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VENTRILLOQUISM IN A MONTH

Cecil H. Bullivant

A PRACTICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE GUIDE TO THE ART

There is one form of entertainment which perhaps makes a stronger appeal to the average boy and young man than almost any other. It would not, in a sense, be wrong to say that ventriloquism is, and has been for a great number of years, the most envied of all accomplishments incidental to the art of the amateur and semi-professional entertainer.

True, ventriloquism for many centuries was regarded as an adjunct to wizardry, and the exponents of black magic, but the great success achieved by the writer of "It Valentine Vox," the central character, in which was endowed with the most wonderful and extraordinary powers of voice throwing, brought the subject of ventriloquism at once under general notice, and ever since it has steadily won its way into universal favor, with the result that it has remained a popular form of amusement for many years.

Despite this, however, the misconceptions existing regarding this branch of vocal phonetics are extraordinarily numerous and widespread, due, perhaps, in a measure to the fact that the amount of valuable written instruction on ventriloquism is so small, while the number of people who have swallowed the fascinating and improbable adventures dealt with in the book just referred to are correspondingly large.

To a very considerable extent, then, it is the object of this chapter primarily to dispose of the many existing fallacies concerning ventriloquism, because by so doing alone is it possible to commence a study of the subject with the hope of attaining proficiency and success.

HOW TO THROW YOUR VOICE

The first idea which the would-be ventriloquist has to dismiss from his mind is that, by following out a stated course of exercises, he will be able to "throw" his voice or, in other words, to upset the equanimity of peaceable old gentlemen snoring quietly in the furthest corner of the railway carriage--or ruffle the temper of some aged lady by producing facetious remarks concerning her appearance--from a long distance away; not that those who approach this subject have any particular desire to be a

disturbing influence to other people, but it is safe to say that more take up ventriloquism with the idea of practical joking than for any other purpose.

In point of truth, the real art of ventriloquism does not lend itself very easily to the production of such illusions; even when the performer is capable of producing ventriloquist sound, he will discover that the "distant" effect [to throw your voice] depends almost entirely upon his situation at the moment of utterance, and whether or not those around him are prepared to give the credence he desires to his efforts.

In other words, a ventriloquist cannot throw his voice where-so-ever he will as if it were sound bottled up only to come out and be heard when it is some distance away; the best he can hope for is to make that sound so deceptive to the ears of his audience that, to them, it seems to come from some one other than the actual speaker.

It cannot, however, be denied that the stock-in-trade of the clever ventriloquist is so unusual and superior to that of his fellow-worker in any other branch of entertainment, that he is capable of producing the most humorous and arresting situations. Moreover, it is a power which once gained can never be lost, and although a ventriloquist may, from various causes, give up the pursuit of his favorite subject for a period of many years, yet he can pick it up again at the point where he left it and find himself still possessed of the same wonderful and extraordinary skill.

ALL BORN VENTRILOQUISTS

Unhappily there are other very prevalent misconceptions to be removed before instruction can be either given or undertaken. The marvelous and almost incomprehensible powers attributed by some professional entertainers to their "dolls," probably once gave rise to the idea that ventriloquism was a gift natural only to those possessing unusual formation of the throat and vocal organs. Modern research and investigation, however, have proved that every one is a born ventriloquist, that the power to make sounds appear to emanate at a point remote from the speaker is universal--and that all those who study the subject from a proper and sensible standpoint can easily acquire the art.

Then, again, it has long been supposed by the uninitiated that ventriloquist practice is injurious to the throat, and capable of harming the lungs. Exactly the opposite is the case ; the exercises necessitated by the proper study of the art are such as will serve not only to train the vocal organs, but also to induce proper breathing a practice neglected by many--and to strengthen and invigorate the lungs.

From many years' personal experience the author can testify to the truth of this fact ; he has known a number of young men who, possessing lung and throat troubles, and acting on the foregoing advice, have followed out a practical course of ventriloquist training, and have obtained much material benefit thereby.

