GET OFF THE EARTH PUZZLE
Sam Loyd, the greatest American puzzle creator (and the inventor of Parcheesi), was the originator of the famous puzzle: "Get Off the Earth" (next pages). Invented in 1896, it involves two disks attached at their common center. In one orientation the disks show parts of thirteen warriors standing on the planet. But when the top disk is rotated a bit, one of the warriors disappears. The puzzle caused such a sensation that it was used as part of a publicity campaign for William McKinley's presidential bid.
GET OFF THE EARTH
PUZZLE MYSTERY

WHEN THE BUTTON IS DOWN, THERE ARE THIRTEEN CHINAMEN. STUDY THEIR FACES, POSTURES, SWORDS AND PIG-TAILS. THEN MOVE THE BUTTON UP, AND TELL WHICH ONE HAS VANISHED. WHERE DOES HE GO TO!
THE DISAPPEARING CHINAMAN!
Move the world to make arrow point NE—and count 13 Chinamen
Then move arrow to NW—and there are only 12 Chinamen in view!
Which man has vanished? Where does he go?

GET OFF THE EARTH PUZZLE
VANISHING PIECES
Most optical tricks and perceptual illusions fail to hold our attention because the secret of their trickery becomes obvious fairly quickly. But a remarkable group of images known as "geometrical paradoxes" are so subtle that they continue to intrigue and surprise even after their workings have been explained.
Geometrical paradoxes involve separating and rearranging parts of a total length or area. After reassembling the figure in what seems to be its entirety, a portion of the original figure is left over.
The explanation lies in what the great American puzzle genius Martin Gardner calls the principle of concealed distribution. The eye has a great tolerance for subtle alterations in the rearranged version. Tiny increases in the gaps between the parts or in the lengths of the reassembled pieces go unnoticed, so people believe both must have the same area or length.