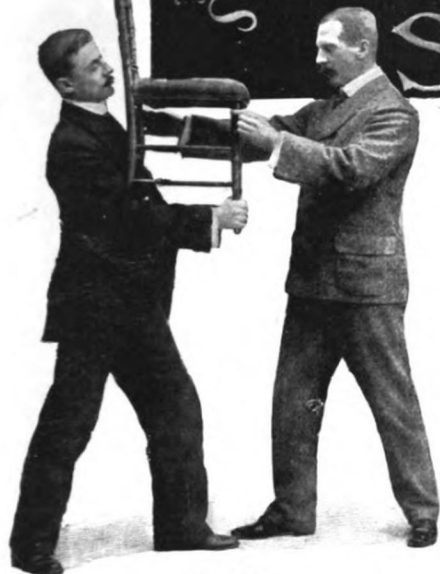


How to Pose as a Strong Man

By E. BARTON-WRIGHT.



Trick No. 1.

It must not be supposed that it is necessary to possess unusual strength to pose as a strong man: indeed, in many strong men's feats, strength plays a less important part than knack and trickery.

There are of course many strong men, on the genuineness of whose feats of strength no shadow of suspicion has fallen. And yet I can show you a dozen feats which you yourself can perform quite successfully, provided that you possess average strength. When once you have grasped the method of these apparent feats of strength, I will guarantee that you will be able to deceive an ordinary audience, and that you can cause

any amount of amusement to yourself and your friends by private performances where critics are not severe.

Although some of the tricks described in the following pages may be familiar to you, I think I may safely say that they have never hitherto been gathered together and thoroughly explained. Some attracted great notoriety when first produced several years ago by a clever personage, styling herself "The Magnetic Lady." The world was fairly taken in by the Magnetic Lady. She did not claim that her feats were feats of strength—as, indeed, they were not. She declared that it was solely owing to the fact that she possessed remarkable magnetic and electric powers that she was able to perform them. This, of course, was not the case, for anyone with average strength, who follows the instructions, can carry them through successfully.

As should be the case with all tricks for private performance, little paraphernalia is required. A strong chair will, however, be necessary. This should be high in the back, and low in the seat, and must have a bar behind. The back legs must not be more than eleven inches apart. The seat should not be higher than fifteen inches. If any other necessary article should not be at hand, the intelligent performer will easily adapt himself to his surroundings. In one or two tricks, for instance, billiard cues play a part. Broomsticks may be substituted.

TRICK NO. 1.—HOW TO MASTER A MAN WITH TWO FINGERS.

Our first trick is as simple as it is effective. The situation, as in all the following cases, is best explained by the photograph. You ask any person from the audience—the stronger the man the more striking will the feat appear—to hold a chair in his arms, in such a way that the back legs rest against his chest, and he grasps the tips of the front legs, one in each hand. You then declare that with two fingers alone you can push him anywhere you please; you say that he will be able to offer you no resistance, that he is absolutely at your mercy, as, indeed, is the case.

Stand in front of him, place two fingers, one on a back leg and one on the opposite front leg as close under the seat as possible. In this position, you will find that you can do what you please with your subject; you can sway him backwards or forwards, you can push him from side to side, you can drive him into any corner of the room, you can pull him suddenly forward or you can throw him backward so that he falls about in the most hopeless manner imaginable.

The explanation is that you continually pull or push your opponent off his balance, owing to the leverage obtained by the peculiar position in which he is made to hold the chair. By watching his face you can see whether he is prepared to resist a pull forwards, or a push backwards. If the former is the case, you push him backwards, if the latter, you pull forward. You thus always take him unawares.



Trick No. 3. (See next page.)

TRICK NO. 2.—HOW TO HOLD A CHAIR IN THE PALMS OF YOUR HANDS, AND TO DEFY ANYONE TO PULL IT THROUGH YOUR HANDS.

Ask one of the audience to grasp a chair by the tips of the back legs, with the front legs resting against his chest, so that the seat is about level with his chin. Then declare, as though it were a marvellous feat, that by merely pressing the palms of your hands against the sides of the chair you will be able to prevent your opponent from drawing it through your grasp! A glance at the accompanying photograph will explain the situation.

