetti for throwing the playing cards up in the air.
Bosco for catching something on his sword.
Devant for catching 3 playing cards with a cricket bat instead of a sword

Joseph Pinetti ⁴

1750 – c.1803

The magician who, before 1799, performed a trick close to and certainly theatrically related to a card sword was Giovanni Giuseppe Pinetti (1750 – c.1803). He was born in Orbetello (Italy).

Pinetti was undoubtedly the most successful magician of the second half of the 18th century. His influence on other magicians of the time was such that many adopted an Italian name, as it evoked the association with Pinetti and therefore automatically carried a psychological stamp of ability.

Pinetti burned a chosen card and threw the rest of the playing cards in the air. With a pistol shot, the chosen card reappeared, nailed to the wall.

The depiction of this trick is one of the most iconic of the era, as it was used as the frontispiece for a widely distributed book ⁵ that sought to explain Pinetti's tricks.



⁴ Pinetti: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Pinetti

⁵ Decremps, Henri. *La magie blanche dévoilée ou Explication des tours surprennants*, Langlois libraire et chez M. Decremps, Paris, 1784, frontispiece and title page

Giovanni Bartolomeo Bosco ⁶

1793 - 1863

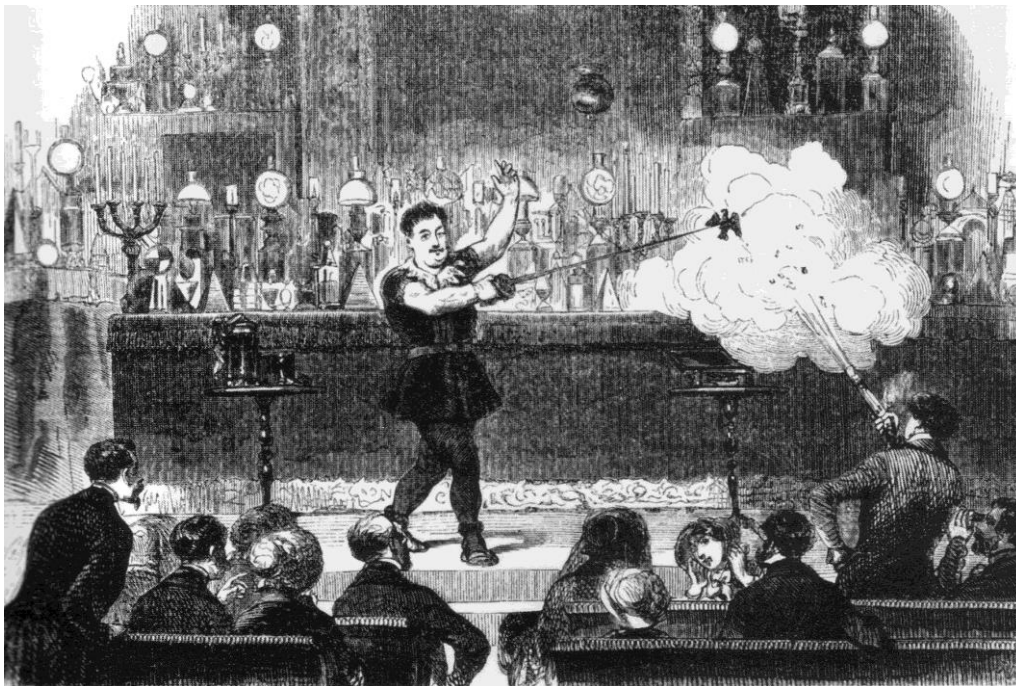
Another (horrific) variant that evokes the thought on a real card sword is the way Giovanni Bartolomeo Bosco uses the sword in 1852 and this until the end of his career in 1863.

Bosco is praised by Robert-Houdin in his *Confidences d'un prestidigitateur* ⁷ for the execution of the cups and balls.

However, Robert-Houdin also describes the performance with the canary being stabbed into the barrel of a gun and when the gun is fired, Bosco catches the canary on the tip of his sword. Robert-Houdin was less enthusiastic about this, to put it with a euphemism.

Although Houdini in his book *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin* ⁸ relativizes Bosco's cruelty.

The French periodical *L'illustration, journal universel* ⁹ from Paris also devoted a two-page article to it in 1852.



On June 6, 2004, Christian Fechner's collection was sold in Paris. ¹⁰
Lot 97 was a sword, attributed to Bosco

⁶ Bosco: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bartolomeo_Bosco

⁷ Robert-Houdin, *Confidences d'un prestidigitateur*, Paris, librairie nouvelle, 1859, page 298 – 304
and

Robert-Houdin, *Memoirs of Robert-Houdin*, Philadelphia, Edited by Dr. R. Shelton Mackenzie, Evans Publisher, 1859, page 188 – 190
(Is the translation of the previous book into English language)

⁸ Houdini Harry, *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin*, The publishers printing CO., New York, 1908, pages 302-304

⁹ Periodical, *L'illustration, journal universel*, Paris, Jan-June 1852, page 47 – 48

¹⁰ <https://www.gros-delettrez.com/lot/3/1404665-carte-a-lepee-attribuee-a-gb-bsort=num&>

David Devant¹¹

1868 – 1941

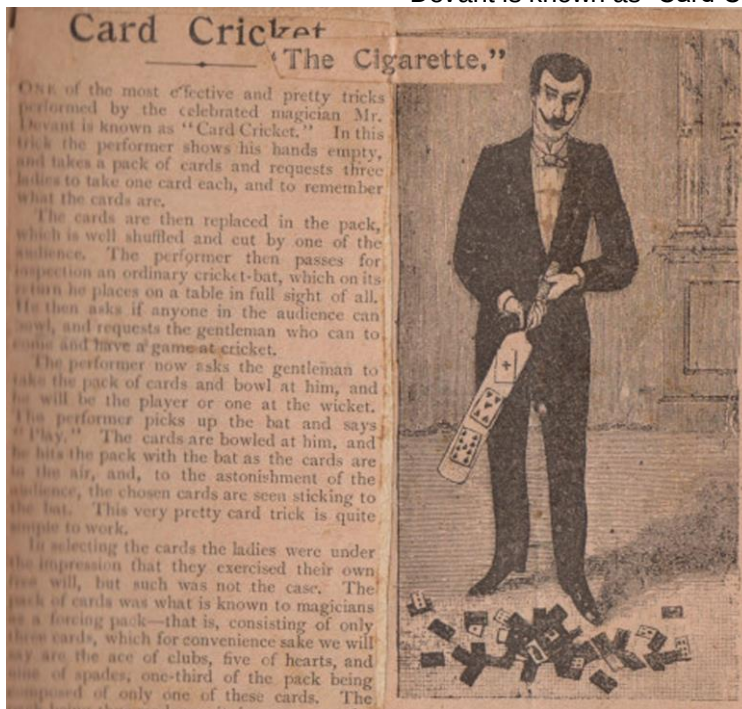
According to magic historian Jim Steinmeyer¹², Devant was “England’s greatest magician - arguably the greatest magician of the 20th Century”

Not a "pure" card sword trick, but a variant with a cricket bat.

Although the playing cards are not thrown into the air, they are thrown like a bowling ball in an uncontrolled manner to the bat, at a lower level by a spectator.

ONE of the most effective and pretty tricks performed by the celebrated magician Mr. Devant is known as “Card Cricket.” In this

One of the most effective and pretty tricks performed by the celebrated magician Mr. Devant is known as “Card Cricket”



Clippings from an unknown (Australian?) magic magazine - private collection Magic Cristian

¹¹ Devant: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Devant

¹² Steinmeyer Jim, *Hiding the Elephant: How Magicians Invented the Impossible*, Random House. 2005, page 125



Illustration: Anton Stursa (Austria) – publisher: Joe Wildon

Cover page of a German magic magazine, volume 6 (April 1956 - March 1957)

Chapter III

Main chapter

The Card Sword trick

the cards are thrown **UP** in the air and the chosen card is pierced from mid-air. The authentic version is with a sword, hence the name. Just like the cups and balls, the egg bag, the floating lady, etc., the card sword is a classic of magic.

Nowadays, there are lots of variants which are performed with a substitute for the sword like an umbrella, tie, pocket knife, handkerchief, shoe lace, car vacuum cleaner, sharpie, balloon, etc.

The trick where with a pointed object a chosen card(s) is pierced in mid-air while all the playing cards are held by nothing and only the air resistance and gravity on each individual playing card determines the downward trajectory of the cards, is of a completely different order than the card stab tricks described in the first chapter.

The card sword is also a card stab, but in completely different, more unpredictable circumstances (for the layman). The methods to perform the trick are therefore also completely different (but most of the time not more difficult).

The first appearance of a Card Sword trick

To find a first sign of “the Card Sword” that fits our definition, we have to wait until the last year of the 18th century (1799).

Admittedly a document, but not a written text.

It is an engraving that is actually an advertising poster for a magician.

We do not know how many original copies are currently in circulation and who the current owner(s) are.

We have tried to trace the owner(s) of an original copy, but without success.

An image of this engraving can be found in:

-Milbourne Christopher (Mr), *Panorama of magic*, Dover Publications, 1962, page 38

-Alfredo Castelli, *Viaggio curioso nel mondo delle carte*, Fabbri Editori, 1975 page 134

-Silvan, *Arte magica: illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, Milano, Rusconi, 1977 page 85

-Milbourne Christopher (Mrs), *Magic: A Picture History*, Dover Publications, 1991, page 38

-Silvan, *La nuova arte magica. Illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, 2020, page 102

Description:

Advertising poster

engraving

concerning Giuseppe Castelli

dated in the drawing itself - 1799

image: Cesare Contini di Forlì

engraving: Zambello di Bologna

Dimensions:

We do not have an original at our disposal.

Given the nature of the various images on the engraving and in order to be able to read them clearly, the engraving must have been at least A4 or letter format and with a probability bordering on certainty a lot larger.



*Volan le Carte e prendan
molti e Vita*



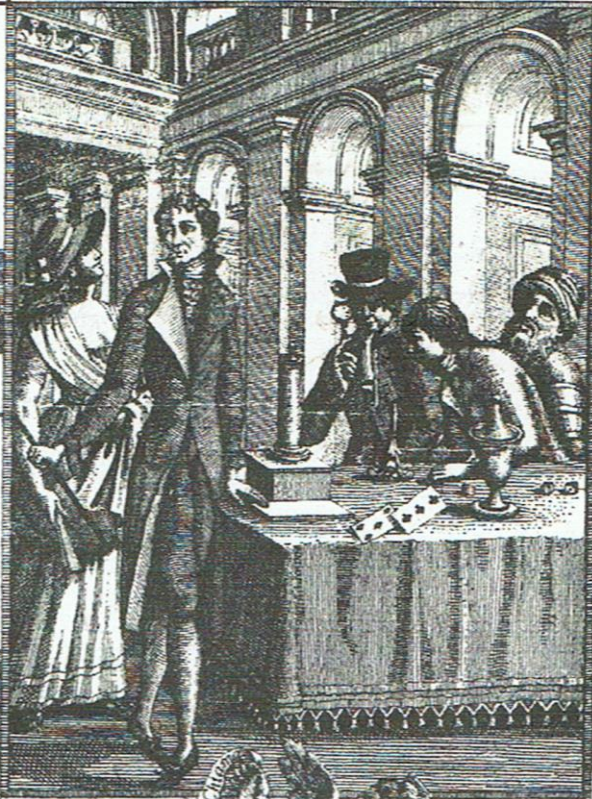
Il Mago che indovina ogni Dimanda



*Sbarato e va l'Anello nella
Cassa*



*La Moneta si cangia in Vaghi
Fiori*



*Il Giocatore ferma la Carta
darda*



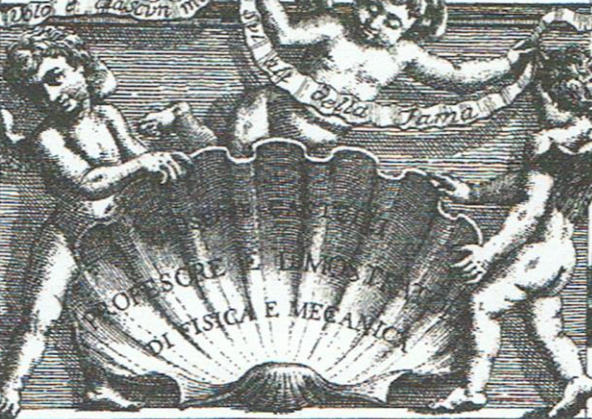
*Da un Vovo, e da un Angel ne
nascon mille*



*Si leva la Camora e non si
sueste*



*Si pesta l'Orologio e non si
rompe*



*Danzano in armonia molte
Monete*

Texts on the engraving:

In the shell, held by two angels:

*GIUSEPPE CASTELLI
PROFESORE E DIMOSTRATORE
DI FISICA E MECANICA*

translation:

Giuseppe Castelli
Professor and Demonstrator
of Physics and Mechanics

Pennant, held by center angel:

Volo e ciascun mi chiama sul ale della Fama

translation: I fly and each one calls me on the wings of Fame

Texts in the 9 little illustrations:

Volon le carte e prendan moto e vita
= card fountain

Il mago che indovina ogni dimanda
= The magician who knows every question

Sbarate e va l'anello nella cassa
= Ring in box

La moneta si cangna in vaghi fiori
= Coin turns into flowers

Il giocator ferma la carta darda
= The player stops the dart card = card sword trick

Da un vovo, e da un augel ne nascon mille
= The multiplication of birds (?)

Si leva la camicia en non si sueste
= take off someone's shirt and nothing is stuck

Si pesta l'orologro o non si rompe
= the clock shattered in the mortar

Danzano in armonia molte monete
= Dancing coins

The image of the card sword trick in the engraving and why we think it is in all probability indeed the trick *card sword* and not the classic *card stab* as described in the older books



- the other 8 small pictures give a relatively accurate picture of the suggested tricks. It can therefore be assumed that the image of the card sword trick is also accurate.

- with a "normal" card stab, all the cards would be on the ground and only the chosen card would be in the air on the sword

- All the playing cards are in mid-air and there are even cards that are above the sword

- Il giocatore ferma la carta darda.

Literally translated that means: "the player STOPS the dart card".

This clearly points to the fact that a "moving" card (in the air) is being targeted and not a card lying on the ground.

There is no need to "stop" a card that is on the floor and is not moving.

-Castelli is an epigone (you may say, almost a clone, in this case) of Pinetti. Most of the tricks in the picture are Pinetti tricks.

Pinetti himself has almost certainly never performed the card sword. After all, one of his most famous tricks is to shoot a chosen card against the wall with a pistol. A card sword trick would look too much like that.

-From the various images, it looks like Castelli was performing his tricks in the open air. There he could not perform Pinetti's trick. Coming up with a variant with a sword is then not that far away.

Notwithstanding all these arguments above, there is no 100% certainty. To be sure, one must have written testimony, preferably from various sources.

Who is Giuseppe Castelli not

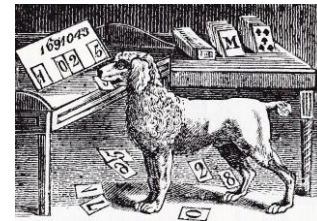
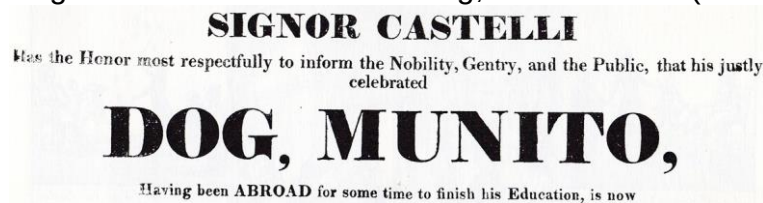
Just as many magicians in the 18th and 19th centuries used an Italian-sounding stage name (hinting to Pinetti's reputation), many magicians adopted the name "Bosco", building on its success.

Apparently, there were also a lot of Castelli's...

Silvan writes in his books ¹³ that there may have been 14.

He also writes (and we agree) that our Castelli in the 1799 engraving is certainly not one of the Castelli's below:

-Signor Castelli and his wise dog, called Munito (1817) ¹⁴



-Castelli, Professor of philosophical amusements who exhibits himself in the 1820 in Trinidad with the tricks "The invisible father", "The pyramids of Egypt", "The Asian turtle dove" (c. 1820) ¹⁵

-Signor Castelli who performed in France, preceded by the following announcement: "Signor Castelli, this evening, during your show, will eat a living man of flesh and blood » (1832) ¹⁶

Conclusion:

It is quite possible that the card sword trick was already performed in 1799. Further research is needed.

The engraving of Castelli is a more than an acceptable reason to dive into this, in order to create more clarity.

A challenge for our colleagues magicians who like to do historical research and in particular for our Italian colleagues, who are after all close to the source of local municipal archives, university- and other libraries. There must be traces of that man.

¹³Silvan, *Arte magica: illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, Milano, Rusconi, 1977 page 86 and

Silvan, *La nuova arte magica. Illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, 2020, page 103

¹⁴ <https://second.wiki/wiki/munito> is a very informative page about Castelli and his dog and Milbourne Christopher (Mr), *Panorama of magic*, Dover Publications, 1962, page 36 - 37

¹⁵ Silvan, *Arte magica: illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, Milano, Rusconi, 1977 page 85

¹⁶ Silvan, *La nuova arte magica. Illusionisti, trucchi e magic di tutti i tempi*, 2020, page 103

The first written report of a performance of “the card sword”

Barton Whaley wrote in his *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic* ¹⁷ under the paragraph “Card Sword”:

“”” *Used in stage performance as early as 1842 by Viennese magician Ludwig Döbler in London*”””

We ¹⁸ can now mark an even earlier date. Namely **February 28, 1840.**

In a periodical edition of “*Der Sammler*” ¹⁹ dated March 9, 1840, there is an account of performances by Ludwig Döbler that he gave on February 28 and 29 and March 01 in 1840 in Wiener-Neustadt (Austria).