Of course it cannot be denied that some possess a natural aptitude for the correct expression of ventriloquist sound, and it is they who make the cleverest exponents. Therefore, from the start it should be assumed that a ventriloquist has only to cultivate the vocal qualifications with which he has been endowed in order to shine as a popular entertainer.

Careful and systematic attention to the instructions subjoined will not only strengthen the throat and respiratory organs, but will also endow any one young man, or young woman, with the power of giving a highly amusing entertainment. Probably many who give this chapter attention will do so with the idea of "taking up" the subject for the purpose of making a living, and in that respect it may truthfully be said that ventriloquism is one of the most paying forms of entertainment. While the number of conjurers, comic singers, &c., is legion, those capable of giving a really good ventriloquist entertainment are comparatively few, with the result that a clever ventriloquist is always certain of obtaining engagements at fees which he, himself, can fix and command. The popularity of the subject is

so widespread that the chances of exhibiting it have increased in recent years.

THE INITIAL STAGES

Just as the successful illusionist is called upon to devote many, many hours of his time to the speedy and finished manipulation of cards, coins, and billiard balls, so the young ventriloquist has an equally uninteresting course to traverse. It is, however, possible for the initial stages of the work to be accomplished in less time than is the case with conjuring, and while the work has to be done all the same, dry and tiresome though it may be, after it is once accomplished the performer can put it behind him for ever.

The primary difficulty to be overcome is incorrect breathing. Possibly nine out of ten, when they come to read this chapter, will discover that their method of breathing is faulty. Most people, from lack of proper instruction and through carelessness, breathe through the mouth--and this fault must be remedied at once.

For ventriloquism, as with singing, breathing must take place through the nostrils. The necessity for this--apart from hygienic reasons--is that because the ventriloquist particularly when he is performing with a "lay " figure, is called upon to conduct a dual conversation, and the supposed interchange of remarks between him and the automaton is so rapid that mouth breathing would interfere with the continuous flow of words. Only by taking in deep inhalations through the nostrils and filling the lungs to their utmost capacity is it possible to carry on one part of the conversation with moving lips, and the other with the face immutably set.

BREATHING EXERCISES

These should be undertaken regularly every day, preferably early 'in the morning and in the open air. Stand erect, shoulders drawn well back, arms hanging loosely at the sides, and then, closing the mouth tightly, draw in a deep breath, retaining it for some seconds in the lungs. Not infrequently it happens, that the ventriloquist when performing is called upon to keep a conversation going for quite a minute and a half without the opportunity of recharging the lung cells with a fresh supply of oxygen ; from this it will easily be understood how important deep and sustained breathing is.

At first difficulty will be experienced in holding the breath for more than five or six seconds ; by the end of a week, after ten minutes practice every morning, the chest will be so expanded and strengthened that " half minute breaths " may be taken with ease. Continue the practice of this exercise until only one inhalation and exhalation takes place every forty or fifty seconds. Somewhat dry indeed, sounds this part of the ventriloquist study ; nevertheless it is of the utmost importance, and will well repay the time, trouble, and perseverance devoted to it.

As a number of minor acquirements must be gained before ventriloquial effects can be produced, the breathing exercises may be alternated with the most necessary adjunct of learning to speak without moving the lips.

AUTOMATON--OR MAN ?

It has previously been said that ventriloquism largely partakes of the nature of an illusion, and this effect is produced by the performer uttering sounds without giving visible indications of the fact. Consequently, when the audience have before them two figures, a live and a dummy one, and the mouth of the "dummy" opens and shuts to correspond with the words used, whilst the face of the ventriloquist remains mask-like and passive--the illusion that it is the "automaton," and not the man who is speaking, is complete.

So important indeed is the ability to do this properly, that speaking without facial movement ranks of equal importance with the placing of the vocal cords in such a position that "distant" effect is given to sound. In fact, one might almost say that a most amusing entertainment can be given without this latter power at all.