You will find that there is nothing difficult in this trick, provided that you place the palms of your hands high up on the sides of the chair, for this gives you such a leverage that you can bend the small of your opponent's back and cause the chair to rest firmly on his chest.



Trick No. 2.

Remember, whilst performing this trick, to push the chair away from you by pressing against it with the balls of your thumbs, although apparently only exerting side-pressure with the hands. Your opponent's back being bent, and the chair remaining firmly planted upon his chest, he is effectively prevented from drawing it downwards through your grasp. And thus, with no exertion on your part, you accomplish a very pretty trick that will astound everyone.

TRICK NO. 3.—HOW TO LIFT FROM THE GROUND A CHAIR IN WHICH A PERSON IS SEATED.

In reality, however difficult it may seem, this is a remarkably simple trick. A strong chair is required, with a high back, a low seat, and a cross-bar between the back legs. In this chair you request your subject to



First, second, and third positions for Tricks Nos. 3 and 4.

arrange himself comfortably, with legs outstretched. He must firmly grasp the back legs of the chair as low down as possible with his hands.

For the performance of the trick three movements are necessary, as follows: (1) Seize the back uprights of the chair, and push forward. This will cause the occupant to stand upon his feet, and to raise the back legs of the chair from the ground. (2) Follow up the movement by pushing upwards against the cross-bar of the chair with your leg, using the side of your leg as a fulcrum. This will cause the front legs of the chair to leave the ground, and the front of the seat will then strike the occupant behind the knees, causing him to fall backward in a sitting posture. (3) Withdraw the support of your leg, and pull the chair backwards. This will cause the feet of the occupant to leave the ground, and he will instinctively make a spring backwards to regain his seat. Thus for the moment both the chair and its occupant will be raised bodily from the ground.

The three movements must be performed as rapidly as possible, a little practice making the feat both simple and effective.

TRICK NO. 4.—HOW TO LIFT A CHAIR WITH FOUR MEN PACKED UPON IT.

This trick is on the same principle as No. 3. But you will possibly wonder how to pack four men on a chair. It is done in this way: The first man, sitting in a natural position on the chair, must be strong and heavy, and must grasp the back legs as firmly as possible. He must directly face the audience. Another man sits across his legs, facing him, and grasping the back of the chair. Two others are then placed lengthwise between these two, face downwards.

The chair is lifted in three stages. First (1) by charging the back with your shoulder you tilt it forward, so that everyone loses their balance, and the bottom man finds himself forced into a sitting position, and lifting the chair with the three men on his thighs. Then (2) you push the chair forward by using your leg as a fulcrum against the cross-bar, and make the seat strike No. 1 man behind the knees. He will lose his balance and drop into the chair with a thud. Then (3) you draw your leg away, and pull the chair



Trick No. 4.

backwards. The bottom man's feet will temporarily leave the ground, and you will thus produce the illusion of having lifted all four men, together with the chair, into the air.

**TRICK No. 5.—HOW TO DEFY ANYONE
STANDING IN FRONT OF YOU TO LIFT YOU
FROM THE GROUND.**

"Ladies and gentlemen, before I set out to join this charming assembly, I charged myself with electricity. I am a human battery—I have magnetic powers which none can resist. With your permission I will give you a few proofs of the marvellous qualities I possess. . . ."

With some such preamble as this the following trick may be made very effective. The good conjuror and wonder-worker talks all the while when performing, and so succeeds in distracting the notice of his audience from his fraudulent methods. The idea of "magnetic powers" will serve as an excellent pattern when performing this feat.



Now to show how you can render it impossible for anyone to lift you when, as you tell your audience, "you turn on your electric current!"

Remove the two non-conductors, place one finger on your opponent's temple, and another on the extremely sensitive tonsil gland of his throat, explaining, meanwhile, that it is only by so doing that you are able to complete the electric circuit. Throw your body and your head slightly backwards. Then, when the man attempts to lift you, he will involuntarily draw away from you as he feels the pain from the pressure of your finger on his tonsil, the result being that his arms are almost straightened.