An amusing detail is that the report states that the trick on Feb 28 did not go as planned, but that the public forgave him for the charm he exuded. The playing card appeared on the tip of the sword before the spectator had tossed the cards in the air.

There are also a number of books that mention that Döbler performed the card sword ²⁰



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¹⁷ Whaley, Barton, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic*, Jeff Busby Magic, 1989, page 166

¹⁸ “We” is not the right word. The discovery of this earlier date is exclusively due to **Magic Christian**, 1st prize winner FISM 76, historical researcher and authority on Hofzinser. It is he who put us on the right track

¹⁹ Periodical, *Der Sammler*, Vienna, March 09, 1840, page 156, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zetschriften

See also: [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Sammler_\(Unterhaltungsblatt\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Der_Sammler_(Unterhaltungsblatt))

²⁰ -Evans, Henry Ridgeley, *History of conjuring*, international brotherhood of magicians, Ohio, 1928, page 102

-Burlingame, H. J., *History of Magic and Magicians*, Burlingame & Co, Chicago, 1895, page 31

-Sidney W. Clarke, *The Annals of Conjuring*, 1929, page 155

²¹ Stamp Austrian post on the occasion of Döbler's 200th birthday, 2001, Michel 2357, Scott 1857

N^o. 39.

Der Sammler.

Ein Unterhaltungsblatt für alle Stände.

Montag den

32^{ter} Jahrgang.

9. März 1840.

Dieses Blatt erscheint wöchentlich viermal: Montag, Dienstag, Donnerstag und Sonnabend, mit lithographirten Bilder-Beilagen in zwangloser Folge im Comptoir des Österreichischen Beobachters, Dorotheergasse Nr. 1106. Vierteljähriger Abonnementspreis 2 fl. 24 kr. G. W.

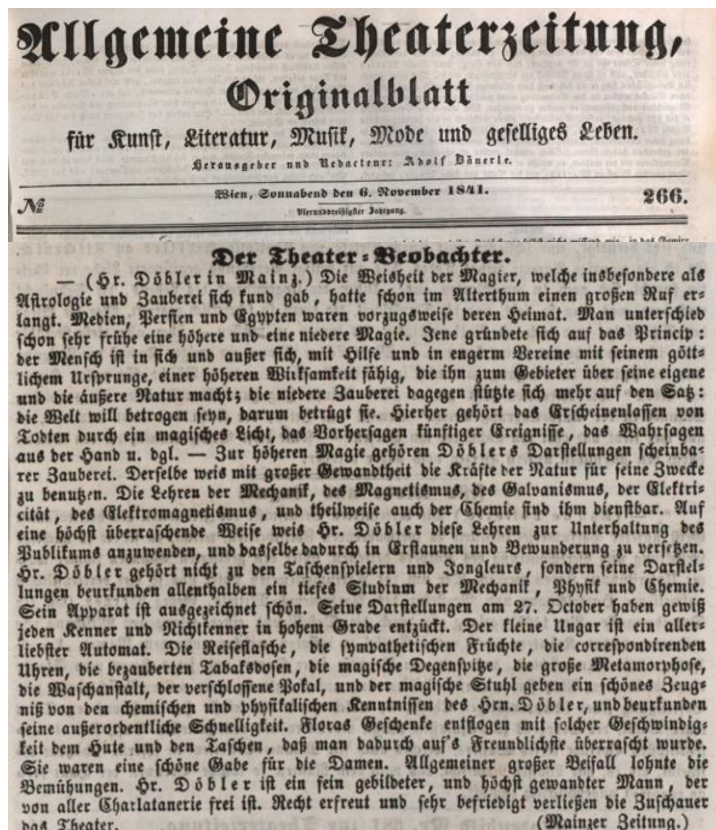
(Wiener-Neustadt.) Hr. Döbler gab im hiesigen Theater in dreh Tagen vier Vorstellungen, am 28. und 29. Febr. dann am 1. März (an letzterem Tage um 4 Uhr Nachmittags und 7 Uhr Abends) bey fast unerhört erhöhten Preisen und stets vollen Häusern. So groß ist die Zauberkrast des Rufes, daß alle Logen und Sperrsiße für die vier Productionen vergriffen waren, ehe Döbler noch angekommen. Der Beyfall ging gleichen Schritt mit den Erwartungen: beyde waren excentrisch, und selbst das Menschliche, was dem Zauberer hier begegnete, konnte diesen nicht herabstimmen. Als Döbler ein Spiel Karten werfen ließ und die gewählte an der Degenspitze erscheinen lassen sollte, war diese schon darau, ehe noch die Karten geworfen wurden. Das wäre für den Unbefangenen allzu potenzierte Vollendung gewesen, wie aber da unbefangen bleiben, wo Döbler verblüfft und besticht, durch das Unergründliche seiner Leistungen. Ein Lächeln im Publicum war der leise Vorwurf über das mißlungene Kunststück, er sagte: eins, zwey, drey — und Alles war wieder vergessen.

Translation in English by Magic Christian ²²

(Wiener Neustadt.) In the local theater M. Döbler presented four performances in three days, February 28th and 29th and then March 1st (On the last day at 4 o'clock in the afternoon and at 7 o'clock in the evening) even at outrageous high prices and always full houses. The might of his fame is so great that all boxes <loges> and stalls were sold out even before Döbler arrived. The applaus followed in lockstep the expectations: Both were eccentric, and even the human factor which faced the conjurer could not minimize it. **When Döbler asked to throw a deck of cards and the selected card should appear on the tip of the rapier, it was already there before the cards were even thrown.** This would have been the most of potentized perfection for the unprejudiced person. But how one can stay unprejudiced when Döbler surprises and wins over by his accomplishment. A smile in the audience was the unheard <silent> reproach concerning the missed <failed> piece of art, he said: One, two, three – and everything was forgotten again.

²² Magic Christian, 1st prize winner FISM, historical researcher and authority on Hofzinser.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_\(magician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_(magician))

Also, in the newspaper "*Allgemeine Theater Zeitung*" ²³, dated November 6th, 1841, there is a report that a newspaper in Mainz (Germany), "*Die Mainzer Zeitung*", a performance mentioned by Ludwig Döbler on **October 27, 1841**, and that one of the tricks he performed, was the "*Die Magische Degenspitze*" ²⁴.



Translation of a part of the article in English by Magic Christian ²⁵

... Mr. Döbler does not belong to the conjurers and jugglers but his performances are based on a detailed study of the mechanic, physics and chemistry. His apparatus is extraordinary beautiful. His performances on October 27th delighted for sure every connoisseur and not-connoisseurs in high grades. The little Hungarian is a delightful automaton. The travel bag, the sympathetic fruits, the corresponding watches, the enchanting tobacco box, **the magic Sword tip**, the grand metamorphosis, the laundry shop, the locked goblet, and the magic chair present a wonderful testimonial of the physical and chemical knowledge of Mr. Döbler, and document his extraordinary swiftness ...

²³ Newspaper, *Allgemeine Theater Zeitung*, Vienna, November 06, 1841, page 1167, Österreichische Nationalbibliothek – Historische österreichische Zeitungen und Zetschriften See also:

https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wiener_Theaterzeitung

²⁴ Difficult to translate into English. Literally translated it means: "the magic point of the sword"

²⁵ Magic Christian, 1st prize winner FISM, historical researcher and authority on Hofzinser.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_\(magician\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magic_Christian_(magician))

It is of course possible, and even very probable, that Ludwig Döbler used the card sword even before February 28, 1840, in the many performances he gave before that date.



Ludwig Döbler

photo of an original lithograph from Döbler's own collection – 1839

Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin

Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin, a French magician who lived from 1805 to 1871 and has been called "the father of modern magic".

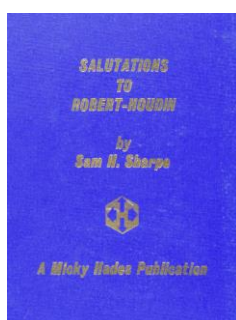
Numerous books have been written about him and it is not our intention in this article to go into details about his life and work.

We mention him here because he is such an important figure in the history of magic and because he also performed the Card Sword trick.

He even performed it in two different ways if one follows our definitions.

- 1) In 1853 (thirteen years after Döbler) he performed the card sword in London during a performance for the Queen of England.

The trick is in Sharpe's book ²⁶ under the name of "*The Magnetic Sword*".



The Magnetic Sword: Another effect featured by Döbler in 1842, in which chosen cards were caught on the point of a sword. It is described at page 121 of *Modern Magic*.

- 2) During that same performance, he also performed the "*The ladies' looking-glass*", a trick discussed later in chapter IV.

In 1853 there were undoubtedly several magicians who performed the Card Sword. It certainly wasn't a novelty anymore (Döbler performed it at least 13 years earlier). We're pretty sure Robert-Houdin never designed or improved one himself. In none of the books written by him, there is any mention of a card sword. Had he designed or improved one, he would certainly have mentioned it in one of his books.

However, Robert-Houdin is, as far as we can determine, the first magician to describe a Physical Card Sword trick (*The Ladies' Looking-Glass*).

This trick was originally titled "*Miroir des Dames*" and was also explained by him ²⁷. Hoffmann translated the book into English ²⁸ and gave it the title "The ladies' looking-glass".

This trick is discussed further in this article in *chapter IV - Physical Card Sword*.

²⁶ Sharpe, Sam H., *Salutations to Robert-Houdin*, Micky Hades International, Calgary, 1983, page 32

²⁷ Robert-Houdin, *Les secrets de la prestidigitation et de la magie*, Michel Lévy frères, Paris, 1868, page 245

²⁸ Robert Houdin, translated by Hoffmann, *The secrets of conjuring and magic*, Routledge & Sons, 1877, chapter V – tricks with cards



Jean-Eugène Robert-Houdin

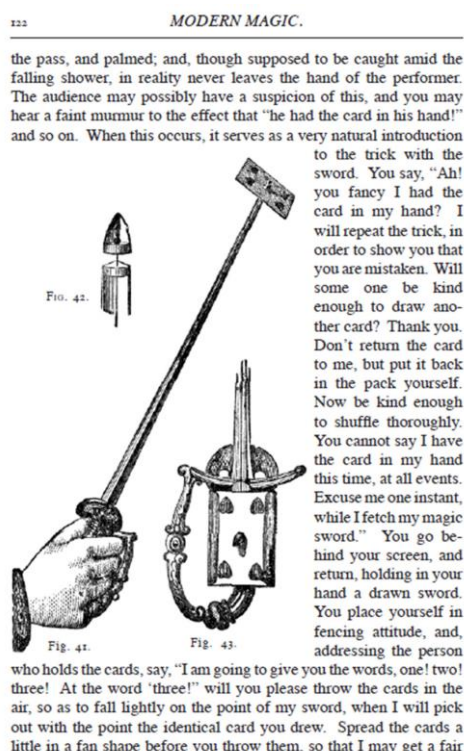
Image from the book: Houdini Harry, *The Unmasking of Robert-Houdin*, Publishers Printing Co, New York, 1908, page 24

The first explanation of the card sword trick in a book

Barton Whaley wrote in his *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic* ²⁹ under the paragraph "Card Sword":

"Exposed in 1876 by Hoffmann (p. 121)."

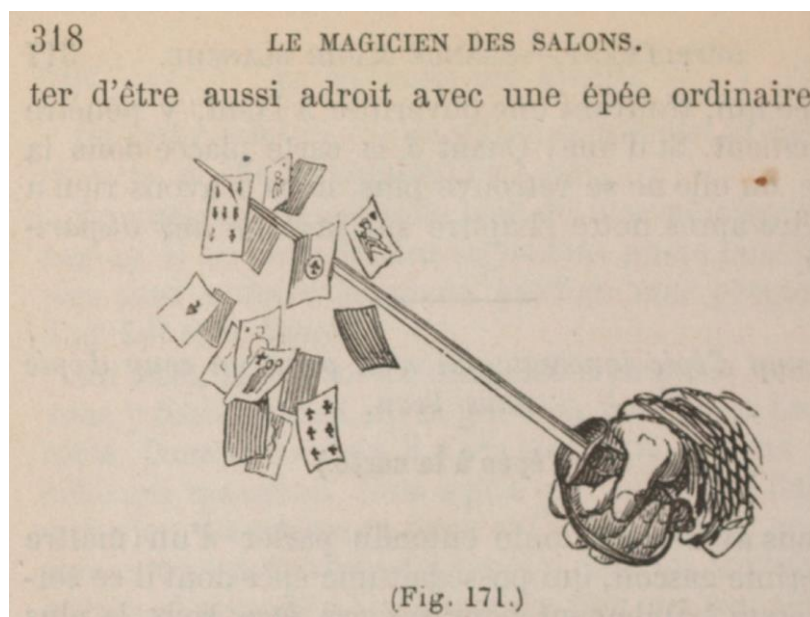
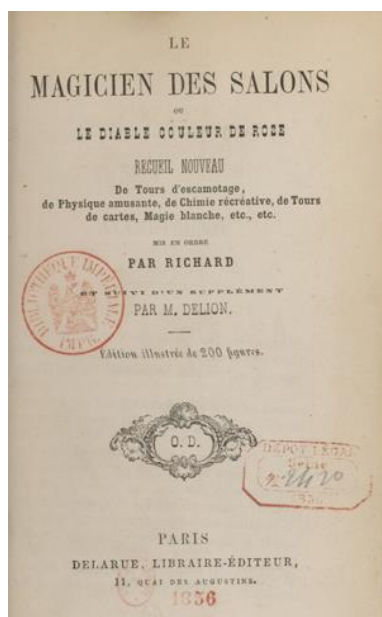
Whaley refers to the book *Modern Magic* by Professor Hoffmann, Routledge & Sons, 1876



²⁹ Whaley, Barton, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic*, Jeff Busby Magic, 1989, page 166

However, the book described below dates from even 20 years earlier.

Delarue (under the pseudonym Richard) and Delion, *Le Magicien des salons ou le diable couleur de rose*, Paris, Delarue – libraire-éditeur, page 317-319 (c.1856)



The book is undated, but 1856 is generally accepted as the date of publication.

Publisher, binding and cover correspond to that time period.

In the book, the explanation of the card sword talks about "un fil" (= thread) instead of "elastic" in Hoffmann's book. (see section "Catgut" on page 33)

In the foreword, the author Richard writes that Delion (the co-author of the book) does tricks from this book. He is writing this in the present tense.

Après avoir mis à contribution tous les auteurs anciens qui avaient acquis quelque juste célébrité dans cette science, nous nous sommes adressé à l'un des plus renommés de nos professeurs de physique amusante, M. DELION, qui nous a donné comme supplément une quantité de tours qu'il exécute sur son petit théâtre du passage Verdeau, aux applaudissements unanimes des petits et des grands enfants qui comblent sa salle à chaque représentation.

excerpt of the preface ³⁰

qu'il exécute = that he executes = present tense

Delion lived from 1811 to 1866 and was a physicist, magician and manufacturer of toys.

³⁰ Delarue (under the pseudonym Richard) and Delion, *Le Magicien des salons ou le diable couleur de rose*, Paris, Delarue – libraire-éditeur, page V (c.1856)

At the back of the book are advertisements for books dating from 1854.

The French weekly *L'éclair* from 1852 ³¹ states that Delion attracts many people with his performances as a magician.

— M. Delion, l'habile prestidigitateur du passage Ver-deau, continue à attirer la foule au charmant petit théâtre qu'il dirige. Nous aimons mieux conseiller à nos lecteurs d'aller voir eux-mêmes les ébouriffantes surprises de ce sorcier moderne, que d'essayer d'en faire le récit.

The estimate by the French libraries for the year 1856 therefore seems to us to be quite accurate.

Delion performs the tricks from the book in his theater as the author writes the book. The book must therefore date at least from before 1867, since Delion died in 1866.

The book was subsequently reprinted many times (1857, 1860, 1865, 1871, 1891, etc.) with sometimes different titles.

At that time, the book had been translated into Dutch (1875), German (1858), Italian (1873) and Spanish (1875).

To this day, reprints are still being made in various languages.

In the later translations, the pink devil usually turned red and the word “Bosco” appears.

In many later editions, the original authors were simply not mentioned anymore.

Spanish: *El mago de los salones ó El diablo color de rosa*, València, Librería de Pascual Aguilar, 1875

<https://roderic.uv.es/handle/10550/78187>

Dutch: *De roode duivel in den gezelligen kring*, Gouda, Van Goor Zonen, 1875

German: *Der rothe Teufel im Salon oder Bosco in allen Hesellschaften*, Verlag und druck Bernhard Voigt, 1858 (Harry Houdini Collection - Library of Congress)

https://openlibrary.org/books/OL23916253M/Der_rothe_Teufel_im_Salon_oder_Bosco_in_allen_Gesellschaften

Italian: *Il nuovo Bosco ossia il diavolo color di rosa*, Colombo Coen, Venezia Trieste, 1873

<https://www.amazon.it/NUOVO-BOSCO-OSSIA-DIAVOLO-COLOR/dp/B01MT15AVB>

³¹ *L'Éclair: revue hebdomadaire de la littérature, des théâtres et des arts*

Volume 1 – 1852 - Page 108, Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

The first dealer and commercial constructor of a Card Sword

In *Le Magicien des salons ou le diable couleur de rose* (1860), A.-O. Delarue (under the pseudonym Richard) provided beginners with a set of older tricks and also more recent ones, including those of the professor of amusing physics and toy maker Jean-Baptiste Delion (1811–1866). ³²



There is no card sword depicted on the lithograph, but if you look at the nature of the other instruments that he makes and sells (e.g., orange tree), it is almost certain that he also made the card sword that he explained in the book *Le magicien des salons* of which he co-authored ³³.