Many ventriloquists or polyphonists, as they more correctly designate themselves, rely solely for their entertainment on a "knee" figure and speech without facial expression.

Those who do not aspire to become really first-class and proficient ventriloquists may conclude their instruction at this point, and rest quite assured that they have learned sufficient, at any rate, to give a creditable performance.

Naturally the beginner would like to have some idea of the time it would take to gain a practical working knowledge of ventriloquism. Well, the student who would take the trouble and devote sufficient time to the initial and most difficult stages of the work would be in a position to give a very creditable performance long before his pains-taking brother who, as fast as he seems to be getting on, will find he has to go back again and again over the early ground.

However, after devoting say a week to the elementary stages, a "knee" figure might be purchased, and within a very few days a private entertainment might safely be entered upon. As, however, the course herewith outlined will take in several different kinds of "voices" for automata, together with the various modifications of the "distant" voice, the student should not expect to gain proficiency under a month. Of course, to give a really finished entertainment consisting of an exhibition of the "near" and "distant" voices, together with instrumental and vocal mimicry equal in skill to the average product of the professional entertainer, many months practice are required.

SPEAKING WITH STILL LIPS

A study of the alphabet reveals that difficulties lie in the path of pronouncing certain letters-- a, e, i, o, u, c, d, g, h, j, k, l, n, q, r, s, t, x, and z--issue from the mouth quite easily; but b, f, m, p, v, w, y all make a demand upon the muscles of the lips and cheeks. Unfortunately these letters often recur in ordinary speech, and as it is almost impossible to speak them distinctly without facial movement, appropriate vocal substitutes have to be made.

On the border line is "b," which is generally pronounced by bringing the upper row of teeth down to the under lip and forcing the breath out between the lip and teeth; by giving greater force to the inhalation, and, opening the mouth, it will be found that almost identically the same sound can be gained, and it is this one which has to be for all words commencing with "v" and "b." Thus the word "brother" is really pronounced ventriloquistly as "vruther" in the hurry of conversation the substitution passes notice, and the audience hears only the correct word.

For "f" an accentuated aspirate makes a very passable substitution--i.e. "fool" becomes "hool," "feel" becomes "heel," and so on.

"m" will be found rather more difficult, but if the lips are formed into an orifice, and the breath drawn sharply in, the sound of the "m" can be made inside the mouth instead of by the lips.

As it is almost an impossibility to sound the initial " p " unless the lips come together, words commencing with it should be studiously avoided. Another plan is to drop the first letter altogether ; but the former is the better.

" w " is amenable to a little tongue-twisting, and is accomplished by moving the tongue twice in quick succession to the roof of the mouth making the sound at the back of the throat. This is as regards the letter itself, but words commencing with " w " are quite easy. Practice on "which," "when," "what."

"y," however, is a fairly certain test, and if you can comfortably manage this without betraying the fact to the looking-glass (before which you should carry out your practice) then you have mastered a great difficulty. A quick exhalation should take place while words commencing with it are being uttered.

TWO KINDS OF VENTRILOQUISM

Ventriloquism may be divided into two classes--the first and more easy of acquirement known as " near," i.e. including all those vocal illusions produced with the aid of automata ; and " distant," which takes in the various illusions achieved by what is known as " throwing the voice."

The most finished exponent of both these branches, of this or any other age, was the great Lieutenant Walter Cole, and he introduced into his entertainment such an exquisite blending of the two styles that his example might well be imitated by other followers of the art.

When carrying on an animated conversation with the "lay " figures placed at near quarters the proceedings would suddenly be interrupted by the low sound of voices coming from afar, and this would gradually increase in volume as the speakers were supposed to draw near, until at last they would be heard outside the very room in which the entertainment was taking place.

This is alluded to now, as showing the latitude which ventriloquism allows its exponents.