Now, when your opponent is in this awkward position, it is obviously impossible for him to raise your body. *Sandow*, the strongest man in the world, is only able to hold out about 75 lb. in this particular attitude, although he can lift 500 lb. with one finger, and about two tons off the ground by what is known as the "saddle-lift."

You must make the audience imagine, however, that you have rendered

your opponent helpless solely by the exercise of your marvellous electrical power, and if you are a good talker, you should be able readily to deceive them as to your real methods. Remember, however, to keep your opponent away from you only just sufficiently to answer your purpose in preventing him from lifting you, otherwise it is likely to attract attention, and show people how the trick is done.

**TRICK No. 6.—HOW TO DEFY ANYONE
STANDING BEHIND YOU TO LIFT YOU FROM
THE GROUND.**

This trick is a variation of No. 5, but is equally effective. As before, you talk a great

Trick No. 5.—The possible and impossible positions.





Trick No. 6.—The possible and impossible positions.

deal about your "magnetic powers," and allow yourself first to be lifted in the air, by way of showing how easy the feat is when your permission is given, and when silk handkerchiefs are used as non-conductors of your electric powers. Your opponent will easily raise you provided that you stiffen your body and arms, and incline your body slightly backwards, so as to throw your weight upon him.

But when you defy him to lift you, take away the handkerchiefs (to allow the electricity to come into play), stand as limply as possible, with head and body slightly bent forward, and hold your arms loosely. It will then be practically impossible for him or anyone else, grasping you by the elbows, to raise you in the air.

TRICK NO. 7.—HOW TO LIFT FROM THE FLOOR A BILLIARD CUE, HELD DOWN BY ANY NUMBER OF MEN, WITH ANOTHER MAN SEATED ON TOP.

By the time you have successfully performed the foregoing feats of skill and strength, provided that you have been cunning enough to avoid detection, the audience will be filled with a great wonder at your cleverness, and will have perfect confidence in the straightforwardness of your methods. It will now be a propitious time, therefore, to introduce the following trick, which is perhaps the most ingenious, the

most marvellous in effect, and the most fraudulent of our entire selection.

To perform this trick, persuade as many people as possible (six at least) to grasp the top of a strong French billiard cue, and to press it downwards with all their force with the object of preventing you from moving it. The photograph shows only four men, but this is in order to show more clearly that the cue is in an oblique position when it is lifted. Then select, as though at random, the heaviest man you can see, and ask him to seat himself upon the hands of those who are holding the cue.

When you have arranged this group round the billiard cue, and when the heavy man has clambered on top with the aid of a chair, explain to your audience that you will now perform the marvellous feat of raising the cue off the ground.

Creep in under the arms of those about the billiard cue, and manage to upset their formation as much as possible without giving any signs of so doing. Note the direction in which the cue inclines. Then pull the end of the cue in the opposite direction to that in which the top is pointing. What is the result? The cue moves without the slightest



Trick No. 7.

Trick No. 7.—Explanatory photographs Nos. 1 and 2, showing the natural position for exerting full force upon the cue, and the actual position taken up.

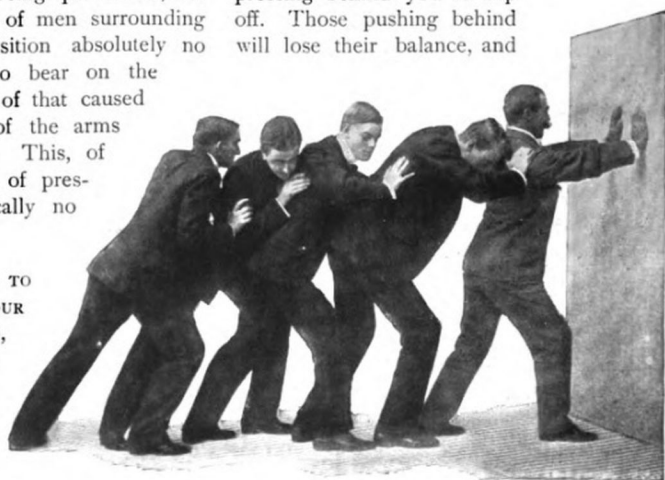


difficulty, the hands resting on its point suddenly feel the weight of the heavy man and the strain on their wrists when the support is removed, and almost involuntarily lift upwards to avoid this strain. Then you quietly raise the cue as high in the air as possible, replace it in an upright position, and turn to receive the round of applause that will undoubtedly greet your efforts.