Poster printed by Rouchon
(Paris), 1855
Wood engraving, 76 x 55 cm
© Bibliothèque nationale de
France

Delion

Tour de cartes et escamotage

Paris 1860.

2 COPIE DISPONIBILI

[BNF Gallica](#)
[Leggi](#)

Locandina pubblicitaria del negozio di Delion (*fabricant, artiste, marchand*).

LINGUA

³² Lachapelle Sofie, *Conjuring Science: A History of Scientific Entertainment and Stage Magic in Modern France*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2015

³³ Delarue (under the pseudonym Richard) and Delion, *Le Magicien des salons ou le diable couleur de rose*, Paris, Delarue – libraire-éditeur, page 317-319 (c.1856)

Manufactures (in the past)

Manufacturers mean, of course, under whose name they were sold. It is evident that these people also usually had their craftsmen who were the real makers.

So, it was *Dag Johansen* who made the swords for El Duco.

Below is a list of manufactures that is certainly not exhaustive.

Delion (France) - c. 1855-1865 (99% certainty)

Carl Willmann (Germany) – 1872 – 1924 ³⁴

János Bartl (Germany) – 1919 -1924 ³⁵

Sigmund Klingl (Austria) – 1876 -1926

Petrie-Lewis (USA) – 1917 – 1968 (later purchased by Abbott's) ³⁶

Davenport – c.1935

Edward Massey – c.1946

Merv Taylor – 1948 – c.1955 ³⁷

Jean Ducatillon (France) – c. 1955 -1980 (AO sword from Fred Kaps)

Harry Stanley (England) – c. 1950

Abbott (USA) – Conley sword – 1950

Georges Proust (France) – c. 1980

El Duco (Sweden) – c. 1990

Jay Lesly (remade of the Massey dagger) – c. 2004

Julio Lipan (Spain) - Card Sword Deluxe – c.2005

Murphy's Magic Supplies (USA) - Card Sword Deluxe II – c. 2010

Magic Wagon (USA) - Ultimate Card Dagger – 2016 (in wood)

See also Potter & Potter (USA) – auction house - older copies from collections, occasionally come up for sale <https://www.potterauctions.com/>



Courtesy of Potter&Potter

³⁴ http://www.zauber-pedia.de/index.php?title=Carl_Willmann

³⁵ https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Janos_Bartl

³⁶ https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=Petrie-Lewis_Manufacturing_Company

³⁷ http://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=Merv_Taylor

³⁸ Potter&Potter, *Karl Germain's sword (c.1903)*, Ken Klosterman Collection, Part II, lot 62, March 26, 2022

Workings

Self-knowledge is the beginning of all wisdom.

The purpose of this article is to provide as faithful as possible, a timeline for the card sword.

I'm not going to explain the operation of the different card swords in detail from beginning to end for two reasons:

- Collectors of old magic equipment and auction houses undoubtedly have more expertise in this than the author.
- The author of this article is a grumpy old man who has a natural aversion to explaining everything everywhere when it comes to magic.

We therefore limit ourselves to the main classifications.

There are 2 main categories:

A mechanical (gaffed) sword and a normal sword

If the magician uses a normal sword, it is the magician who causes the cards to appear on the point through dexterity. That is usually only one card with a normal sword. Various methods are described in the magical literature.

The mechanical card swords work with an elastic or without an elastic.

Some have a "housing" for the cards, and some don't.

Some mechanical swords are dismountable, others are not.

Sometimes a chest is included with the mechanical swords for protection and transport.

With a mechanical sword, 3 playing cards are normally pierced by the magician.

Warning:

In the old European card swords with a "housing" for the card(s), **bridge sized cards must be used**. The "housing" is in some older swords not wide enough for poker cards.

Catgut

Before real elastic was common, it is almost certain that "catgut" would have been used for the card sword.

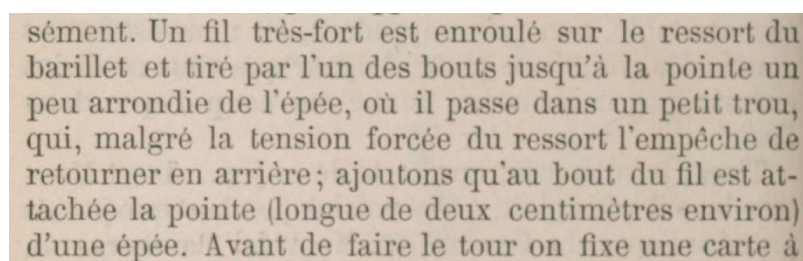
Catgut is an animal material that offered the perfect combination of strength and "spring".

Catgut was used in tennis rackets and as violin strings, among other things. It is an elastic animal material (gut) that does **NOT** come from a cat, but from sheep or cows. There are countless articles ³⁹ on the internet that extensively discuss what catgut actually is and what it is used for.

Catgut is of animal origin and decays with time. One will probably never find an old card sword with catgut.

It should also be noted that in the book from Delarue ⁴⁰, c.1856, that describes a card sword for the first time, there is still mention of "*a thread*", while in 1876 Hoffmann already mentions "*elastic*" in his book *Modern Magic* ⁴¹

This section will be a great relief to your cat.



sément. Un fil très-fort est enroulé sur le ressort du barillet et tiré par l'un des bouts jusqu'à la pointe un peu arrondie de l'épée, où il passe dans un petit trou, qui, malgré la tension forcée du ressort l'empêche de retourner en arrière; ajoutons qu'au bout du fil est attachée la pointe (longue de deux centimètres environ) d'une épée. Avant de faire le tour on fixe une carte à

page 318, Delarue (c.1856) = un fil (French) = **a thread**

middle, so as to form, with the concavity of the blade, a kind of eye just large enough to admit freely a piece of thin black elastic cord, the other end of which is passed through a similar small hole in the guard of the hilt. The elastic thus lies along the hollow side of the blade, passing through the two "eyes" already mentioned, and is kept in position by a knot at each end. The tension of the elastic holds the moveable tip in its natural position at the end of the blade. It may, however, be drawn away from it in any direction as far as the elastic will permit, but, when released, immediately flies back to its old position. On the same side of the hilt—viz., the side farthest

page 123, Hoffmann (1876) = **elastic**

³⁹ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/quora/2018/09/26/what-is-catgut-really-made-from/?sh=25f857b37fce>

⁴⁰ Delarue (under the pseudonym Richard) and Delion, *Le Magicien des salons ou le diable couleur de rose*, Paris, Delarue – libraire-éditeur, c.1856, page 318

⁴¹ Hoffmann Professor, *Modern Magic*, American edition, David Mc Kay, Philadelphia, 1876, page 123

Throwing the cards in the air

The main feature of a card sword trick is that the playing cards are thrown into the air. Throwing the playing cards in the air is usually done in one of these 4 ways:

- 1) The magician has the sword in one hand and with the other hand he does a "card spring flourish" with the deck in an upward direction. It is also nice to do a ribbon spread on the free arm as Lance Burton does and throw the cards in the air with a short upwards movement ⁴².

Keith Clark did "the arm spread" in combination with a card sword already in 1940 / 1941 ⁴³

Keith Clark, currently at the Rainbow Room, (N.Y.) is making good with a color changing tie and arm card spread using a card sword,

- 2) The magician has the sword in his hand and a spectator is given the deck of cards, which he has to throw up on the third count or on an agreed signal. This method involves risks. If the spectator misunderstood the command or reacts too late, or throws the cards too low, or ... There is a lot that can go wrong, and the magician is not 100% in control. On the other side there is the participation of someone from the public which is positive. Ludwig Döbler can speak of experience (see page 21 – Ludwig Döbler -The first written report of a performance)
- 3) Another commonly used method is to have the cards fired into the air by a (hidden) mechanical device. Namely a card fountain with a time mechanism or preferably with a remote. Nowadays there is already a card fountain that can be palmed in the hand and that can be triggered manually or with a remote.
- 4) The magician places the deck of playing cards ON the blade of the sword, a dagger or even a kitchen knife and makes an upward movement with the pointed object causing the cards to fly in the air. This method is usually used when one is not working with a mechanical sword, but with an ordinary pointed object. The pointed object then already protrudes through a slit in the bottom card.

Weak points of many mechanical Card Swords

The weak point of most card swords is the elastic. At least, those swords that work with an elastic.

At some point and probably depending on the model and construction, it will break sooner or later.

I suspect this is the case with all those swords after many years.

It is really not easy to find the right elastic that differs in thickness from model to model. The elastic should be thick enough and the stretch should be triple ⁴⁴ its length. The percentage of real rubber that is processed in the elastic plays a major role here.

It is not unwise to ask for spare elastic from the maker of a card sword.

Another thing is that, especially with the older swords, the metal "tip" is often lost.

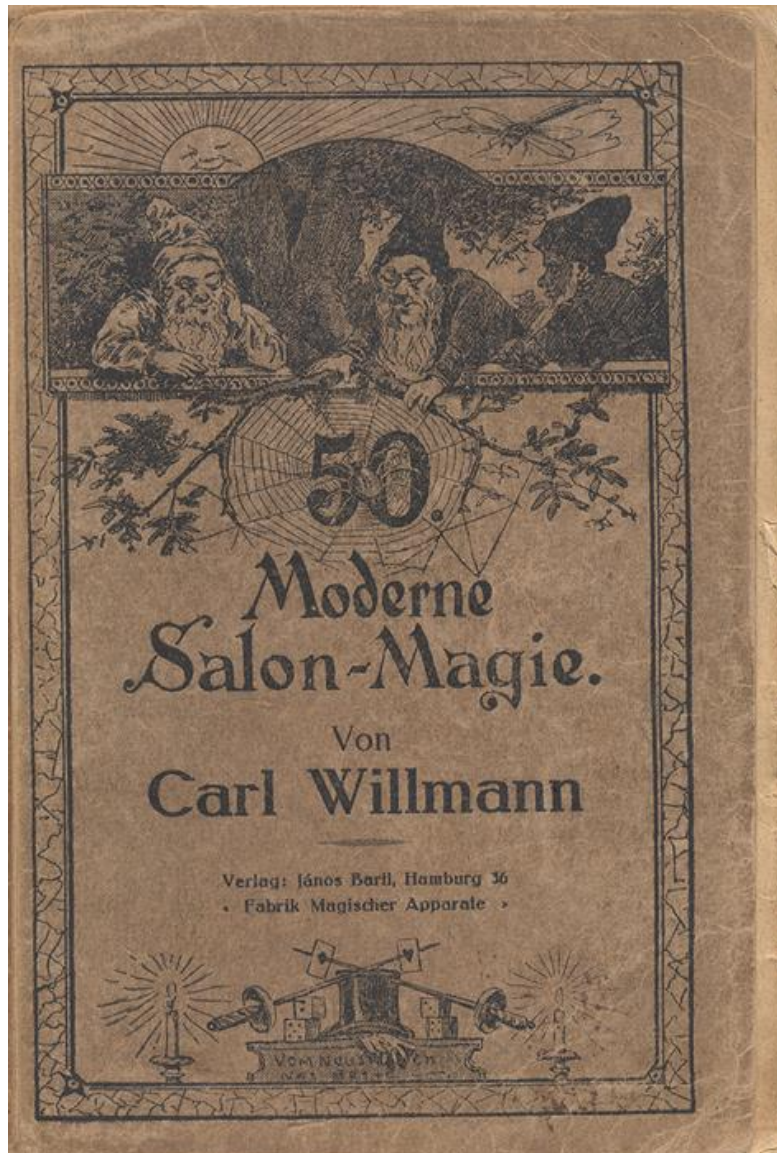
⁴² https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JCx-vqDt_9c and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NluBiLxgOMs&t=2s>

⁴³ Periodical, *The Jinx*, N° 126, 1940/1941, page 732

⁴⁴ Periodical, *The Sphinx*, Vol 45, July 1946, N° 5, page 141

The first image of a card sword on the cover of a book

The first image on the front cover of a book that we were able to retrieve shows even two card swords and dates from 1926 ⁴⁵



⁴⁵ Willmann Carl, *Die moderne Salon-Magie*, Verlag Janos Bartl, Hamburg, 1926

The most explanations in one book

Der Kartenkünstler ⁴⁶

literal translation: The Card Artist

The book is undated and different sources give different dates for the first edition, ranging from 1870 to 1895.

In this book, written in the German language, a total of no less than eight cards are pierced by a sword!

These eight cards are spread over **three different tricks**, which in itself is also the biggest number of tricks with a card sword that we found in a book.

Der magische Degen

literal translation: The magic sword

pages 9 and 10 (digital edition),

A normal card stab trick where the cards are spread out on the floor and where the blindfolded magician is spearing the chosen card with a sword.

Das Aufspießen gezogener Karten auf einen Degen

literal translation: The impaling of chosen cards on a sword

pages 18 and 19 (digital edition) page 21 and 22 (book)

A card sword trick with a normal sword and 4 prepared cards.

The prepared cards are for sale in the catalog, *Bartl's Akademie für moderne magische Kunst*, page 134, N° 1589 - *Die durchspießten Karten* (see page 44)

The magician throws the cards in the air and pierces 4 playing cards on his sword

Der Kartendegen

literal translation: The card sword

pages 48 and 49 (digital edition)

A card sword trick with a mechanical sword where the magician pierces 3 playing cards with his sword after the cards were thrown in the air.

The most routines

The magazine that describes the most routines with a card sword in 1 volume is undoubtedly *"Tops"* Volume 15 (1950).

The reason is not hard to find. The magazine was published by Abbott and 1950 was the year they launched their Improved Conley sword.

⁴⁶ Suhr H.F.C., *Der Kartenkünstler*, Verlag von Levy & Müller, Hamburg, n.d. (c.1895)

Digital edition by Lybrary.com – <https://www.lybrary.com/der-kartenkuenstler-p-922426.html>

How many cards on a Card Sword?

With a **Card Stab**, usually only 1 card is pierced with a sword, dagger or knife. Although, we came across a performance of a card stab with three daggers and three cards (Douglas Dexter in 1934) ⁴⁷.

With a **Card Sword** there are more variations:

With 6 playing cards:

Let's start with the record number of cards on a Card Sword we've found. That honor goes to the Russian illusionist Kio in 1967 with no less than SIX playing cards ⁴⁸.

At precisely 9:27 P.M. on the evening of October 8, 1967, the two entryway posts at the west end of Madison Square Garden in New York City were lighted from within, the orchestra leader raised his baton and Igor Kio, son of the late Emil Kio, made his American debut as the star of the Moscow Circus.

Kio takes a pack of cards, gives six cards to as many spectators and tells them to remember the cards. The cards are returned to the pack. Kio flourishes a sword in the ring. A girl tosses the pack toward him. He lunges. The six cards are impaled on the blade.

With 4 playing cards:

In the book *Der Kartenkünstler* ⁴⁹ we find a card sword trick *Das Aufspießen gezogener Karten auf einen Degen* (literal translation: The impaling of chosen cards on a sword) with 4 (prepared) cards.

The prepared cards are for sale in the catalog, *Bartl's Akademie für moderne magische Kunst*, page 134, N° 1589 - *Die durchspießten Karten* (see page 44)

Dieses effektvolle Kunststück, welches auf dem Programm des berühmten Zauber Künstlers St. Roman stets in fetten Lettern prangte und zu dessen am meisten bewunderten Piecen zählte,

It was featured in St. Roman's program in bold and was one of his most admired tricks

St. Roman (1829-1918), born Samuel Thiersfeld in Austria-Hungary, abandoned being a pastry cook for a life of music and magic in 1857. He was a pupil of Hofzinser ⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Holden Max, *Programmes of famous Magicians*, self published Max Holden, New York City, 1937, page 14 and 15

⁴⁸ Periodical, *The New Tops*, Vol. 7, December 1967, page 7 and 8

⁴⁹ Suhr H.F.C., *Der Kartenkünstler*, Verlag von Levy & Müller, Hamburg, n.d. (c.1895), page 22

With 3 playing cards:

A sword on which three playing cards are impaled is not an ordinary image, but an archetype that is present in the subconscious mind of all magicians, older than 40 years in 2022. And that's the case since the beginning of the 20th century.

With 2 playing cards:

We have not come across any description of a card sword trick where two playing cards were used.

There is, however, a card sword that can only function with a maximum of 2 playing cards ⁵¹.

With 1 playing card:

Each card sword can be used with 1 playing card.

Is impaling 3 cards to the sword imperative?

As I wrote above, the image of 3 playing cards on a card sword has become archetypal and we don't even think about it anymore.

But is it really that logical and for the best?

To be fair, also the author of this article has never thought about that before now.

It's only until writing this article and reading an article by Ducatillon that we started thinking about it. And Ducatillon is right!

Ducatillon is a strong advocate of doing the card sword with only 1 card.

I quote Ducatillon ⁵² :

“” Une seule suffit. Transpercer au vol une carte choisie est déjà un exploit suffisamment remarquable!!

Il ne faut pas vouloir forcer son talent en voulant prouver que l'on transperce deux cartes d'un seul coup d'épée !!!

Une seule carte ..., une seule ..., croyez-moi! “”

translated:

“One is enough. To pierce a chosen card on the fly is already a remarkable enough feat !!

You should not want to force your talent by wanting to prove that you pierce two cards with a single sword stroke!!!

Just one card..., one card..., believe me!”

The fact that he writes about 2 and not 3 cards is because his sword could only hold 2 cards.

Notice how he uses double and even triple exclamation points to support his point of view. It says something about how strong his conviction is on this matter...

⁵⁰ [https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=St. Roman](https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=St._Roman)

⁵¹ Fred Kaps's card sword – see Addendum page 63

⁵² Periodical, *Le Magicien*, January 1959, N° 70, page 2093 (French)

See also page 63 (Fred Kaps's Sword) and page 64 (the card sword in 3D)

Fred Kaps, Ludow, Ger Copper and Lance Burton (and I) have clearly listened to his advice.