Of the two branches, "near" ventriloquism is much the simpler to acquire, although some might hold that, in order to justify the title, to " distant" sounds should first be mastered.

For the purpose of adding interest to the work, students are recommended to give precedence to the " near " effects. Briefly, the " near " voices come from the mouth, the " distant " from the throat.

For the former five modified voices are generally used. These are: " The old man " " the old woman," " the little boy," " the little girl," and " the coster."

The first is a foundation for the last two. It has been spoken of as the " grunt," because, being the vocal production of an aged and un educated man, in its initial stages it much resembles the familiar grunting of a pig.

And here it should be noted that the speech of ventriloquist figures is always harsh and toneless because the efforts to produce the sound in the mouth without moving the lips rob them of that music and modulation invariably associated with the speech of educated persons.

Do not attempt to speak ventriloquially, as you would naturally but slur the endings of your words. Grunt and drag them out slowly, just as do many countrymen and those unacquainted with the rules of proper speech.

To give the sound the necessary depth and loudness, keep the lips slightly apart, the tongue lying loosely in the mouth ; then make the grunt, using some vowel sound like " ah! " fairly far back.

To a certain extent the vocal chords will have to be contracted and the chin drawn slightly down into the chest.

At first only a spasmodic jerkiness of the breath will come, but after a little practice " ah! " can be said quite easily, and then other and longer words follow as a matter of course.

THE OLD WOMAN'S VOICE

Known as the " theek " or " rush " voice, it partakes of the nature of the squeaky, shrill sound produced by a reed instrument. Most people are gifted with the power of singing " falsetto," and the " theek " voice simply consists of falsetto tones somewhat exaggerated. Either the words " queek " or " theek " may be used for the preliminary practice, the latter perhaps being preferable.

As it is not intended in these chapters to enter into a practical discourse on the anatomy of the throat and vocal chords, technical terms relating to such will be avoided as far as possible. However, the larynx must now be mentioned--this is the part of the throat often spoken of as Adam's apple, and is the convex portion of the first cartilage of the larynx. It is, then, this part of the larynx that has to be compressed by muscular contraction in order to give the " theek" voice its proper quality; by a slight pressure with the hand on the " apple" you will realize the position which this part of the throat should occupy when muscular contraction takes place.

Now, taking in a deep breath and contracting the larynx, it will naturally curl up the tongue, until the tip presses tightly against the roof of the mouth. Open the lips fairly, wide and say the word " theek " in a high-pitched falsetto tone, sustaining the vowel sound as long as you can.

Your first efforts will probably end in dismal "failure, but after a few attempts the full sound settles down to the long drawn-out sound of full roundness and tone.

Now you have acquired the " theek " voice, which is also the basis of the voices used with the figures of little boys and little girls.

Very possibly your practice in the elementary stages of ventriloquism will result in a slight soreness of the throat. To alleviate this, and, at the same time, to strengthen the vocal chords, gargle with a weak solution of salt and water, or better still, get a chemist to make up a gargle for you.

Curiously enough, the mere effort of gargling is in itself a valuable aid to the production of ventriloquism, inasmuch as the subject is forced to emit sounds while the water is in the throat, and these will be found to possess quite a " distant " effect.

Having mastered the " grunt " and " theek " voices, use words consisting of vowels, changing the words into sentences as progress is made.

At this point the young ventriloquist is sufficiently well equipped to undertake a public exhibition of his powers, and this being so, it is perhaps better to make mention of ventriloquist figures before the remaining " near" voices are dealt with.

As a matter of fact, the practice of ventriloquism in its earlier stages is not the most interesting of occupations, and not until the beginner awakens to the full realization of his powers--as he does only when he is working with automata--is the real fascination of the art felt.

THE " DISTANT" VOICES

By this time the young ventriloquist should have attained sufficient proficiency in the art of manipulating "knee" figures to feel confident of venturing on the far more difficult and relatively more important distant "voices".

