

(No Model.)

E. HOWARD.
ILLUSION.

3 Sheets—Sheet 1.

No. 574,090.

Patented Dec. 29, 1896.

Fig. 1

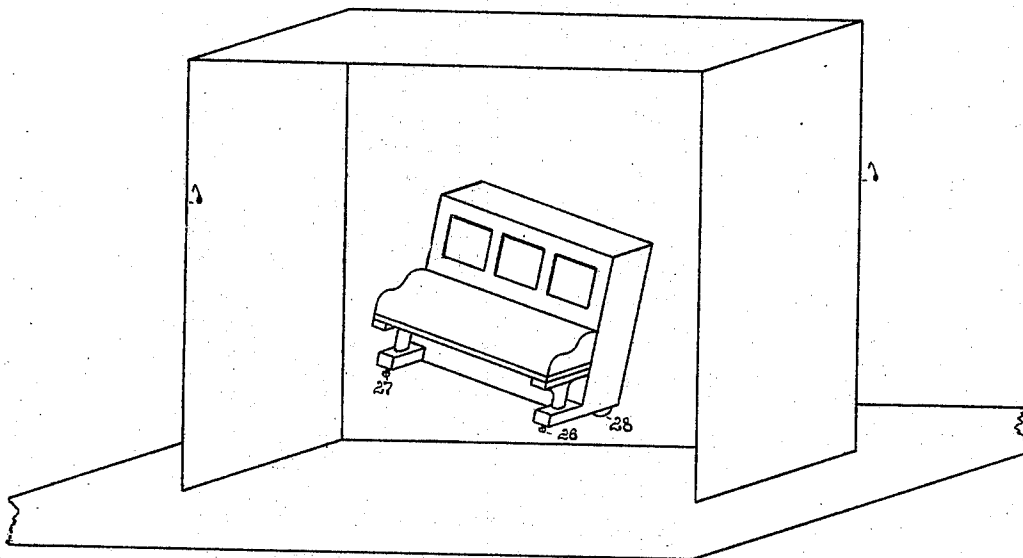
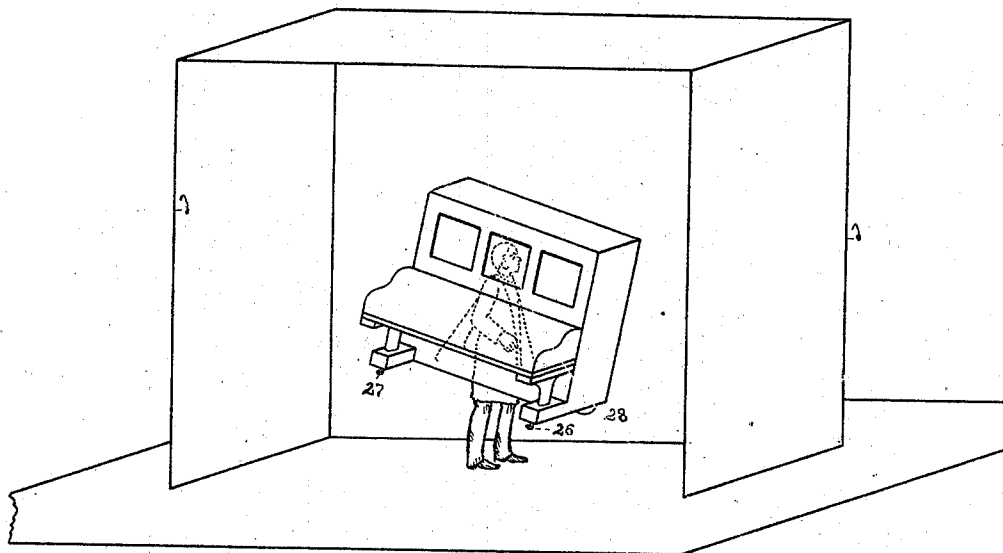


Fig. 2



Witnesses

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Lepine Hall Rice.