The author of this article when he was performing the card sword with 3 playing cards just at the moment of the piercing and when 2 more cards still had to fall down on the sword.

Photo taken at least 150 years ago.

I know better now. ⁵³

Less is more! ⁵⁴

⁵³ Only fools and dead men don't change their minds. Fools won't and dead men can't

⁵⁴ Made famous by the designer and architect Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, the dictum, *Less is More* came to define the brave, utopian ideals of modernist design and architecture. In fact the phrase originated in Robert Browning's 1855 poem *Andrea del Sarto*

Old catalogs and magic magazines

If you feel the urge to do a doctoral dissertation on the card sword trick, then you have the duty to read EVERYTHING closely related to the subject. However, this is not a PhD thesis, but a free article.

We have therefore limited ourselves to a choice of mostly English and German-language documents that more or less creates a general picture. We are convinced if someone does the same with magazines and catalogs in another language (Dutch, French, Italian, Spanish, etc.) they would arrive at exactly the same image.

We did go through several hundred old magazines, which is really only a fraction of what is available in old magazines. Publishing everything from what we found here wouldn't really contribute much.

In our opinion, the content of the texts is of less importance, but it is mainly the adjectives that are used that reveal a lot.

From the word choice of the adjectives, it is very clear that the card sword was already a classic in magic around the turn of the century (1899/1900) and was known by everyone.

The card sword could be found in almost every catalogue, he appeared in the programs of the magicians and variants were already described in the magazines. The catalogs already contained also "improved" versions of the card sword.

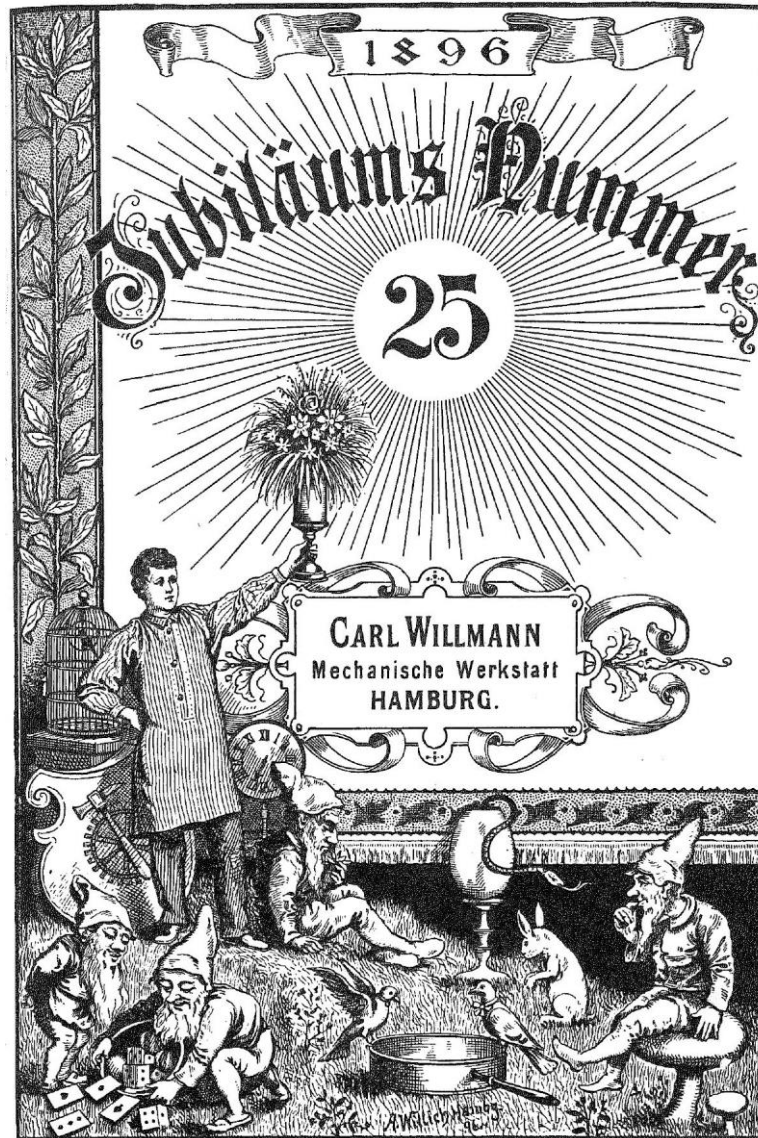
Some examples on the next pages

1872 – 1924

In 1872 Carl Willmann⁵⁵ ran a clockmaker's shop and mechanical workshop in Hamburg, where he also began to manufacture magic devices.

He was the first in the world to publish a magazine for magicians.

In July 1919, the companies *Janos Bartl* and *Carl Willmann* merged to form the *Vereinigten Zauberapparate-Fabrik Bartl & Willmann*. The collaboration ended in 1924.



40

CARL WILLMANN, HAMBURG.

162.

Der Kartendegen.

Der Künstler lässt mehrere Karten aus einem Spiel ziehen und in dasselbe zurückmischen, lässt das Kartenspiel in die Luft werfen, fährt mit dem Degen zwischen dieselben, und spießt die vorher gezogenen Karten mit demselben auf M. 18.—

Catalog – private collection Dr. Steffen Taut

⁵⁵ http://www.zauber-pedia.de/index.php?title=Carl_Willmann

c.1895

Illustrated catalogue, Hamley Brothers., London, c.1895

A card sword is already depicted on the front cover of the catalogue.

We are not in possession of the catalogue, but it goes without saying that the card sword will also be sold at the Hamley brothers.



56



detail

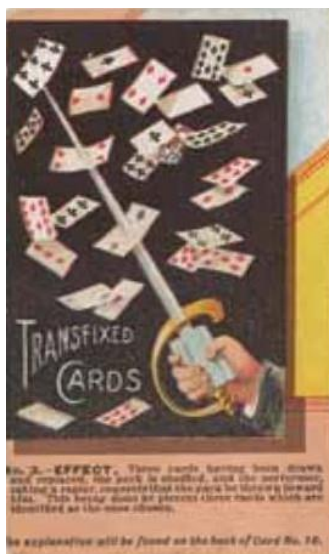
Courtesy of Potter & Potter

⁵⁶ Potter & Potter auctions, Summer Magic Auction, lot 109, August 2018 - <https://www.potterauctions.com/>

c.1887⁵⁷

A trading card from c.1887 with the image of a card sword.

There were 24 such cards and they were originally packed with Duke's Honest Long Cut tobacco.



1902⁵⁸

New method of Card and Sword trick

The **old** method of ...

New Method of Card and Sword Trick.

The old method of catching the chosen card upon the point of the sword is all very well in it's way, but as the card must be forced and the duplicate be ready on sword attachment, it has it's disadvantages. The way I work this experiment is as follows :—

1902⁵⁹

New method

CARD ON SWORD, (New Method).

BY H. MARTIN CHAPENDER.

1909⁶⁰

Best model

Sword on which to catch three selected cards ; best model,
made and finished in best manner, brass and gilt 25/—

⁵⁷ Trading card with an image of a card sword. Lot 250 sold by Potter & Potter in 2016.

⁵⁸ Periodical, Stanyon Ellis, *Magic*, London, September 1902, page 92

⁵⁹ Periodical, Stanyon Ellis, *Magic*, London, November 1902, page 11

⁶⁰ Periodical, Stanyon Ellis, *Magic*, London, June 1909, page 70

Date unknown (c. 1910)



Bartl's Akademie
für moderne magische Kunst
Hamburg.

Preis Mk. 0,50.

134 János Bartl, Hamburg

1585. Das geheimnisvolle Kartenspiel.
Der Künstler blättert ein Kartenspiel als unpräpariert vor. Auf Wunsch ist er imstande, das Spiel so vorzublätern, daß nur die schwarzen resp. die roten Karten zu sehen sind.
Dieses eigenartige Kunststück wird jedem Künstler zur Freude gereichen.
M. 2.—

1586. Die Kunst, jede gedachte Karte zu erraten.
Dieser wirklich staunenswerte Trick ist wohl der dankbarste aller Kartenricks. Der Künstler kann das Kunststück beliebig wiederholen, ohne daß jemand hinter das Geheimnis des Künstlers kommen kann.
Ohne Volte, ohne jede Reihenfolge. M. 2.—

1587. Die mysteriöse Verbindungskarte.
Aus einem entliehenen Spiel wird eine beliebige Karte von fremder Hand gezogen und in das Spiel zurückgegeben, welches gut gemischt wird. Der Künstler bittet die Zuschauer zu bestimmen, als wievielte Karte die vorerst gezogene liegen soll; sofort zählt der Künstler die Karten nach und die betreffende Karte findet sich an der gewünschten Stelle an. M. 2.—

1588. Die verschwindende und wiedererscheinende Karte.
Der Künstler zeigt die vier Asse eines Kartenspiels vor und bittet einen Zuschauer, dieselben wieder in das Spiel hineinzugeben. Auf Wunsch des Künstlers durchblättert der Zuschauer jetzt das Spiel und stellt dieser fest, daß ein Ass aus dem Spiel verschwunden ist. Der Künstler kann die Karte an anderer Stelle wieder erscheinen lassen. M. 2.—

1589. Die durchspießten Karten.
Der Künstler bittet, aus einem Spiele mehrere Karten zu ziehen, dieselben sich zu merken und alsdann wieder in das Spiel zurückzugeben und das Spiel zu mischen. Der Künstler wirft nun das ganze Spiel in die Luft, sticht mit einem entliehenen Degen dazwischen und zum größten Erstaunen der Zuschauer sind die gezogenen Karten sämtlich aufgespießt.
Mit diesem frappanten Kunststück wird der Künstler stets großen Beifall ernten.
Das Spiel ohne Degen M. 2.—



Catalog – private collection Dr. Steffen Taut

N° 1589 of the catalog: Not the sword is sold, but the specially prepared cards. They are almost certain the playing cards needed for Carl Willmann's sword (see page 41)

The cards are connected to each other with a thin thread and are described in detail in the book *Der Kartenkünstler* by Carl Willmann (see page 36)

1915 ⁶¹

CARD ON THE SWORD

By Geo. W. Kennett

This is an idea for the effect of catching a selected card on the sword. Use a fencing foil with a sharp point. Duplicate card is concealed in hollow in sole of left shoe. While playing with the foil, bending on floor and the like, the point is inserted through card, and held on the floor. Then cards are tossed in the air, and the fencing foil is jerked up and through them, of course the selected card goes with it.

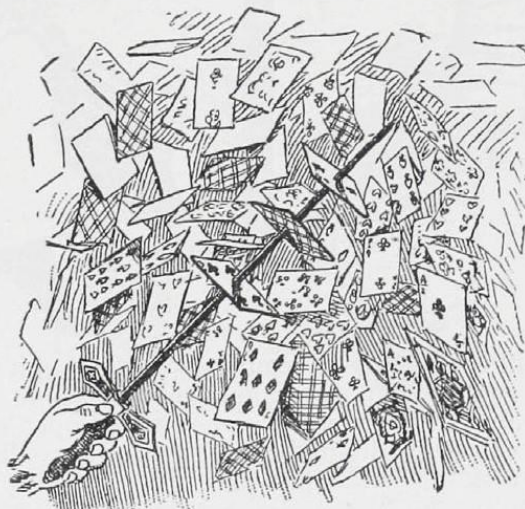
⁶¹ Periodical, *Magical Bulletin of the Magic Shop of the West*, Vol. III, N° 10, Los Angeles, October 1915

1916⁶²

In the text: *With several **recent improvements***

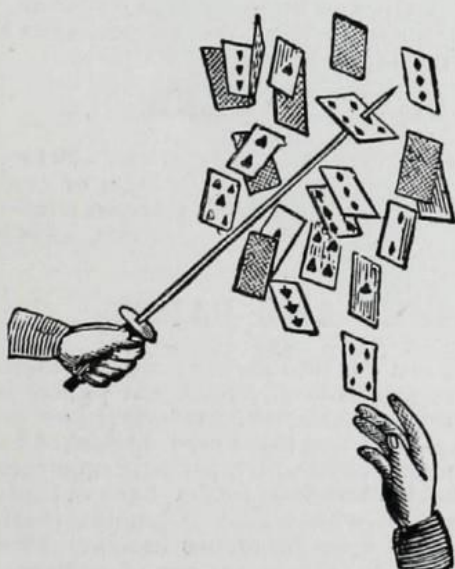
No. 438

THE CARD SWORD



Three or more cards are selected and returned to the pack, which is then shuffled by one of the spectators. The performer now seizes a slender sword and having freely shown all parts of it, asks the gentleman holding the pack to throw it high in the air. As the cards come down in a shower, the performer makes a lunge with his sword among the falling cards and catches the selected cards on the blade. The cards are then taken off the sword and thrown out to the audience. The sword we supply has a finely shaped tapering blade, which, with the handle, is highly plated. Best grade; with several recent improvements. Price.....\$5.00

1920⁶³



No. 34

34. THE CARD SWORD.

Several selected cards are caught upon the blade of a sword. Cards removed and all parts of sword may be freely shown. The sword is heavily plated, both hilt and blade Price, **\$5.00**

The same, finest make rapier blade, with houlette . . Price, **6.50**

35. RISING CARD WAND.

From an ordinary pack of cards several are chosen and put back again. On a magic wand a small skeleton frame is placed to hold the pack. At command the chosen cards rise from the pack, one at a time, or go back again if desired. Cards and skeleton frame are freely given for examination. Price, **\$6.00**

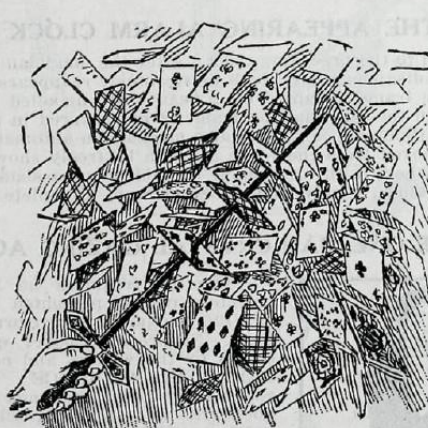
⁶² August Roterberg, *Catalogue N° 15 of Superior Maical Apparatus*, Chicago, 1916, item N° 438, page 161

⁶³ Silvey & Bugden, *Leroy's Mammoth Pictorial 20th century Up-to-date illustrated catalog*, c.1920, item N° 24, page 7

1924 ⁶⁴

8 years later: another dealer, the same sword as in 1916, 50% more expensive ☹️

No. 438 **THE CARD SWORD**



Three or more cards are selected and returned to the pack, which is then shuffled by one of the spectators. The performer now seizes a slender sword and having freely shown all parts of it, asks the gentleman holding the pack to throw it high in the air. As the cards come down in a shower, the performer makes a lunge with his sword among the falling cards and catches the selected cards on the blade. The cards are then taken off the sword and thrown out to the audience. The sword we supply has a finely shaped tapering blade, which, with the handle, is highly plated. **Best grade; with several recent improvements. Price.....\$7.50**

1926 ⁶⁵

From an Austrian catalog that celebrated its 50th anniversary in 1926.

50. JAHRGANG PREIS 5.-

1876 50 1926

PREISBUCH
DER
MODERNE MAGISCHE KUNSTE



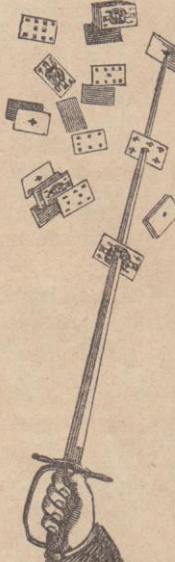
REG. SCHUTZMARKE

ZAUBER-KLINGL
WIEN, I. FOHRICHGASSE 4
TELEFON 76-3-45

3356
Der Karten-Degen.

Der Künstler lässt von mehreren Personen Karten ziehen und wieder in das Spiel mischen. Sodann zeigt der Künstler einen eleganten Degen und bittet die Person das ganze Kartenspiel in die Luft zu werfen. Im selben Moment stösst der Künstler mit dem Degen, in die zu Boden fallenden Karten und erscheinen am Degen aufgespiesst die drei vorher gezogenen Karten. Sehr hübsches Salon- und Bühnenexperiment. Der fein vernickelte Degen S 32.—.

Dazu passende Karten siehe unter Nr. 3295 oder 3308.