The real test of ventriloquist power is when the performer is capable of making sounds appear to come from a distance, i.e. so modify his utterances that they appear to the audience to proceed from some point remote both from the entertainer and from themselves.

The basis of real ventriloquism, as apart from polyphony, i.e. "near" effects, is known as the "bee drone," because the first sound of which the vocal chords are capable when placed in the required position much resembles the droning of a bee in full flight.

The "bee drone" should be practiced in loosely fitting clothing, so that neither the muscles of the throat nor of the chest are unduly hampered.,.

From a natural, upright position, inhale in a short, jerky manner, making what is best described as a retching noise at the back of the throat. Unpleasant as the practice of this undoubtedly is for the first few minutes, after a short while the noise emitted will settle down to a softly sustained hum. The tongue should lie flat, so that the sound waves produced partly in the larynx and partly in the back of the throat are forced upwards by the action of the abdominal muscles and directed towards the roof of the mouth, the latter acting somewhat as a sounding board-modifying the sound and conveying to the ears of a listener some distance away a "distant" effect.

The continuous practice of the word "ah," with the vocal chords in the position just described, will speedily produce the necessary droning quality.

It remains now only by a contraction of the throat to regulate the quality of the tone and the distance from which you wish it to appear come.

From this point progress will be found rapid and satisfactory. The various modifications of the bee-drone produce respectively,

The "roof" voice.

The "level" voice.

The "floor" voice.

The "roof" voice is extremely useful for illusions of all kinds, and perhaps is the easiest of the three to acquire. Its purpose is to make sound appear to come from any point above the audience, and the entertainer practices it at first by standing erect, taking in a deep breath, and then drawing backwards and downwards the lower jaw, holding it by muscular contraction in that position. With the lips about an inch apart say your words, whatever they may be, just as you would the "ah!" of the bee drone, concentrating your mind on the effort of directing the sound waves towards the roof of the mouth. In this case, however, exhalation should take place very slowly, while the speech is uttered with unusual clearness.

The effect of the illusion, however, is destroyed if whilst using the "roof" voice you look either straight before you or down to the ground.

The ventriloquist must bear in mind that it is important to deceive the audience, just as a conjurer does, but the former has this advantage over his magic brother, that the deception is both optical and oral.

Let him, therefore, when "throwing his voice" to the roof, glance sharply upwards as soon as the words

are uttered, and turn his head in a listening attitude; his example will be followed immediately by the audience, who naturally fall into the trap prepared for them, and, for the time being, are quite satisfied that the sounds do really come from the roof.

This is an advantage on which the ventriloquist can trade to an enormous extent, because the ear is so easily deceived. How difficult it is, when listening from within a closed room to a street organ playing outside to tell whether the music comes from up or down the road. So with ventriloquism--the performer has but to modify the position of the vocal chords as indicated, and to fix his eyes upon the roof, when lo and behold! everybody is perfectly satisfied that the speech does come from above.

"LEVEL" SOUNDS

Of the three "distant" voices, the "level" is, perhaps, the most useful and the most generally successful, because the mere fact of the entertainer being on the same plane as the door and the windows, from behind which people are supposed to converse with him, provides him with opportunities for using the facial muscles and for distorting sounds, and so heightening the illusion.

For instance, whereas he must turn full or three-quarter face when using the "roof" voice, he can carry on a dialogue on the level, sideways to the audience; or in the case where the stage possesses a door at the rear, he may often be permitted for a moment to turn his back.

Practice as before in the "bee drone" voice, without endeavoring to any great extent to shut off the sound in the throat. This may be done by curling up the tongue so that its tip presses against the back of the upper teeth.

If you are practicing by the side of the door, as you open it towards you the ventriloquistically uttered sounds must be raised in tone and made more distinct by lifting the shutter from the throat, or, in other words, by allowing the tongue to resume its normal position, and the sounds to issue forth on the principle of the "bee drone."