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Fig. 3

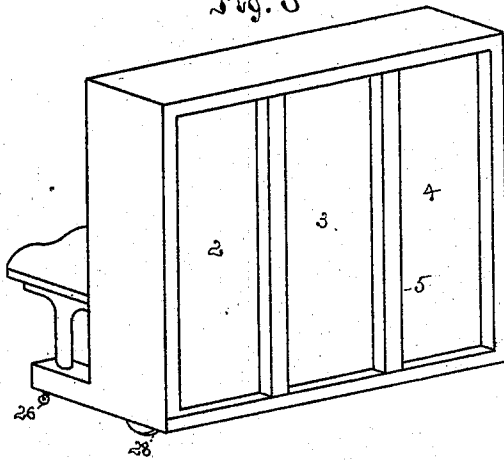


Fig. 4

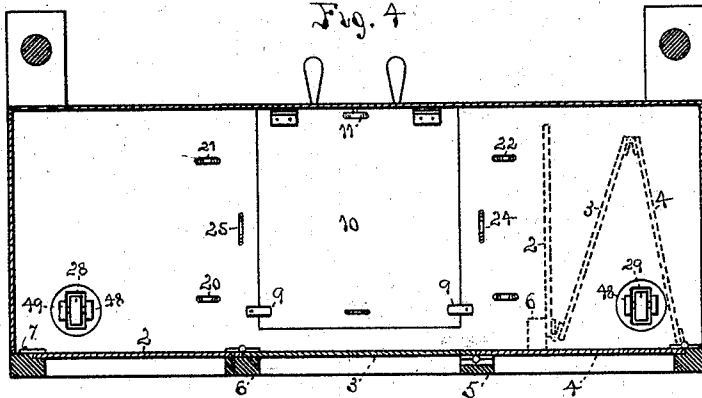
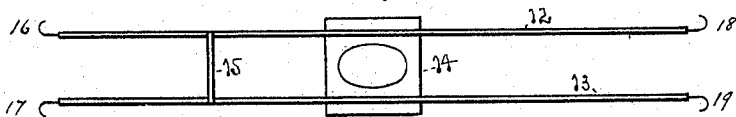


Fig. 5



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Fig. 6

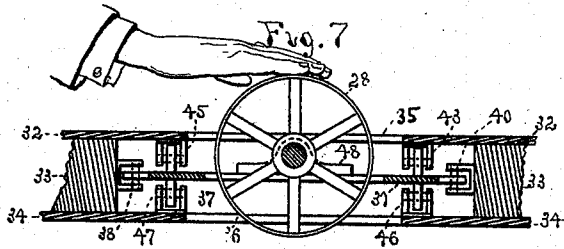
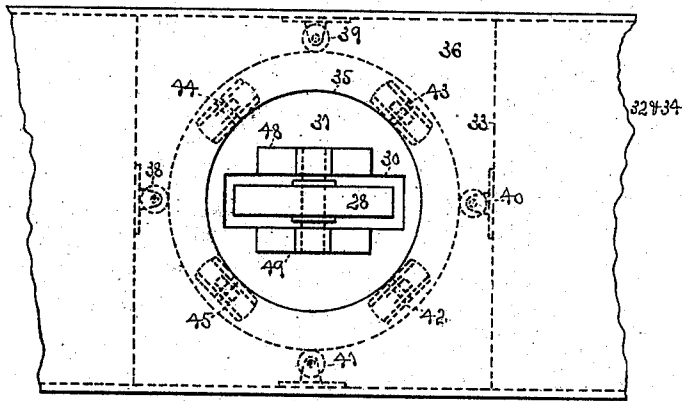
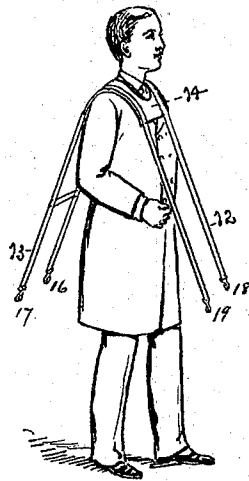


Fig. 8



Witnesses

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

ERNEST HOWARD, OF BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS.

ILLUSION.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 574,090, dated December 29, 1896.

Application filed July 15, 1896. Serial No. 599,262. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, ERNEST HOWARD, of Boston, in the county of Suffolk and State of Massachusetts, have invented a new and useful Illusion, of which the following, taken in connection with the accompanying drawings, is a specification.

The form in which I prefer to embody my invention is that shown in the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a perspective view of the appearance to the audience of my illusion. Fig. 2 is the same with the position of the concealed manipulator indicated by dotted lines.

Fig. 3 is a rear perspective view of the piano, showing the paneling. Fig. 4 is a middle horizontal section, looking down. Fig. 5 shows the harness worn by the manipulator. Fig. 6 is a top view of one of the rear casters. Fig. 7 is a vertical section through the same, the friction-rollers being differently placed, so as to show up clearly. Fig. 8 is a view of the manipulator with the harness on.

The illusion I produce is that of a floating and moving piano, apparently isolated from any means of impulsion outside itself, or so isolated that the intervention of "spirits" is the only admissible hypothesis to explain its motion. To this end I first provide a chamber or cabinet 1 with walls, ceiling, and floor absolutely black, forming a background against which anything black will be invisible, especially in a dim light or one arranged to dazzle the eyes of the spectators. The cabinet is to have no front. Into this cabinet will be wheeled a piano, which the performer will immediately command to rise and float in the air. The piano will obey this command and will remain suspended about thirty inches clear from the floor, turning or tipping in whatever way directed. After going through these evolutions the piano may come to rest while the performer demonstrates that it has no connection with the floor, walls, or ceiling. This he does by passing a long rod all around and under it. No sooner has the piano sunk again to the floor than the lights are turned up and a committee from the audience, who, indeed, may also have been permitted to inspect it prior to its floating act, are allowed to examine both the piano and the cabinet. And then, in full light and surrounded by the

committee, the piano will roll around in any direction at the command of the performer.