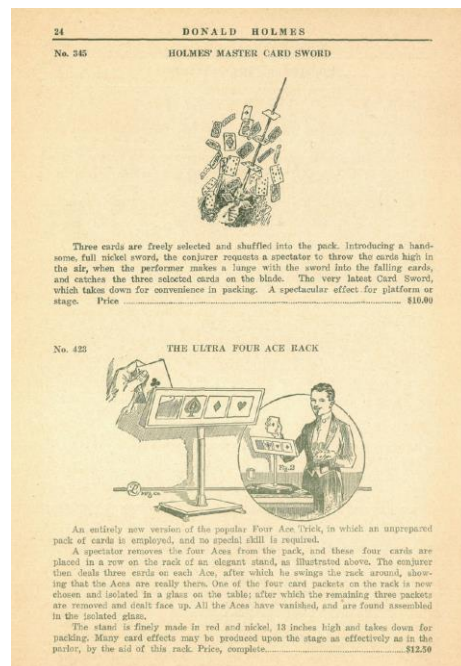
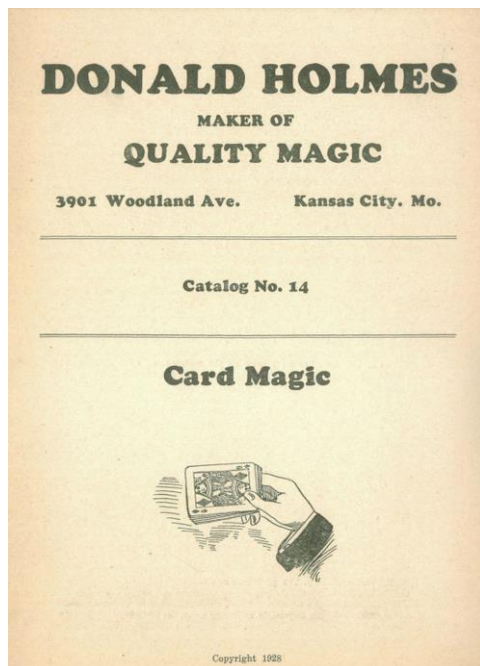


⁶⁴ Felsman Arthur, Magic From All Over the World And Everywhere Else, published by A. Felsman, Chicago, 1924, page 153

⁶⁵ Catalogue, *Zauber-Klingl*, 50th volume, Vienna, 1926

1928 ⁶⁶

In the text: "The very latest card sword"

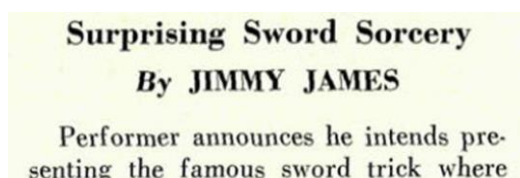


Three cards are freely selected and shuffled into the pack. Introducing a handsome, full nickel sword, the conjurer requests a spectator to throw the cards high in the air, when the performer makes a lunge with the sword into the falling cards, and catches the three selected cards on the blade. The very latest Card Sword, which takes down for convenience in packing. A spectacular effect for platform or stage. Price \$10.00

Donald Holmes ⁶⁷ (September 23, 1879 - December 30, 1958), born Donald Holmes Alsdorf in Albion, Michigan, was an amateur magician, inventor and dealer.

1948 ⁶⁸

Performer announces he intends presenting the famous sword trick



⁶⁶ Donald Holmes, Donald Holmes maker of quality magic Catalog No. 14, Kansas City, 1928

⁶⁷ http://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php/Donald_Holmes

⁶⁸ Periodical, magic magazine, *The Conjurer's Magazine*, Vol.4 N°5, July 1948, page 40

1933

The magician “Murray” performs the card sword in 1933 in London ⁶⁹.

We found this amusing because the current “Murray” also performs the card sword. Interesting is the sword of the current Murray ... (nice twist) ⁷⁰

MURRAY
LONDON — 1933

Shooting Through a Woman (With the assistance of two spectators from the audience) — A length of red ribbon is attached to a marked bullet. The bullet is loaded in a rifle, the trigger is pulled and the bullet is impaled in the target behind a girl assistant. The ribbon is pulled back and forth through her body and through a selected card held in front of her body.

The Pincushion Girl—Walking sticks are passed through girl assistant's body.

Selected Cards Caught on the Point of a Sword.

The Girl Without a Middle.

Siberian Handcuff Escape.

Escape from a Slotted Box while Immersed in a Tank of Water.



Murray plate – private collection Domenico Dante

Norman Murray Carrington Walters ⁷¹ (11 November 1901 – 22 January 1988), who used the mononym **Murray**, was an Australian escapologist and illusionist, who found international success between the 1920s and 1950s and settled in Britain.

⁶⁹ Holden Max, *Programs of famous magicians*, published by Max Holden, illustrated by Hahne, New York, 1937, page 34

⁷⁰ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7bWP1B2Q-k&t=8s>

⁷¹ <http://www.geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php/Murray>

In the second half of the 19th century, the card sword trick appeared in the magic books in many countries and languages.
By the early 1900s, the card sword had already become a classic of magic and was a regular item in every magic catalog.
In the magic magazines, the trick was regularly discussed in the form of submitted presentations, alternative methods to achieve the effect and sales ads.

From Card Stab to Card Sword

Since the 1840s and perhaps even earlier, someone had the idea to throw the playing cards in the air and impale them on a sword.
Who came up with this idea and when it actually happened is still unknown.

In 1899, Ducarel described in the magazine *Mahatma*⁷² a method to perform the card sword trick.

Probably without realizing it himself at the time, he described the method we believe to be the most logical by which the transition must have happened.

After all, real elastic did not exist in the early 19th century (but "catgut" - see page 33) and the first mechanical card sword we know dates from at the earliest c.1852 - 1856 (see Delion page 30).

It therefore seems very likely that the very first card sword tricks were performed with an unprepared sword.

After that, thread or catgut was probably used.

We do not even know which method Döbler and Robert-Houdin used.

CHOSEN CARD CAUGHT ON POINT OF AN ORDINARY SWORD.

BY MONS. DUCAREL, OF LEEDS.

Take a card and color the back of it same color as platform or carpet (of course if stage is high and there is no fear of anyone seeing card lying on it, you need not prepare card). You place prepared card somewhere about centre of stage, in a place where you will know exactly where it is. Force a duplicate card, let it be returned to pack and shuffled with pack. Let sword be examined, then stand near card on floor, sword in hand, point down, and waving backward and forward, as the pack of cards are thrown to you, you dig sword into the card on stage and rapidly thrust it amongst the flying cards, and then hand it and sword for examination. This trick requires considerable practice in taking up the card neatly and quickly. The proper position of body as regards card will be best found out by practice and experiment.

⁷² Periodical, *Mahatma*, monthly magazine, Vol 3 , N° VI, 1899

However, it should also be noted that there is already a mention in the magic literature of catching "a bullet" on a sword in the years 1800 and 1805. If one could then catch a bullet on a sword, catching a playing card is also not inconceivable.

That would reinforce the assumption that the card sword could also already performed in 1799 (see page 15).

In any case, nowhere is it described how and by what means these tricks came about.

Whaley ⁷³

Maginnis, British conjurer, caught bullets on his sword-point in Boston, 1800-1801. REF: Moulton (1919/1983), 4. John Rannie, a Scot, was catching bullets on a dagger's point in New England by 1805, claiming the "power of magnetism." REF: Pinchbeck (1805), 38-39.

The "REF: Moulton" in Whaley above, refers almost certainly to a book of Moulton ⁷⁴. Moulton made a list of all the performances in the city of Boston during the period 1792-1915 at the request (and for a fee) of Houdini. Unfortunately we do not have that book in our possession.

The "REF: Pinchbeck" in Whaley above, refers to the book *The Expositor* ⁷⁵. In Whaley it is "Rannie" and in *The Expositor* it is "Ranie", but this is undoubtedly the same person ⁷⁶.

The Expositor

A Gentleman has lately arrived here by the name of *Ranie* : His wonderful feats are performed by the Art of Legerdemain. The

page 38

2d. He suffers a gun to be discharged at him, previously loaded with powder and ball, and catches the ball on the point of a dagger ; declaring that he does it by the power of magnetism.

page 39

⁷³ Whaley, Barton, *Encyclopedic Dictionary of Magic*, Jeff Busby Magic, 1989, page 143

⁷⁴ Moulton H.J., *Houdini's History of Magic in Boston, 1792-1915*, Published by Meyerbooks, Glenwood, IL, 1983

⁷⁵ Pinchbeck William Frederick, *The Expositor*, printed for the author, Boston, 1805

⁷⁶ https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=John_Rannie



Courtesy of Swann Auction Galleries

Chapter IV

The Physical Card Sword

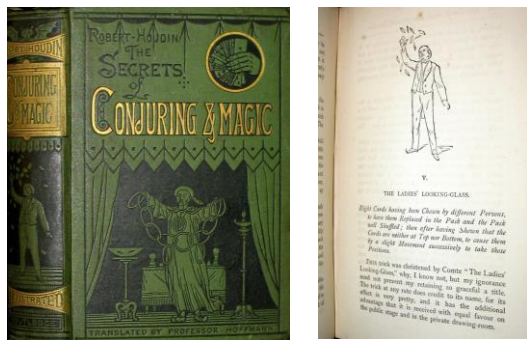
Just like with a real card sword, the cards are thrown UP into the air and the chosen card(s) is grabbed from among the falling cards with the hand only. The magician's arm and hand act as the card sword.

The Physical Card Sword trick in print

Robert-Houdin, *Les Secrets de la Prestidigitation et de la Magie*, Michel Lévy Frères, Paris, 1868, page 245, "Le miroir des Dames".

The English translation from the above book is:

Robert-Houdin (translated by Hoffmann), *The secrets of conjuring and magic*, Georges Routledge and Sons, London, 1878, chapter V, "The ladies' looking-glass".



Robert-Houdin performed this trick in 1853 for Queen Victoria in London. (See page 25 in chapter III)

The trick involves finding 8 playing cards.

Four spectators each choose two playing cards and from three spectators their two chosen cards appear every time as the top and bottom cards of the deck.

It is actually the reveal of the last spectator's two playing cards that is a "physical card sword". The magician throws the deck of cards into the air and catches the two playing cards of the last spectator from the fluttering cards.

Robert-Houdin writes that he has great success with this trick both in the salon (parlor) and in the theater (stage).

Robert-Houdin mentions also that the trick originally belonged to the magician Comte and that it was Comte⁷⁷ who gave this trick the name *Miroir des Dames*. It was apparently not clear to Robert-Houdin why Comte chose that name, but he decided not to change it because it sounded so charming.

From what Robert-Houdin writes, it is clear that the trick is Comte's.

It should also be noted that Robert-Houdin performed this trick with a 32-card deck of that time. After 6 cards from the previous three spectators were gone, only 26 were left.

With 26 cards, the cards flutter down nicely. Due to the special move needed in this particular trick, a deck of $52 - 6 = 46$ cards, falls down like a block (at least, in the hands of the author), which is not such a pretty sight. After all, in this particular trick, the cards are thrown up into the air and the chosen cards are captured by the same hand.

The trick is also described in Erdnase's famous book⁷⁸ under the name *Top and Bottom Production*.

⁷⁷ Comte Louis (1788-1859) is a magician and ventriloquist who had great fame at the time and had his own theater in Paris.

⁷⁸ Erdnase S.W., *Artifice Ruse and Subterfuge at the Card Table* (cover title: The expert at the card table), Frederick J. Drake & CO, Chicago, 1905, page 200-202

Recent physical card swords tricks

The trick of catching a card from a shower of cards continues to fascinate and has prompted many magicians to come up with their own variant.

Since it is a bit pathetic to reinvent the wheel, we refrain from publishing a comprehensive list of these tricks in this article.

After all, this work was previously done by Denis Behr and can be found in his **Conjuring Archive** ⁷⁹, an invaluable source of information for the researcher.

We would like to mention two books especially because both authors are fascinated by the subject and devote an extensive chapter to it in their book.

Both books describe (with explanations) at least 7 different variants.

Christoph Borer

A string of Pearls (German language)

Spelcaster Verlag, 2022

John Carney

Sleights & Insights

Carney Magic, 2020

The two books above are definitely recommended for anyone interested in the subject.

⁷⁹ <https://www.conjuringarchive.com/list/category/2862>

The finger is the point of the sword and really pierces the playing card

Among the physical card sword tricks, the tricks below have a special place. The playing card is not only plucked from the shower of cards but is actually pierced by the magician's finger.

Richard Kaufman

Cardmagic

Richard Kaufman and Alan Greenberg, 1979,

Trick: Karate Card

Page 7



Kaufman writes that he was inspired by what we know as the “karate coin”

Simon Lovell

Best of friends (volume III)

Harry Lorayne Inc. 2007

Trick: Poked

Page 121

Tom Cagnon

Too hot for the devil

avanT-Garde Magic, 2013

Trick: Cancelled deck Card Stab

Page 124

Christoph Borer

A string of Pearls (German language)

Spelcaster Verlag, 2022

Trick: Auf dem Finger aufgespiesst

Page 81

Simon Lovell

Close Up Magic to tapdance to

Spiral bound – self published?

1989

Trick: Squiddle

Page 93

In this last trick (squiddle), the surface of the card is not pierced, but the card is “split” by the finger.



Part of the photo was cropped by the author to better fit the page⁸⁰

⁸⁰ **Fred Kaps**, Utrecht, June 16, 1961 - photographer: Jack de Nijs – Dutch National Archives

Summary

Card Stab	1670	1680	1690	1700	1710	1720	1730	1740	1750	1760	1770	1780	1790	1800	1810	1820	1830	1840	1850	1860	1870	1880	1890	1900	2022
Card Stab first text	between 1670 and 1730																								
Card Stab publ. text																									
Card Sword																									
Card Sword performed																									
Card Sword publ. text																									

The first unpublished written text that mentions a sword in relation with a card trick dates from between 1670 and 1730. (Chapter I)

The first published written text that mentions a sword in relation with a card trick dates from 1740. (Chapter I)

These texts are always about playing cards that are on the floor or on the table and are in a static state. (= card stabbing)

The first appearance of a sword piercing a card from playing cards in the air can be found in an engraving from 1799. (= card sword) (chapter III)

Although most probably truthful, there is no certainty. It could still be a drawing of an over-enthusiastic image of a card stab. However, the other images in the engraving do not suggest this. Until more evidence is found, the reader will judge.

The first documented performance of a true card sword trick took place on February 28, 1840 (Döbler). (chapter III)

With a probability bordering on certainty, the first performance is very likely even earlier, as Dôbler had already performed numerous performances in his hometown of Vienna before that date.

The first publication of the Card Sword trick explaining how it works dates from c.1856 in the French language, 1858 in the German language and in the last quarter of the 19th century in English, Dutch, Spanish and Italian. (chapter III)

The trick *Card Stabbing* existed at least 100 years earlier than the *Card Sword* trick. If the 1799 engraving is a real *Card Sword* trick, the difference is smaller and is about fifty years.

Card Stabbing is a trick that dates back to the 18th century and maybe even the 17th century.

Card Sword is a trick that dates back to the 19th century and maybe even the end of the 18th century.

Contrary to what is considered “generally accepted” in magic literature, this article rectifies some data.

1. The first documented performance of a card sword was not in 1842, but on February 28, 1840.
Everything indicates that further research could even bring this date (1840) backward by a year to several years.
2. The first explanation in a book about the workings of a card sword was not in 1876, but c.1856 and certainly before 1867.
3. A small image on an engraving from 1799 may indicate that the card sword was already being performed at the end of the 18th century.
However, this requires further research.

Let me end the first part of this article with what I wrote at the beginning:

This article, by our standards, does not pretend to be academic at all.

Many aspects have not been explored in depth enough for this.

However, this article is a solid working document and starting point for further research.

Also not unimportant, this article does shift some data that were previously generally accepted.

Also for the interested magician who is not a historian or researcher, it hopefully gives an idea of how the card sword has become a classic of magic.

Numerous images of card swords

The keyword “*card sword*” leads to numerous images of card swords that have been sold on the *Liveauctioneers* website.

<https://www.liveauctioneers.com/search/?keyword=Card%20Sword&sort=-relevance&status=archive>

If you log in (free) you can also see the achieved prices.

It is a very useful tool for identifying a card sword and estimating the date of manufacture.

ADDENDUM - MISCELLANEOUS

On the following pages you will find interesting facts and original variants from the past.

These topics were set apart as an addendum to this article in order to keep the historical timeline as intact as possible without too many extras.

Addendum - Miscellaneous

The historian and researcher may completely ignore what follows in this section except for the first two items (Famous Person and Fred Kaps' sword).

The other subjects were placed in a relatively random order.

At a certain point we forced ourselves to stop, because "*faits divers*" can go on indefinitely.

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The most famous performer of the Card Sword was NOT a magician

Ingrid Bergman performed the Card Sword trick at the artists' gala at the Cirque d'Hiver in Paris in 1957 ⁸¹



The Manhattan dailies carried photos of Ingrid Bergman doing the card sword and pouring water into a barrel with captions that she would do magic at a Paris circus show for the benefit of French actors...

Due to copyright restrictions we cannot put the photo here.

However, you can view the photo by [clicking on the stamp above](#).



On August 20, 2015, in Los Angeles, CA, the U.S. Postal Service ® issued the Ingrid Bergman commemorative 49-cent (Forever ®) First-Class Mail ® stamp. The Ingrid Bergman stamp sold for 49¢ when issued.

⁸¹ Periodical, *Hugard's MAGIC Monthly*, Vol. XIV, N° 10, March 1957, page 548

Fred Kaps's card sword



Creator of the sword: Jean Ducatillon (1909 - 1999)

France

Jean Ducatillon created and builded illusions so perfect that they are therefore difficult to reproduce.

He created material for magicians such as: Channing Pollock, Fred Kaps, Pierre Brahma, Ger Copper, Alpha, etc.

Estimated date of fabrication:

Between 1957 and 1960

Ducatillon presented this sword at the *Concours Magicus* in 1957 and won a first prize with it.

History:

We know from a privileged witness (Dick Koornwinder) that after the death of Fred Kaps, the sword came into the hands of Henk Vermeyden. Currently (2022) it is owned by a French magician, known by the author.

Description:

Originally the sword came in a green box.

The sword is made from a "real" sword and converted by Ducatillon into a card sword.

The sword does NOT work with an elastic, but with a reel.

The blade is triangular and measures 80 to 85 cm and comes from a real old sword.

A special feature of this sword is that the housing can only contain two playing cards.

The working of this sword is explained in the French magazine *Le Magicien*.⁸³

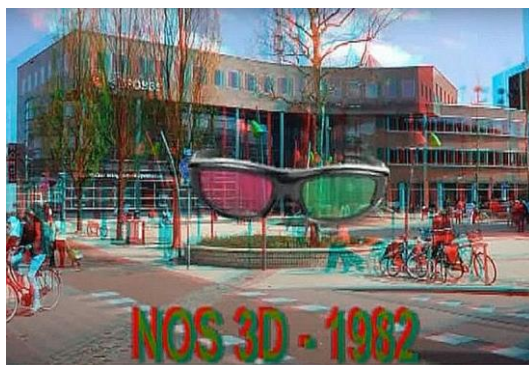
Ducatillon made 4 or 5 copies which are all very likely slightly different, but the mechanism is probably the same on all of them.