THE "FLOOR" VOICE

This voice is extremely useful for such illusions as "the man in the cellar attending to the gas meter," &c. It calls particularly for a display of histrionic powers, and the mere fact of bending down, as the sounds appear to come from below, helps to give it the necessary subdued and "distant" effect. Whilst speaking very slowly in the "bee drone," thrust the chin forward, contracting the larynx as much as you possibly can; roll back the tongue to stifle the sound in the throat, and the illusion will be complete. Immediately you change from the "floor" to the natural voice, resume the standing position and speak with unusual distinctness. The contrast cannot fail to escape the notice of the audience, who will be quite convinced that you have indeed carried on a conversation with some one below.

VENTRILOQUIST IMITATIONS

Although imitations can hardly be classed under the heading of pure ventriloquism, yet they may be pressed into the service of the entertainer to promote variety in his performance. They serve, too,

another very useful purpose, inasmuch as they provide a relief from what must inevitably prove a strain on the vocal chords. As has already been said, ventriloquism necessitates the placing of the vocal chords in a somewhat unnatural position, and the result is that the exponent, particularly in the early stages of the work, is apt speedily to become tired.

As a break between an exhibition of "near" ventriloquism--that is, with the automata--and an exposition of distant effects, one or two vocal or instrumental imitations will prove welcome both to the entertainer and the entertained.

A witty person once remarked that the secret of success lies not so much in what you can do, as in what you can induce other people to think you can do. In other words, a little knowledge in the hands of a ready-witted and competent ventriloquist can be turned to great advantage and become a valuable asset in his undertakings. For successful imitations, self-confidence is perhaps of even greater importance than the possession of real ventriloquist powers. Self-confidence is a trump card that the ventriloquist should always hold in his hand, because it will take all the tricks. Success is impossible without it, and easy with it!

Perhaps there are few branches of entertaining in which self-assurance is so necessary as in ventriloquist mimicry. The border-line between a successful imitation and a ludicrous failure is oft-times so narrow, that a sensitive soul would soon be disheartened.

The only difference between the efforts of the ordinary and the ventriloquial mimic is that the latter, when giving expression to sounds vocally produced, should place the chords in the same position as for "bee-drone" and the "distant" voice.

A very good study is that of a hen as she cackles immediately before laying an egg, and again after having done so. You will notice that the first sounds are mostly of a guttural nature, and they should come from well back in the throat, starting moderately high and descending four or five notes. Of course the lips will have to be kept slightly opened, and for the final jubilant crow considerably extended. To avoid the necessary facial movement, it is as well when uttering the "crow" to turn sideways to the audience. Again, while the first note of the cackling should be loud, the successive notes grow quieter.

A DOG FIGHT

An imitation of a dog fight will form a spirited item in your program. By your actions you may suggest, for instance, a small cur yapping vigorously until a larger and more ferocious animal endeavors to quiet him.

To produce the higher notes of the dog-bark, the falsetto or "thick" voice must be used, while deeper guttural tones serve for the larger dog.

It is a little difficult to intersperse the two sets of sounds without expressing facial contortion, but you may obtain for yourself a certain amount of license by pretending that the dog fight is taking place beneath a covered table, behind which you may stoop in your supposed endeavors to stop the tumult.

It is but natural to turn from dogs to cats. Whereas you have just given an imitation, perhaps, of a fierce duel, your next effort should endeavor to portray a feline courtship. This should be made as funny as possible. The lady's "marr-rr-ows" and "mia-a-a-ows" are easily copied after you have been kept awake a night or two listening to the genuine article, whilst the deeper tones of Mr. Tom are included in the repertory of every well-educated schoolboy.

The mouth should be kept fairly wide open and a kind of sideways motion given to it, whilst the cry should be drawled until the lips form for the final "ow." The spittings and growlings necessitate the

bringing together of the lips and teeth, a freedom which your audience on this occasion must permit you. The doleful moans with which our feline friends endeavor to solace one another can be produced by making the mouth very hollow, the lips into the form of a large O, slowly contracted to a very small one.