The two photographs, shown above, will help to explain the theory of the trick. No. 1 shows how a man should stand if he is to exert the full force of his strength to keep the cue firmly planted on the ground. No. 2 shows the position he must necessarily take up when the trick is being performed, on account of the number of men surrounding the cue. In this position absolutely no pressure is brought to bear on the cue, with the exception of that caused by the mere weight of the arms resting upon the top. This, of course, is the slightest of pressures, and has practically no material effect.

TRICK NO. 8.—HOW TO FACE A WALL, WITH YOUR ARMS OUTSTRETCHED, AND DEFY ANY NUMBER OF STRONG MEN TO PUSH YOU AGAINST IT.

Take up a position against a wall, as



Trick No. 8.

shown in the photograph. Be careful, however, to resist the power from behind entirely with your wrists, for if you attempt to resist with your hands only, they would be bent back, and your wrists, in all probability, would receive a severe strain.

The object of the people pressing behind you is to push you against the wall; your object is not so much to resist them, as to break their line—a very simple matter, as I shall show, if you know how.

Arrange, if possible to have a weak man pressing immediately on your shoulder-blades. Place two silk handkerchiefs, which are very slippery, upon your shoulders, saying that you take this precaution in order that your coat shall not be soiled. Then, when the word is given, and everyone begins to push with all their power, it is not at all improbable that the weak man will give way before you feel any severe strain; and the line will naturally fall to pieces. However, if this does not happen, slightly bend one of your arms (the one furthest from the audience, so that they shall not see how the trick is done), and lower your shoulder, causing the hand of the man pressing behind you to slip off. Those pushing behind will lose their balance, and

the line will immediately be broken. You then straighten your bent arm, and assume the original position.

In order to make this trick more effective, you ask two members of the audience to place their hands between yours and the wall. Then, when the trick is done, ask them whether they felt any pressure. They will reply in the negative. The reason is, of course, that you receive the whole pressure on your wrists.

TRICK NO. 9.—HOW, WHEN LYING AT LENGTH ON TWO CHAIR-BACKS PLACED AT YOUR EXTREMITIES, TO SUPPORT A PERSON STANDING ON YOUR CHEST.

I advise only the stronger section of my readers to attempt this feat; it is not a case of trickery so much as a case of strength, although less strength is required than anyone would imagine who first witnesses the performance.

Place two chairs in such positions that, when you are lying horizontally, the back of one will support your shoulders, and the back of the other your feet. Then ask your friends to tie your arms tightly to your sides, a device which gives invaluable support.

On the top of the chair on which your shoulders will rest place a thick overcoat, doubled twice. This, it will be found, will extend the support, not only down your back, but up your legs. It will, in fact, have much the same effect as would a flat board.

Lie at length on the ground, and request two people to take you up, one by the legs, and the other by the head, and to place you on the chairs. Arrange for someone to step upon your chest from a chair at a given signal.

Then, when everything is ready, draw a long breath, give the signal—and when the ordeal is over try to assume as pleasant a look as possible.