The owners of the 3 or 4 other swords are unknown to us.

⁸² Fred Kaps 1961 – see page 57 in this article for a bigger format

⁸³ Periodical, *Le Magicien*, January 1959, N° 70, page 2090-2092 (French)

The Card Sword trick in 3D



In 1982, a Dutch TV channel broadcasted a test broadcast made by NOS, Philips and the German ZDF where the TV viewer had to put on 3D glasses ⁸⁴.

In that program FISM Grand Prix winner 1979 Ger Copper performed. He performed.... Yes, the Card Sword!

A fragment of the broadcast can be seen here, but is very blurry. This is normal. After all, you were supposed to wear 3D glasses to see the images in 3D.

We know from a well-informed source that the sword Ger Copper used, was one made by Ducatillon ⁸⁵.

Ducatillon had also made the appearing candlestick(s) for Ger Copper, as well as Pierre Brahma's disappearing jewelry box for his final.

Also note that Ger Copper only makes 1 card appear on the sword ⁸⁶.



Click on the image above to watch the fragment

⁸⁴ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EN6W5dGITYQ>

⁸⁵ See the previous page (63) (card sword Fred Kaps)

⁸⁶ See page 38 in this article (is it imperative to use 3 cards?)

Twice Jean Merlin and twice the Card Sword



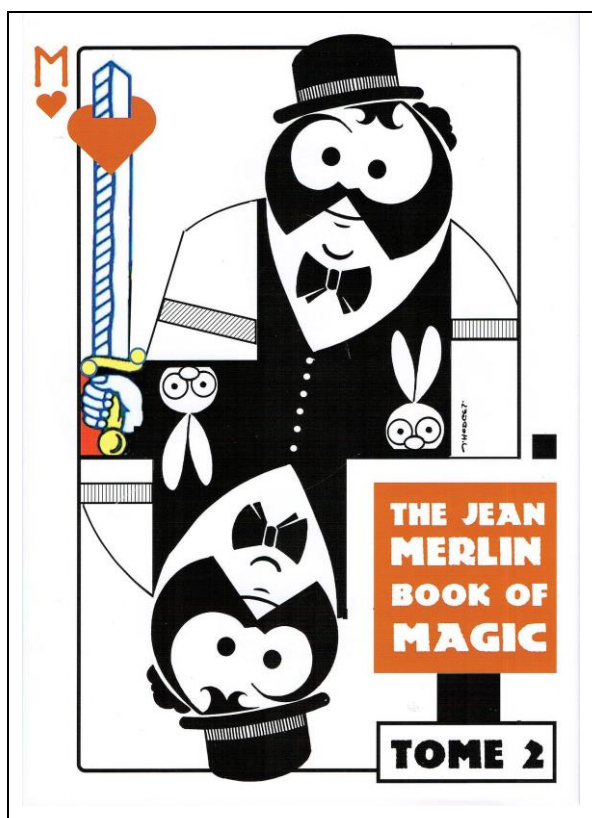
During my quest for beautiful images of the card sword, I came across this photo.

The photo shows the magician Jean Ludow and Ludow has (rightly) written a flattering text (in French) for the then still young Jean Merlin on the photo.

The photo dates from 1972.

Jean Ludow (Heraud Jean Ludovic)
1913 - 2007

He was a FISM prize winner in 1961 and beloved among his fellow French magicians.



Jean Merlin probably never realized it himself, but on the front cover of part 2 of his beautiful trilogy is a real card sword. Although not with a full playing card, but with a suit (hearts). I couldn't resist not posting it here.

Twice Jean Merlin, twice a Card Sword.

Jean Merlin is a "monument" in the magic world and wrote numerous books. He was one of the magicians who made close-up magic popular in France ⁸⁷.

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⁸⁷ <http://www.magicienmerlin.com/magicien.shtml>

⁸⁸ Merlin Jean, *The Jean Merlin book of Magic*, Part 2, self-published, 2017 (French language)

Which playing cards to use with the card sword trick?

When the cards are pierced it is logical that the center of the playing card has a hole. If there is a "pip" in the center of the playing card, it will automatically disappear, making recognition of the card no easier for the spectator.

A three of hearts, once pierced, will resemble a two of hearts. Therefore, it is recommended (in our opinion) to avoid playing cards that have a pip in the middle of the card.



Ace, 3, 5 and 9 are inadvisable.

7, 8 and 10 are acceptable.

2, 4 and 6 are ideal.

Picture cards by themselves are not a problem, but every professional knows that playing cards with a low number of pips and of black color are best visible from a distance.

We don't have any practical experience with it ourselves, but *large index cards* ⁸⁹ for the card sword trick are certainly worth considering in our humble opinion.

You can see a video clip about the large indexes here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w2k97cCz6eQ>

(we have no financial interests in any product featured in this article)

⁸⁹ <https://www.card-shark.de/index.cfm?page=96&lang=en>

MINI card swords

Evidence that the "card sword" theme continues to be popular is that over time there have also been close-up tricks created that refer to impaling a playing card on the sword.

We're sure there are more close-up tricks that mimic the card sword. The tricks in this article, in no particular order, are therefore pure exemplary rather than exhaustive.

Mid-Air Card Stab (John Kennedy)



This is not "almost" a card sword trick. This IS a card sword trick that fulfills all the conditions. The disadvantage of this is that you need space to perform it and that some cards can end up on the floor. It's the smallest card sword trick we know (with a penknife). However, the deck is not examinable and you can only do this trick with the deck.

Stabbed & Shot (Bill Abbott)



Very close to a card sword trick. The cards are not in mid-air, but also in motion in a paper bag. That's the only difference. The trick has almost become a classic and is indeed very good.

An empty paper bag that is examined by the audience is introduced and the deck is tossed inside. A spectator is asked to shake the bag to mix the cards. The magician removes a dagger or a knife and stabs it into (and through!) the bag. Violently the knife is ripped from the bag and a single card is impaled on the end of the blade... the spectator's signed selection!

Royal Stab (Richard Sanders)



Two cards are selected and lost in the deck. You bring up the topic of the classic effect, The Card Stab, where the magician thrusts a sword into a deck of cards, impaling the selections on it. You boldly offer to perform this miracle; however, you explain that presently all your swords are at the dry cleaners.

Luckily there is one card in the deck that carries his own sword, the King of Clubs. After the King of Clubs has been thoroughly examined, it is pushed half way into the

deck, when it emerges one of the selected cards is now impossibly impaled on the king's sword...and it's part of the actual printing on the card...this is impossible! If that wasn't enough, without any switches, the same card is pushed into the pack again and impossibly, the second selection is now impaled on the King's other sword...the cards just seem to materialize on the swords.

A very similar trick is ***Backstabber*** by **Ton Onasaka**.

Magic Sword (Mickael Chatelain)

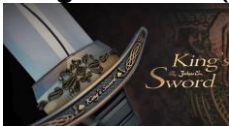


Very visual effect. Lots of possible presentations.

One of my favorites.

Trailer on YouTube.

King's Sword (Jaehoon Lim)

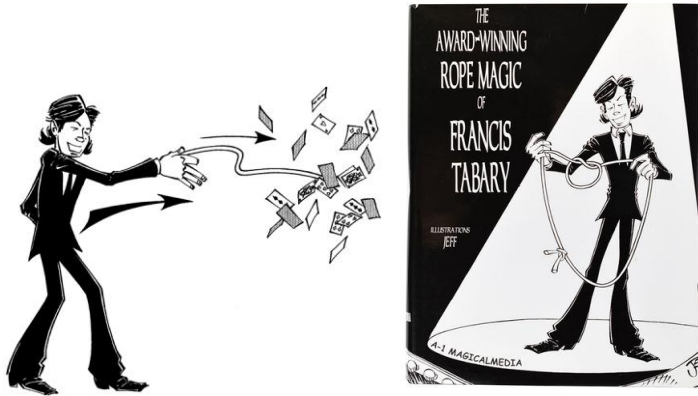


A card is selected and the magician introduces the King of Spades. He explains that the king will reveal the selected card with his sword. Small shapes of suits are given to the spectator, and the spectator throws the shapes towards the King of Spades. The King of Spades catches some of the shapes, revealing the selected card.

The Card Sword with a Rope

Francis Tabary, a 1st Prize Winner FISM, has a brilliant rope routine where the rope is the substitute for the sword.

The trick is called *The Card Sword with a Rope* and you can read the description and explanation with clear drawings in his book ⁹⁰ which is a translation by Todd Karr from the French book.



Penguin lectures with a Card Sword

Jonathan Pendragon – 2015

How to make a card sword yourself

Not finished enough for close-up or parlor in our opinion.

Maybe possibly for stage.

Scott Alexander – 2018

Comic presentation in the typical “Alexander” style.

Very good method, but in our opinion, only suitable for stage.

Nathan Coe Marsh - 2019

VERY good physical card sword trick – not for absolute beginners

Henri White – 2022

Card Sword trick with a butter knife – good presentation

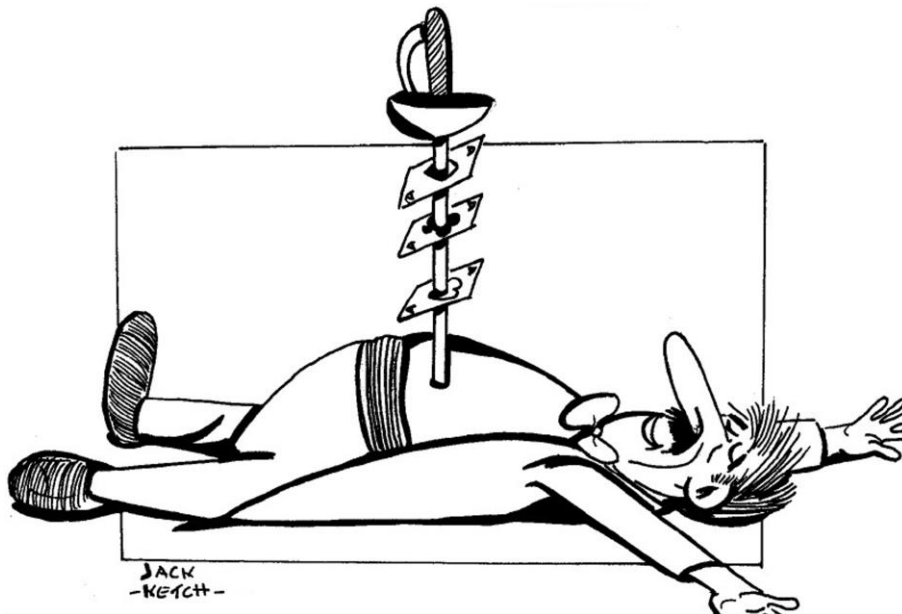
Deck of cards on the blade – classical method for that situation

⁹⁰ Tabary Francis, *The Award-Winning Rope Magic of Francis Tabary*, A-1 Magical Media, California, 2000, page 254

Humour and the Card Sword

And did you hear about the two magicians who challenged each other to a duel with card swords? They were to meet at dawn, with seconds, et al, in approved fashion, brandish their swords in the air and the highest card that appeared was to win a coffin escape gimmick. The instigator of the publicity stunt told his brother (?) magus that both should get Aces of Spades and shake hands over a bloodless duel. The double crosser had an Ace of Spades, all right, but it was a GIANT CARD!! I wonder if they slapped each other's faces with color changing gloves?

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⁹¹ Periodical, *The Jinx*, N° 82, 1940, page 532

⁹² Periodical, *The New Phoenix*, February 1961, page 246

Over the radio

We thought it was not possible, but it is apparently.
The magician Horowitz performed the card sword over de radio!

Article from ***The Jinx***⁹³ from 1940

Leo "Sam" Horowitz's interview on station WBNX recently revealed a swell radio voice not hitherto suspicioned. His recollections of Martinka's shop, Kellar, and others down to present day contemporaries showed an attitude always Sam's. No "me"; no "I"; no "the greatest"; just a quiet person who knows his stuff so well that he can afford to be gracious, without hesitation or thought, to all living members of the profession. He finished the broadcast with a demonstration of the card sword, and you'd be surprised (if you didn't hear it) how well the trick was put over the air. His professional name is now Leo Hartz.

⁹³ Annemann Theo, periodical, *The Jinx*, N° 91, Editrivia, 1940, page 570

Card Sword and a Tennis racket ⁹⁴

CARD RACKET

by MAX ANDREWS

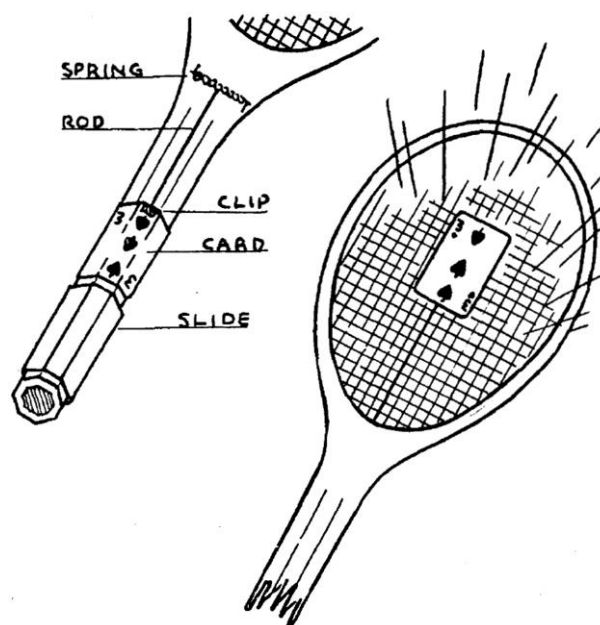
In case some readers get the wrong idea, let me say straight away that this is not a new way of making money, but an idea of my own for catching a playing card on a tennis racket. Incidentally I am assured by an authority that this is now the correct way to spell this word!

A showy effect which will be talked about afterwards (since all appears to be so above board) is that of catching a selected card on a tennis racket.

The card is selected and shuffled back into the pack. The tennis racket is shown all round (and can be seen through) after which the performer sticks a spot of wax on the centre of the strings. The whole pack is thrown into the air and the selected card caught.

METHOD.—Similar to card in balloon. A clip slide is made to go up and down on the handle and is the width of the card. The card is fixed on a spring arm which is hinged to land the card in the middle of the strings. The slide is covered in binding to match the handle. The card is bent round the handle and the slide is pushed up over it. The arm is painted to match and would not show if racket is swung round casually.

To catch card—pull down the slide and the arm will spring up. Or swing the racket sharply forward whilst holding slide. This makes the racket slip out of its own accord, thus releasing the card.



Card Sword and Table Tennis bat ⁹⁵

The name of the trick (Card Tennis) is somewhat misleading. It's about a Ping Pong bat. The trick is from Edie Joseph but the text is too long to publish here. We only provide the reference.



⁹⁴ Periodical, Magic Magazine, Card Racket, Vol. 1, N° 1, April 1952, page 13

⁹⁵ Periodical, Magic Magazine, Card Tennis, Vol. 1, N° 7, October 1955, pages 174 - 177

A duel with the card sword

EN CARDE
(A Card Sword Presentation)
By B. Lu Brent

The card sword is a darn swell effect and one doesn't see it performed too often, yet Magicians will do a card stabbing to death by using a small knife, etc.

I do not use the card sword myself, but if I did, I'm sure I would wish to make a stage production of it, and with this idea in mind, I thought that maybe some of TOPS readers would appreciate having this type of presentation. And here it is:

First of all, I would get another sword — an ungimmicked duplicate — to match the Card Sword. Then I would get two fencing uniforms, such as plastrons, protective face masks, etc. And then — "The play's the thing!"

Here it is as the audience would see it: Three cards would be selected and replaced in the pack by someone in the audience, who would be told to remember them, and then to shuffle the pack and bring it along with him to the stage. On the way back to the stage, the performer would garner another assistant, for he will need both of them.

The first assistant would then be instructed to whisper the names of the three selected

cards to No. 2. This done, the performer pretends to do a bit of mind-reading and in turn calls aloud the names the three cards. "Have I named the cards?" he asks No. 2 assistant. "No" is the reply.

Now here is where the performer does a bit of good-natured acting on his own, engaging in a friendly argument with the assistant. Performer argues that never has he made a mistake, etc. The argument can become a bit heated, the performer is so disappointed and chagrined. He finally challenges the assistant to a duel on the field of honor, and without giving the assistant a chance to get a word in edgewise, he introduces the two swords in the manner of "Choose your weapon, suh!" Then to make the matter a safe affair for all concerned, performer dons a fencing attire and the assistant does the same, both being helped to get into the gear by the other assistant.

No. 1 assistant acts as referee and second for both participants. Positions are taken — the first one the conventional "En garde" (performer explains this pose to assistant so that what the audience sees is the picture of two fencers). The other helper has the deck of cards in his hand and he stands between the two fencers. The performer directs final instructions to the referee — to let the cards lie loosely in his hands and then at command from the performer to throw the cards upward.

The performer shouts "Hi" or something else that may sound something like French and the cards fly into the air and both fencers make lunges with their swords into the shower of cards, as the pasteboards flutter to the floor. The assistant's sword emerges free from any cards, but the performer's has impaled three cards — and they are the selected cards.

Performer shakes hands with the assistants and thanks them while the audience applauds.

Understand the fencing attire is optional, but it certainly would dress up the act and make it more colorful.

If any reader uses this idea, I would appreciate hearing about it.

⁹⁶ Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, June 1950, page 17

Cupid's Arrow

A Card Sword converted in an Arrow ⁹⁷

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For That Special Occasion

by Dale Salwak

CUPID'S ARROW

EFFECT:

Magician offers to demonstrate the magical powers of Cupid's arrows. He has three spectators each select a card from a deck of cards. Cards are shuffled and held by one of the spectators. Magician then brings out a gleaming silver arrow. Spectator throws the cards into the air and the magician stabs at them with the arrow. The three chosen cards appear impaled on the arrow!