For the die-away, distant effect, moaning more or less in the throat must be resorted to. The finale can consist of a number of fierce spittings, and growlings, suddenly interrupted by an unmistakably human voice (your own) "shooing" the night visitants away.

A variation can be made by giving an imitation of pouring out a glass of wine. To produce the illusion of drawing the cork from the bottle, turn slightly round, thrust the forefinger into the mouth against the cheek, close the lips around the finger, slowly bring the end of the finger round inside the cheek, and force it smartly out through the lips. The result will be a loud pop. By moving the tongue from the back of the mouth quickly backwards and forwards, making it strike against the inside of the gums, the "glug, glug" of the wine being poured out will be plainly heard.

THE LION AND THE COW

Under the cover of a screen, the roaring of a lion is simple of accomplishment. Use a glass oil-lamp chimney, and give vent to a series of deep-throated roars from this. The effect will both be natural and startling. With the same instrument the deep lowing of a cow can be perfectly imitated, the lips producing the familiar "moo," the sound being gradually drawled through the glass chimney.

To copy a saw at work is quite easy. Get a ruler, or some similar article, to represent the saw, and draw it backwards and forwards as though cutting a piece of wood. The sound is best made by clenching the teeth, placing the tongue a little forward between the upper and lower teeth, quickly inhaling and exhaling the air. The resultant noise will be an exact imitation of the saw cutting its way through the wood.

Quite an effective item is the ascent of a rocket. By blowing hard through pursed lips, and striking the mouth rapidly with sharp little blows with closed fingers, the curious sound of an ascending rocket may be reproduced with perfect fidelity. This slowly fades away, there is a moment's pause, and then the final pop as the stars burst. Naturally such an imitation should be performed in the shelter of the screen. As a last example, an imitation of the itinerant knife-grinder may be attempted. Keep the lips and the teeth closed to produce the rasping up and down of the steel upon the grindstone, the while working an imaginary treadle with the right foot.

THE COMPLETE ENTERTAINMENT

By this time the young ventriloquist should have at his command "near" and "distant" voices and imitations. It only remains to few words regarding the manner of giving an entertainment.

Although smart dialogue is very entertaining, it is apt, after a little while, to pall; and to obviate this it will be found well to introduce an occasional song or comic recitation. In both cases these may take of parodies, but in the former a serious song really well sung by the ventriloquist figure will evoke both admiration and applause.

Those not possessed of particularly good vocal qualifications may feel that the singing of a song successfully is beyond their capabilities. They should, however, bear in mind that nothing like "finish" or cleverness in execution is expected from a wooden figure. One or two verses and the chorus are

quite enough to venture upon, as singing ventriloquistly is extremely tiring.

The best time to introduce a song is when dialogue between yourself and the automata has been in progress for seven or eight minutes. Either the little boy or the old man or the old woman can essay to try his or her skill as a vocalist, or the affair may be com petitive. Much amusement may be caused by the little boy extolling his own skill as a vocalist, and another figure challenging him. To settle the matter, let one sing the first verse of a song and the second, the little boy making a terrible hash of his part of the per formance. If his mistakes are greeted with groans of derision from the old man, or cries of horror from the old woman, the audience will be immensely pleased.

While the song is in progress, the ventriloquist should look about him unconcernedly, feigning total disinterestedness in the affair. Towards the end of the song he may glance sharply once or twice at the singer and applaud him for his effort, which applause it is to be hoped the audience will generously supplement.

It is not intended that these few observations on the art of ven triloquism should be taken as covering all the ground over which this fascinating subject spreads. Enough has been said, however, to show any one who is sufficiently interested how to give a really pleasing performance which shall earn for him the reputation of being quite a creditable exponent of the wondrous and mystifying art.

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Rick Carruth