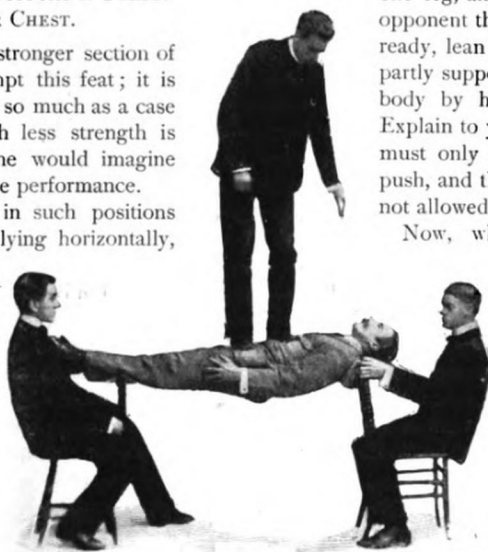
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TRICK NO. 10.—HOW TO STAND ON ONE FOOT AND TO DEFY ANYONE TO UPSET YOUR BALANCE BY A SLOW, STRAIGHT PUSH.

To stand on one foot and to defy anyone to push you over sounds wonderful enough, even though the condition is made that only a slow, straight push shall be exerted, but it is in reality a feat that may be easily performed when the correct method is understood.

Support a billiard cue or a broom-stick in the palms of your hands, holding your arms straight before you, with the backs of your hands upwards. Then balance yourself on one leg, and before giving your opponent the signal that you are ready, lean slightly forward, and partly support the weight of your body by his counter-resistance. Explain to your opponent that he must only give a slow, straight push, and that rushing tactics are not allowed.

Now, when your opponent begins to push at right angles to his body, you immediately thwart his efforts by pushing in a slightly upward direction. This causes him to expend his strength in attempting to push the stick downwards until it is level with his



Trick No. 9.

shoulders. When he has succeeded in this, vary your manoeuvres by slightly depressing the stick, which will cause him to again waste his energy in vain attempts to attain the stipulated position. By adopting these tactics your opponent will never have an opportunity of exerting a horizontal pressure against the stick, and will be entirely engaged in either trying to force the stick downwards—when you force it upwards, or in forcing the stick upwards—when you are forcing it downwards!

The cleverness of the trick depends in not over-doing the upward and downward pressure,



Trick No. 10.

so that your opponent will never suspect that he has not been exerting all the time the "slow, straight push!"

TRICK NO. 11.—HOW TO HOLD A BROOM-STICK IN YOUR HANDS, AND TO DEFEY ANYONE TO PUSH IT THROUGH YOUR HANDS.

This feat is entirely a matter of leverage.

Hold a broom-stick at the extreme ends in the palms of your hands, inviting your opponent to grasp the centre, and to attempt to force the stick through your hands. As soon as he begins to exert a downward pressure, you have merely to tilt the stick slightly out of the perpendicular to frustrate him. For owing to the great leverage power which you can obtain by holding the ends of the stick only, you prevent your opponent from forcing the stick into a perpendicular position—in which direction alone it is possible to push the stick through a person's hands.

Great care must be taken not to overdo this trick, otherwise your opponent will perceive that you are forcing him to use lateral pressure instead of perpendicular pressure.

When performing the foregoing tricks, it is well, by the way, to prevent your opponent, if possible, from having any idea as to how your marvellous "feats of strength" are effected. He should, moreover, never be given an opportunity of arguing or explaining

anything to the audience, or your reputation may be ruined.

Although the majority of the feats are of so simple a nature that they may be readily understood, it is well, of course, to practise them before venturing on a public performance. Practice will explain away any difficulties that may arise through studying merely the theory of the feats as here set forth; practice will add the perfecting touch, and will set you well upon the way to becoming—to your own conceit and to the boundless amusement of your friends—a highly-accomplished and entertaining "drawing-room strong man."

It may be added that if these feats of strength are actually to be performed in a drawing-room, as large a space as possible should be cleared, for the larger the space available the more effective many of the tricks can be made.

For Trick No. 4, it will be found that the chair shown in the photograph is not sufficiently high in the back in order to obtain the necessary leverage to lift the four men. To perform this feat satisfactorily a chair with a specially high back will be required.

In Trick No. 7, the longer the broomstick the less vertical pressure it will be possible for the men holding it to exert. It will be advisable, therefore, to have a stick at least 5ft. high, and, if one can be obtained, 5ft. 6in., or even 5ft. 8in. high, so much the better.



Trick No. 11.