PREPARATION:

The arrow, of course, is actually a Card Sword converted to look like an arrow. Remove the guard from the sword and in its place attach two large feathers. These can be real feathers, or can be made of aluminum and painted to look like feathers.

The point of the sword, to which the elastic is attached (those who own a Sword will understand this) is pulled down to the end to which the feathers are attached. The three cards which are threaded onto the elastic and hidden behind one of the feathers. They are held in place either by a little bulldog clip attached to the back of one of the feathers, or by two hooks as in the illustration.

PRESENTATION:

Beforehand load three cards onto the arrow, following the same procedure as normally used with the Card Sword. If a bulldog clip is used to hold the cards, the cards are positioned as in the illustration. The cards are released by simply pressing the clip with your thumb as you stab at the cards in the air.

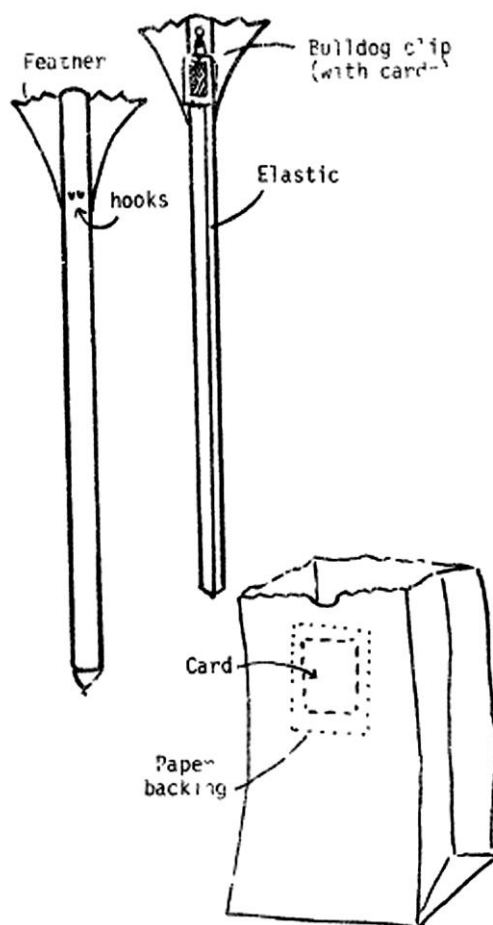
Three duplicate cards are in the deck and these are forced on the three spectators.

The NEW TOPS

If you would rather not use the Card Sword idea, there is another way to do this. First take a card and hold it against the inside of a paper bag. Next cover it with a piece of paper a little larger than the card (cut from another paper bag) and tape in place.

A duplicate of the card is in the deck. Force only this card on the spectator, have it returned to the deck and shuffle the cards. Then instruct the spectator to toss the cards into the paper bag.

Now take a real arrow, and holding the bag with your left hand, near the top, thrust the arrow through one side of the bag where the card is. (You can have a small "X" in pencil so that you will have no trouble locating the card.) Tear away the bag, and reveal the selected card on the arrow. If you wish you can do this with more than one card.



⁹⁷ Periodical, *The New Tops*, Vol. 18, March 1978, page 38

The Card Sword with an invisible deck ⁹⁸

When conditions do not allow tossing playing cards in the air and letting them fall to the ground.

CONLEY CARD SWORD ROUTINE

By Percy Abbott

Here is a novel way to use the Conley Card Sword based on the Invisible Deck idea. It works and really has great possibilities.

You announce that you are going to do a card trick and you go through the action of putting your hand in your pocket, groping around and finally bringing it out as if you are holding a card case. The card case you now open — understand you have nothing whatever in your hand — it's all "dumb show."

Now you hand this imaginary deck to spectator and have him shuffle the deck. Spectator never fails to enter into the spirit of the thing. He'll go along with you all the way.

After the shuffle, spectator is asked to hand deck to you.

"Pardon me" you say, "you dropped one. It looks like the Deuce of Spades." Spectator will pick it up (or you can do it). "Thank you."

You hold the deck in your hand, fan it and then close fan and say to spectator, "As I run through the deck, you say 'stop' any time you like. Is that fair enough?" Spectator says, "Okay" and as you pass the cards from one hand to another, says, "Stop" and you stop and take out card at that point and announce it as, say, "The Ace of Spades", and holding it up for a moment, have spectator verify it, which he will do. Of course, the Ace of Spades is one of the cards you're going to produce on the blade of the sword later.

You go through the same procedure with the other two cards. If you wish to vary the "Stop" idea, have spectator thrust his finger into the deck as you riffle it. You then carry on as before in announcing the card.

As each card is announced it is replaced in the deck and afterward the deck — it's still imaginary — is shuffled. Deck is given to spectator to hold.

You then take out an imaginary pocket knife and open blade. Holding it up toward the spectator, you ask him, "Can you see that?" Whatever he replies, you say, "It seems pretty small to me. It really is too small", close the blade and put it away.

Look around and finally bring out imaginary sword. "Now you can see this sword better, can't you." He'll nod or say "Yes" — he'll still go along with you. You look at him

quizzically and shake your head, and say, "You don't like it so well, do you? I don't think it's so hot myself."

You lay the imaginary sword down and go over to where you have placed the Conley sword. Pick it up and return and show it to spectator. "This looks much better, doesn't it?"

Fan out cards and say to spectator as you hand deck to him, "Throw the cards into the air — not too high when I count to Three. One-two-three."

Spectator throws cards and you thrust sword into the midst of the scattering imaginary deck and the three selected cards actually appear on the sword blade.

It's surprising how well this version goes over with an audience. I did it for an intimate group recently. I'll say they were intimate — spectators were so close they were almost nudging my feet. Conditions were out for the regular method and it was no place to have cards thrown into the air, so I used this and it clicked in a big way. I've given it here about the way I did it. You can enlarge on the by-play with the imaginary deck and the spectator. You'll probably find plenty of opportunities to do this.

⁹⁸ Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, February 1950, page 8 and 9

The Card Sword and musical instruments ⁹⁹

A drum stick and the bow of a violin are the substitutes

A card was chosen and vanished. The lady who selected the card was asked to name it. The drummer gave a roll on his drum and the card **SUDDENLY APPEARED ON THE END OF HIS DRUM STICK!**

This novel appearance always caused a sensation and has been a favourite item of mine ever since I first tried it.

I use the simplest means possible in this item . . . self-locking card box for the vanish. The co-operation of the drummer is obtained and he is given a faked drum stick. This has a magnet in the ball end. He has the duplicate card, faked with a piece of tin in it, on his drum.

The working is now obvious. The card is forced, placed in the card box and vanished. The drummer starts his roll, then places the stick on the card, which lays face down on the drum, lifts the stick and stops the roll. His surprised "Oh!" draws all attention to him and the sudden appearance of the card on the drum stick simply 'gets them'.

There is no reason, of course, why this 'unexpected appearance' idea could not be adapted for use with other band instruments. With a little ingenuity the violinist's bow could be borrowed and the card suddenly make its appearance on its tip, a lá card and sword. Faked bow is of course planted before the show with the violinist.

⁹⁹ Periodical, *Magic Magazine*, Vol 2, N° 4, July 1953, page 104

The Card Sword with paddles

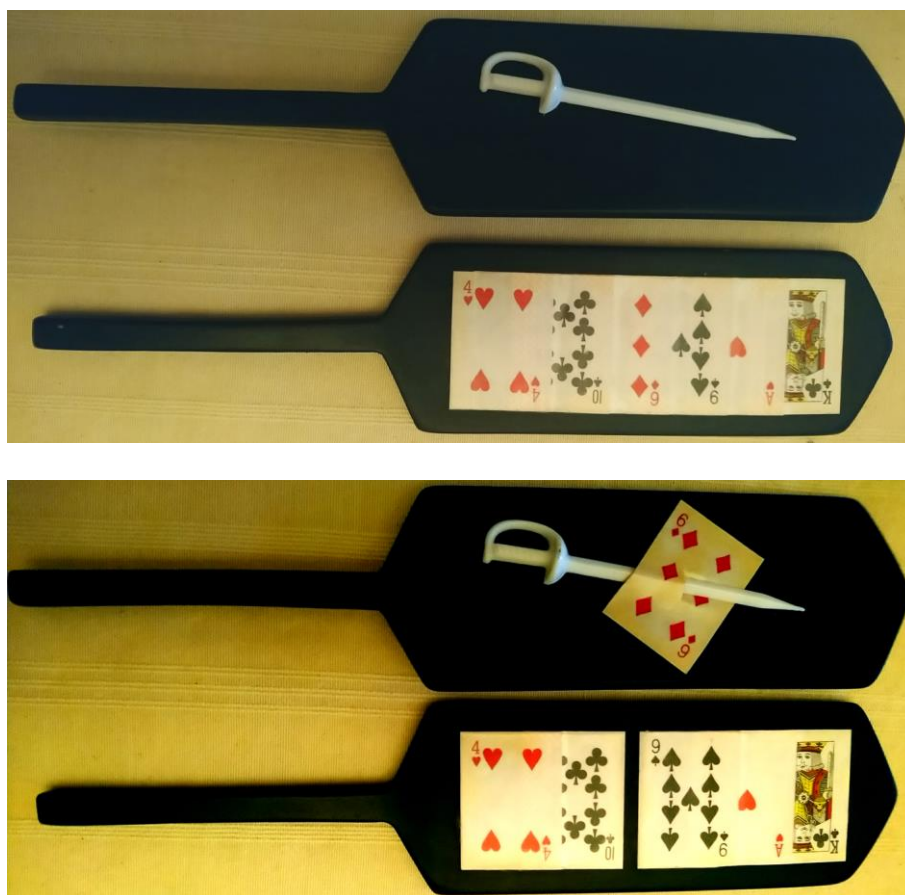
It is the privilege of an author to put in his book or article what he decides.
You can safely skip this page if you want.

An outcast and I don't even have a good presentation for it.
And yet I put it in this article because I have nostalgia with these two paddles as a memento of a good friend who passed away in 2006.

The paddles are handmade in wood by **François Goossens** in 1980 and are a gift from him. After 42 years I still have them despite the fact that I never performed with them.

He was also the man who once made me a little coffin in wood in which the murdered Jack of Diamonds lay.

In the close-up gala show of the National Magic Congress in the Netherlands in 1985, I had 600 people stand up from their chairs and had them all keep 1 minute of silence for the murdered Jack. This while Chopin's Funeral March sounded through the hall. A surreal situation that the public understood well and which resulted in a huge success afterwards.



Voilà Cois, your name and your paddles are digitally immortalized

15 ways to perform the Card Sword ¹⁰⁰

1950 was the year that Abbott came out with their Card Sword. In Volume 15 (1950) from their magazine TOPS, they published several presentations for the sword.

Fifteen Ways To Use Abbott's Card Sword

By Eddie Joseph

There was a time when I used to loathe the Card Sword. Not due to the effect itself which will always remain startling and an excellent piece of **VISIBLE** Magic. My aversion to it grew out of the fact that everybody was doing it the same way. With the older cumbersome outfit there was no chance of varying the presentation, at least, to give it a tinge of novelty.

To the onlooker, any departure from the traditional application becomes a novelty. They are so used to seeing the same thing over and over again that when a new approach is applied to an old problem, the problem becomes fresh again. "Ah" they will think, "here is someone at last who does things in his own way." If everybody begins to work the card sword in the same way, the audience will cease to be interested.

Now comes Abbott's Card Sword. A more exquisite piece of workmanship I have never seen before. And... I have been seeing things magical for the past **THIRTY** years. Due to the peculiar construction of the sword it did not take me long to estimate its greater possibilities. The results of my investigation are set forth here. I have developed **FIFTEEN** different ways of utilizing the apparatus which certainly places at the disposal of the lucky owner a rich fund of material to draw from and which may be varied for repeat dates.

It just cannot be argued that these different methods do not affect the trick itself. They certainly do, because a different approach to any trick alters the appearance in the eyes of the onlookers.

Method One: You will find this approach far better than proceeding in the traditional manner. Everybody tosses up the deck and then plunges the sword point amongst the scattered cards to catch the three selected ones. Here is the difference:

After the three cards have been returned to the deck you merely rest it against the **GUARD**. Now if you will plunge the sword upward the entire deck will **FLY** up to a point **ABOVE** the sword tip and scatter. At the same time the three selections will be impaled on the blade in the usual manner. Now the

plunging upwards is all a bluff. By this I mean that you do **NOT** make any attempt to toss the deck up. All you need do is to release the hidden cards as per original instruction. The rest follows **AUTOMATICALLY**. Just try it out and see how pleasing this looks and it certainly makes a welcome departure from the orthodox version.

Method Two: We shall suppose that the three cards have been returned to deck and later offered for shuffling. Borrow a hat and rest it on the floor. Toss deck in. Now with the sword in your hand, you dig the point into the hat. Catch the side of hat and raise it up **SMARTLY** to a vertical position. The hat will go flying to one side when the button is released and the cards within will flutter all over like a shower of rain while the three selected ones will appear on the blade. Don't try to be a gentleman and raise hat up delicately. Do it smartly, otherwise the cards will slide out of the hat prematurely.

Method Three: After the three cards have been chosen and returned to deck, your assistant takes it in her right hand. A sheet of newspaper is introduced. She grips one end with her left while you take the other end with your left as well. The sword is in your right. Actually you have formed a sort of paper screen for the deck in assistant's hand. Now thrust the sword point through the paper from the front up to the hilt and then **UP** again, tearing the top edge of paper in the process. As you do this release the button and there you will have the three cards on the blade. Try it out and see if you like it. You have presumably thrust the sword point into the deck and caught the three cards.

Method Four: Can you back-palm three cards? Well if you can... here's your meat. The three selected cards are held in a fan in your right hand. You make a pretense of tossing them up while the sword is held in the left hand. Needless to say the cards are back-palmed and the three duplicates appear on the blade.

Now for the duffers like myself. Have a short length of elastic under coat with a clip at one end. Just vanish the three cards under
(Please turn to Page 23)

¹⁰⁰ Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, July 1950, page 4

15 ways to perform the Card Sword ¹⁰¹

1950 was the year that Abbott came out with their Card Sword. In Volume 15 (1950) from their magazine TOPS, they published several presentations for the sword.

ABBOTT'S CARD SWORD

(Continued from Page 4)

coat under cover of throwing action and there you are. Get it?

Method Five: .Have three cards selected and returned to deck. Hold deck in left hand and bend both ends up with right. Now cut deck in the middle and place them back to back. There will be a distinct gap in the center of deck which magical professors call a BRIDGE. Now take a somewhat loose fitting rubber band and encircle around the LONG way of deck. Thread the deck through the point of blade and allow it to rest on the

¹⁰¹ Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, July 1950, page 23

15 ways to perform the Card Sword ¹⁰²

1950 was the year that Abbott came out with their Card Sword.

In Volume 15 (1950) from their magazine TOPS, they published several presentations for the sword.

guard. Now thrust sword upward and release button. Brother, watch that deck ride up the blade at LIGHTNING speed and then as it reaches the top the rubber band will go flying where you will never find it and the cards will scatter all over the place. The inevitable happens here again for the three selected cards will be on the blade. You don't say!

Have you seen that ball ride up a long pole at a carnival when you hit the platform with a hammer. Well when you succeed in hitting hard enough, the ball gets right to the top and a bell rings, O.K. ... it would be a good idea if you get someone to strike a gong in the wing the moment the deck gets to the top. It will do your ears good to hear the laughs that will surely follow.

Method Six: The three cards are torn and loaded into a funnel gun. Assistant fires the gun. They expect to see the three cards on the sword blade ... what a sell ... they see only two. Where is the third? Magician turns as he inquires ... and the assistant fires again. Magician picks up his coat at the back slightly and the third card is seen stuck to the seat of his pants.

Actually only two cards are fixed on sword and the third is hanging behind with a pin. If you don't like this business then the third card can appear on the inside of sleeve. In this case only one shot is fired. Two appear on the blade. You turn to the right to expose inside of arm and the third is seen. This card is resting at the outset on the table behind some piece of apparatus. A bent pin is stuck behind with scotch tape. When picking the sword with the right you stick the card with the left to the inner side of sleeve. That's all.

Method Seven: Some swords are used for catching silk, others for cards. Some enterprising dealers have embodied the double feature which could be ALTERNATED. Now I shall explain my method of catching a SILK AND CARDS SIMULTANEOUSLY. You don't need anything extra and this like the others is NOT a "may be" idea but one that I have and am still using. You are going to like this if nothing else.

Get a 12-inch silk. First place the three cards in position on the blade. Now tie the silk by one corner UNDER the tip but around elastic. Set the three cards in the secret chamber. Let the knot come UNDER the

guard. Now fold the silk in small pleats in zig-zag fashion rather tightly and place a loose fitting rubber band around it. Now if you lay the sword on the table with the silk end of guard to the rear — it will DEFINITELY NOT be seen from the front due to the peculiar construction of the guard. This, at least, is one thing you can't do with any other sword.

The three cards are torn and loaded into a gun with a silk and fired. Now when you release the button at the appropriate time you will NOT believe your own eyes. The three cards will find their places on the blade and the silk will flutter at the tip. Yes ... the rubber band will AUTOMATICALLY slip off the silk and you will not even notice when that happens or where it goes. I hate to part with this idea but I don't know of any other way of proving to Percy Abbott what a smart guy I am. I am now due for a raise.

Method Eight: Now here we have something else. Instead of THREE, only two cards appear on the blade. So ... you make a second thrust and the third card appears. The working is simplicity itself ... but never misses. Stick a bit of wax on the two index corners of the undermost card. Stick this to the card that is planned to appear in the middle. After the first thrust only TWO cards appear. The third is missing.