The piano used is apparently an ordinary instrument, having a keyboard and all the other external features of the common upright. In reality, however, it is made of the lightest wood and has no metal plate inside. It can therefore be readily lifted by a man and the general mode of making it "float" can be gathered from Fig. 2.

Before the performance, and while the piano is behind the scenes, the manipulator gets into it through the back. As it appears to the audience, (see Fig. 3,) the back is built solid. In reality it is a series of hinged leaves 2 3 4, swinging against the side when opened, as shown by dotted lines in Fig. 4. This arrangement permits ready access to the interior and enables other tricks than those herein mentioned to be done in the cabinet. One rib 5 between the panels 2 3 4 is, or may be, set solid, while the other rib 6 is attached to the leaf 2 and is withdrawn with it. A cleat 7 secures the leaves when closed. With the manipulator inside, the piano is now ready to be wheeled upon the stage. This may, indeed, be done before the performance and the piano remain in sight of the audience for some time previous to the particular illusion. At the proper moment it is rolled into the cabinet 1 and the manipulator turns the cleats 8 9 and swings up the trap-door 10, catching it open by the cleat 11. He steps through the opening and stands upon the floor. His legs and feet are to be incased in black material, which will, as above stated, be invisible against the black background. Over his shoulders is arranged a sort of harness, Figs. 5 and 8, consisting of two long straps 12 13, secured to a neck-piece 14 and stayed together by a cross-strap 15. The long straps 12 13 terminate in hooks 16 17 18 19. In the floor of the piano are four corresponding staples 20 21 22 23, into which he catches the hooks. This he does in a stooping posture. He also grasps two handles 24 25 in the floor and straightens himself up, lifting the piano to the height shown in Fig. 2. The handles give him complete control of any movements he wishes to make the piano go through. When the rod is passed slowly beneath, he steps over it, one foot at a time. Again stooping, he brings the piano

to the floor, disengages his harness, steps inside, closes and secures the trap-door, and is ready for any inspection that the committee may wish to make. The performer now commands the piano to move in various directions, and the manipulator effects this movement by the following means: The front casters 26 27 are of the ordinary type, but the rear casters 28 29 are of special construction. Each is mounted on and projects through a slot 30 in a round plate 31. The floor of the piano at this point consists of three layers 32 33 34, the bottom and top ones 32 34 having a circular opening 35 36 cut in them of about three-fourths the diameter of the plate 31. The middle layer 33 is still further cut away, leaving a square chamber 37. In this chamber the plate 31 is maintained in a horizontal position, but free to revolve by friction-rollers at its top, bottom, and edges. Those at the edges 38 39 40 41 are attached to the sides of the chamber, while those at the top 42 43 44 45 and bottom 46 47 (the other two exactly alike and under 42 44, though not shown) are attached to the top and bottom layers. These rollers should be made of a material which will permit the plate 31 to be turned with comparative silence, or they may be merely covered with cloth or the like. The caster 28 is mounted, as before said, upon the plate 31 in bearings 48 49 of the ordinary type and projects below the floor 32 33 34, so as to rest on the stage. It also projects into the interior of the piano, so that, as shown in Fig. 7, it can be revolved by the hand of the manipulator. When, therefore, the performer commands the piano to move forward or back or to the right or left, the manipulator turns the caster in the right

direction and revolves it till the command to stop is heard.

What I claim as new and of my invention is—

1. In an illusion, a piano-case constructed with space for a manipulator therein, and having a trap through which said manipulator may step upon the stage, and having staples with which a harness on the manipulator engages and handles which he grasps to raise and tip said piano-case, in combination with means for rendering invisible the exposed portion of his body.

2. In an illusion, a piano-case constructed with space therein for a manipulator, and with a caster projecting into said space and pivoted vertically and horizontally so as to be rotatable by said manipulator.

3. In an illusion, a piano-case constructed with space therein for a manipulator, and with a caster projecting into said space and adapted to be rotated by him.

4. In an illusion, a piano-case constructed with space for a manipulator therein, and having a trap through which said manipulator may reach some outside support, and having staples with which a harness on the manipulator engages and handles which he grasps to raise and tip said piano-case, in combination with means for rendering invisible the exposed portion of his body.

In testimony whereof I have signed my name to this specification, in the presence of two subscribing witnesses, on this 11th day of July, A. D. 1896.

ERNEST HOWARD.

Witnesses:

N. P. OCKINGTON,
LEPINE HALL RICE.