You touch the double card as you address the third person and say, "I expected THREE cards ... but there is always a remote possibility that two of you took the same card." This will be disavowed. However, the reason for touching this card was to SEPARATE them. The sword in the meantime is held horizontally. Now thrust the sword up smartly and the third card will take its place. I assure you this is pretty to look at and baffling to the mind.

Method Nine: Force five cards. On a side table have a beer bottle which produces a card on the top. On another is a balloon to card apparatus. Three cards are loaded in the sword and one each behind bottle and the balloon outfit.

Have the five cards returned to deck and tie it with a ribbon. Form a loop at the free end and suspend deck on tip of sword. Swing deck like a pendulum. First hit the beer bottle and one card appears on top. Next hit the balloon with the swinging deck and another card appears. Say, "This takes too long."

¹⁰² Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, July 1950, page 24

15 ways to perform the Card Sword ¹⁰³

1950 was the year that Abbott came out with their Card Sword.

In Volume 15 (1950) from their magazine TOPS, they published several presentations for the sword.

Now swing deck upwards and free it off the sword tip and release button. The three remaining cards will appear on the blade. Good to look at I assure you.

Method Ten: If you say there is no novelty in this and the one that follows then I will know you are envious. Never mind the spectators ... you will want to do them for your own amazement.

Each person selecting a card is also given choice of a different colored handkerchief. The three handkerchiefs — silks to be precise — are tied at three points on the blade. When you release the button the THREE silks will go FLYING WAY UP to heaven and their places will be taken by the three selected cards. You can even use borrowed ladies' handkerchiefs. If you will remember the position of the three cards then the handkerchiefs are tied in their respective points. Merely ask each person to watch her handkerchief. In a fraction of a second ... the three handkerchiefs will be replaced by the three selected cards.

I don't need to tell you that you must tie a rather loose knot ... sufficiently tight enough to stay in position when the sword is held vertically.

Method Eleven: The deck is held behind newspaper as in Method Three. Behind newspaper you have a pocket and in this pocket you conceal three INDIFFERENT cards punched with holes so they can fit on the blade equidistantly. The topmost card must fit a couple of inches BELOW tip. The rest at regular intervals. The sword, of course, is loaded with the actual duplicates of the selections.

Now when you thrust the point through the newspaper ... you thread the three indifferent cards and come UP and out. These three cards being wrong ones will be disavowed. You proceed to remedy the mistake.

Now all you do is to rest deck on guard as in the first method and release button. The three wrong cards will be REPLACED by the THREE selections. It will, therefore, be understood that the release of the hidden cards will throw the three wrong cards up and out, also the deck; at the same time the hidden cards will take their respective positions.

Method Twelve: You must get Abbott's Mento Marvel. Three cards are selected and mixed with five others and placed in the

holder. This is shut and placed in the hands of assistant. The assistant merely flips the folder open and there are now only five cards. The three selected ones are missing. Why, they are now on the blade!

Method Thirteen: Get a strong spring rat trap. Rest the deck on one side on the trap. Now release the trap and see which way the cards fly. Well, you stand in the right position and let your assistant operate the trap. You catch the three appropriate cards from amongst the flying cards. Have you ever heard of "Clay Pigeons?" ... good sport that ... Remember how they release the pigeons?

Method Fourteen: Have you ever seen a juggler spin a plate or tray on the point of a pole? Well ... you get a light tray and in the bottom you fix a high rimmed ring so that you can balance the tray on the point of sword. If you want to do it the genuine way then take lessons from Charlie Carrer ... but what the heck do we ever do in Magic that is ever genuine?

Now on this tray you spread out the deck ... just cover the entire surface with the cards ... the more scattered the better. Mount tray on point of sword and start to spin it. A few cards will start falling off and you suddenly give a quick thrust to dislodge the tray and as it and the rest of the cards come fluttering you release your button and there you are. If you intend using a heavy tray, better wear a steel helmet.

Method Fifteen: You know what a butterfly net is. In case you don't you will when you retire. However, the deck is placed inside the net. Get a man to stand on a chair and hold the net in his hand above his head. You thrust the sword from the bottom which naturally upsets all the cards. Hit the bottom of the net from outside and spill all the cards out and at same time release button. The three selections will appear on blade.

Well, these are the fifteen ways for the Abbott Card Sword. You may like some, love others and dislike the rest. Whatever it be ... of one thing I am sure. By using any of these you will certainly be going about it differently from the many Tom, Dick and Harrys, who toss up the deck for the climax.

May I offer one little tip. It will pay you sometimes — Just palm the three selected cards away from the deck before producing them on the sword blade. You will feel better.

¹⁰³ Periodical, *Tops*, Vol. 15, July 1950, page 25

What does St. George have to do with a card sword?

A nice quiz question for advanced users.

The magic magazine *The Wizard - Modern Magic Monthly*,

Enfield, Middlesex (England), is a periodical published from 1947 to 1956.

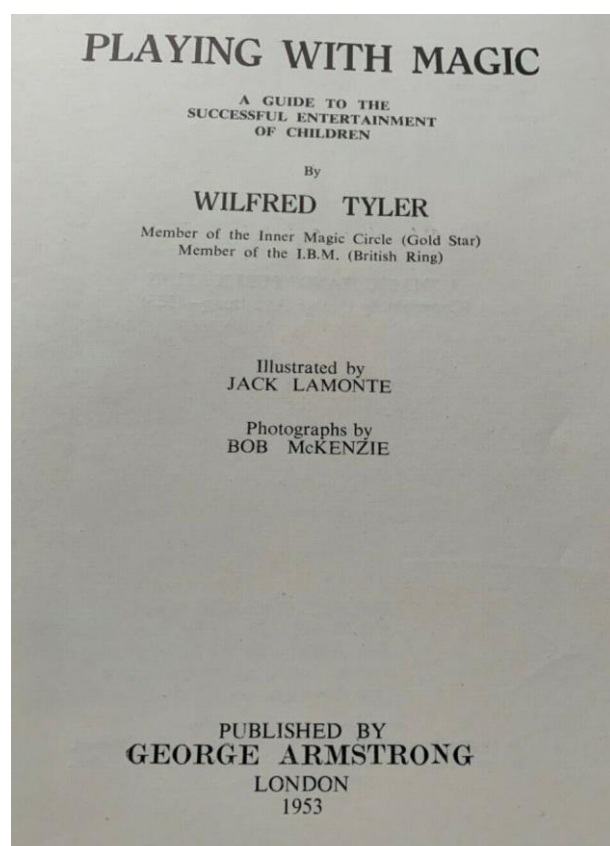
In vol.6, N° 63 of April 1953 I came across an advertisement for a book about magic for children.

In the book ¹⁰⁴ we find, as far as we could find, the first presentation of a card sword trick specific for children.

The trick is called *St. George and the dragon* and is on page 43.

We can't say anything more about it because we don't own the book.

In any case, it sounds very exciting.



Clogs	...	...	...	...	...	...
PRESENTING "STANDARD EFFECTS" TO	...	...	...	...	...	...
CHILDREN	...	...	...	...	...	33
The Thumb Tie for Children	...	...	...	...	...	35
Hussar (Rainbow Plumes)	...	...	...	...	...	40
St. George and the Dragon (Card Sword)	...	...	...	...	...	43

¹⁰⁴ Tyler Wilfred, *Playing with Magic*, George Armstrong, London, 1953, page 43



DOUBLE DARING

By Frederick M. Shields and Bascom Jones, Jr.



August 30,
Dear Jones:

Well, vacation time upon us again, and we'll be seeing you. Have some good things to show you, and also some stories about the "fantastic television business," which I know you will be able to match with equally bizarre one's about public relations and the aircraft scam.

Walking through the May Company's Wilshire the other day with Bill Larsen, I thought of the Elder Larsen's comment about Caryl Fleming — that he could walk through the 5-and-10 with Caryl, watch while the wiley Fleming spent a dime here, a nickel there, and know that a miracle of illusion proportions was in the making.

An exaggeration, perhaps, but I said to myself, I said: "If Caryl could do it, so can I." And besides, I get a break in this store where prices start at a dime and go into the hundreds of dollars.

So, while Bill and I strolled thru the aisles of the store I looked, and looked, and finally spent \$3.19, plus tax, for a variety of props, which, put together, resulted in a minor miracle of nothing proportions.

The first cash register stop was in the Household goods department, barbecuing division. \$1.00 for three small skewers designed to resemble small swords. You know the type, for hors d'oeuvres and small shish kebob servings.

And the second stop was in the game department for a deck of "Playtime" playing cards, the less than half-size pack. Price, 69c.

You've guessed it. All my feeble imagination could come up with was a miniature version of the card sword. Sorry. Caryl and the elder Larsen could do it, but I can't.

But it makes an interesting closeup item, so perhaps all was not in vain.

No, I did not drill a hole down

the center of the blade for an elastic cord, I'm no mechanic as you well know.

Method had me stumped for a moment or two.

As we walked, I considered a bit along the lines of the Humber sword as appeared in "Genii, the Conjuror's Magazine" a month or so ago. And decided no.

I thought of a small hole in the tip of the sword, and a thread running from a button - through the hole - to a card palmed. And decided, no.

I thought of the Rex Wightman version of the sword, but the hilt of the miniature weapon was too small. No.

And the Conley version, but the guard and quillon were too small. No.

Then I remembered a method for catching card on knife, shown to me by Harry Mendoza, and credited by him to David Bamberg. It involved using a court card, slitting it along one of the lines in the court costume, and forcing this card. The flat blade of the table knife slides into this slit after you pass the card to top of pack, and as rest of deck goes into the air, the selected card remains impaled.

But my barbecue department sabres did not have flat blades.

So, stop number three, the stationery department, and another \$1.50, for a paper punch, one that punches triangular rather than round holes.

From here on, it was clear sailing.

Punch holes in the center of about 12 or 13 of the playing cards.

Presenting the effect, cut the block of punched cards into the center of the pack, and spread the pack so that the prepared cards are available, as you request that someone touch the back of any card in the pack.

Cut the pack at this point, so that the chosen card is on the

face of the top half of deck. Hold that portion of the pack up so that all can see the selected card. Cover the hole in the card with the tip of the middle finger.

Side steal or overhand shuffle the card to top of the pack.

Place the pack on the point of the small sword, making certain that the tip of sword finds the hole in card.

Drop the pack, at the same time raising sword into the air, and you have "Caught the card on the sword."

Show it and end the effect to small applause. As I said, it's a small trick.

Oh, yes, I carry a large card case. It's a dealer display item such as you see in the store window, about 8½ by 11 inches by 5 inches, and the cards drop into this case which I place open on the floor. Saves having to pick up the cards from the floor after the effect is over. And gets you off quickly, before anyone can throw anything.

Guess that's it.

Chill up the beer, I'll see you the first week in September.

And if you know anyone who wants a punch that knocks out triangles instead of round holes, I know a fellow who has one and will sell it cheap.

Regards, FMS.

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The card sword with a chicken

There is really almost nothing you can think of but you can do a card sword trick with it. How about a chicken?

It cost you \$450 (in c.2003) but you do get a card fountain with it ¹⁰⁶.

In any case, an amusing and successful presentation. Here is a video of the presentation and explanation ¹⁰⁷

The card sword with a chimpanzee ¹⁰⁸

And how about a chimpanzee?

Cocomo is his name.

NICK CARRADO

"There is No Business Like Monkey Business" is the title of Bernard Levin'sky's article about Nick Carrado in the June **Courier** magazine. Seventeen photographs of Nick and his chimp which can do tricks add eye appeal. Gleaned from the text: Nick is 25. Can do 1,000 card tricks. Played 6 Saturdays in the Utica, N. Y. Boston dept. store. His friends call him "King of Cards." Was in the Marines. Chimp's name is Cocomo. Exposed 14 card cheats while in the service. Nick, not the chimp, that is. Was to do box escape at Binghamton YMCA. Box didn't arrive. Nick in straitjacket jumped in pool. Escaped in a minute and a half. Chimp cost \$1,500. **Chimp does card sword**, square circle production and picks pockets. Article ends "What is that boy going to do next?" I wonder too.

¹⁰⁶ <https://wolfsmagic.com/wolfsmagichomepage/magicproducts/chicken-sword/>

¹⁰⁷ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w7J6YcDXG5E>

¹⁰⁸ Periodical, *Hugard's MAGIC Monthly*, Vol/ XIV, N° 3, August 1956, page 460

Aliquando et insanire jucundum est ¹⁰⁹

OK. I confess. I am biased.

As a memorized deck addict, I chose to close this addendum with a trick that involves a stack. (And of course a Card Sword.)
Connoisseurs will immediately understand that this is not a self-working trick.

To the "common" magician I would say:

"Don't skip reading this trick. Get to know the devious principles underlying stack work and the wonderful mathematical mechanisms involved. You may also be tempted to learn a memorized deck to become a real stack specialist. Juan Tamariz, Dani DaOrtiz, Matt Baker, Denis Behr, Pit Hartling and Joshua Jay will love this trick. I'm sure about that."

The second reason I chose this trick is because I'm a fan of "*The Senator*", the name Clark Crandall was called in life ¹¹⁰.



Playing with the language in a humorous way is so satisfying and therefore it's all the more frustrating for me that I can't do that in the English language and have to do it with a flawed and rudimentary vocabulary in this language as you will have noticed in abundance in this article. For which my apologies.

Reading a column by *The Senator* is like savoring a slice of foie gras with a glass of Château d'Yquem (my second addiction).

The trick that follows is by Crandall and appeared in his column "*It's a Mystery to me*".

A column that he ran from from 1963 till 1974 in the magazine *The New Tops*.

This trick appeared in the issue of May 1968.

I have taken the trouble to copy the text verbatim.

¹⁰⁹ Seneca (minor) Lucius Annaeus, *De tranquillitate animi*, c.55

¹¹⁰ https://geniimagazine.com/wiki/index.php?title=Clarke_Crandall

IT'S A MYSTERY TO ME

by CLARKE "THE
SENATOR" CRANDALL



111

As per last month's promise I'll continue, with an occasional digression, the saga of stabbed, pilloried, pierced, impaled, tacked and skewered playing cards.

In all these effects the method is basically the same. A card must be forced upon, pushed out to, chosen by or in some devious manner taken by any freely chosen spectator.

Said card must be controlled, kept track of or located by the magician or whoever happens to be impersonating him. After the card is returned, put back, mixed up, shuffled into or otherwise seemingly lost in the pack, it may be revealed by a dagger, a knife, a tack, a sword, an ice pick, pitch fork or some other pointy thing like the magician's head.

This reminds me (of course it does) of an original effect I considered placing on the market a few years ago. This isn't really true, I just now thought of it.

This effect is good for farm shows, county fairs and other groups of soil tillers.

I use a giant deck. Three cards are selected by as many indifferent folks in the audience. After the cards have been taken back the errant trio is tossed into a large pile of straw on the stage.

A three tined pitchfork is examined carefully. Hay may be used if straw is not available but straw is cheaper and easier to lose after the show.

Go back as far as you can without falling off the stage. Cry out if you care to, then suddenly rush at the straw stack.

Plunge the fork all the way into the stack of straw and brandish it aloft in triumph, showing the three chosen cards sticking to the tines or points of the pitchfork.

If you use an assistant it is best he or she not stand too close to the other side of the straw stack as you rush forward because there isn't room for an assistant and three cards on a pitchfork.

The method is simplicity itself. Only five large cards are actually used. Place a Joker on each side of the three force cards. It will appear to be a regular deck because the cards are so big. Be careful not to force one of the Jokers.

Concealed in the straw stack is a duplicate pitchfork with three cards pre-stuck on it. Make sure the three force cards match the cards on the fork. Bury the original fork into the straw and pull out the loaded duplicate fork and show the cards impaled.

The farmers will be taken aback, you also may be taken back.

Manufacturing rights on this trick is held by the author.

Oh yes, one final note, the three force cards are not stacked but the straw is ...

I call this effect *Crandall's Card in the Straw Stack Trick*, or I sometimes humorously say, "Fork over your card."

Quite often I will throw in little quips here and there.

¹¹¹ Periodical, *The New Tops*, Vol. 8, May 1968, pages 6 and 7



American Gothic by Grant Wood ¹¹²

¹¹² https://nl.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bestand:Grant_Wood_-_American_Gothic_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg
and
<https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/american-gothic-supplemental/5QEPm0jCc183Aw?childAssetId=EgFARnS055XgrA>

Epilogue

The way this article came about is a story in itself.

Initially, it was never the author's intention to write this article.

The author had created a trick of which he is 99.99% certain only he can do it at the moment and of which he is certain that it has never been performed before in such pure circumstances. It's not a self-working trick...

The author plans to write a printed (physical) book about it and only share this book with magicians he thinks have the necessary skills to perform the trick. We're not going to have to print fifty books.

The author sat down at his PC and started to write a foreword for that book. It was the intend to write about two pages text.

Those two pages turned into four. Those four pages turned into six and here we are with an article of almost hundred pages.

So this article came about in a very short time without any plan or preparation.

Thanks to the help of the people mentioned at the beginning of this article and a few weeks of research, it became a working document for magicians who love history and research and who like to delve deeper into a particular subject.

After all, our research revealed that some "*generally accepted dates*" need to be shifted.

For the magic community in general, it gives a relatively good picture of the card sword trick in all its facets.

I have given a small impetus with this article. It's up to the younger generation to make something decent out of it.

And now it's high time to turn these hundred pages back into two pages for the foreword of my **real** book.

Feedback and useful information is always welcome.

Danny Crauwels aka Maigret.

August 2, 2022

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Last seen in 1799 near Bologna and / or Forli (Italy). See page 15.

In all probability already dead.

Mail to memdeck@gmail.com if you find this man.

Eternal fame and my infinite gratitude will be your portion.