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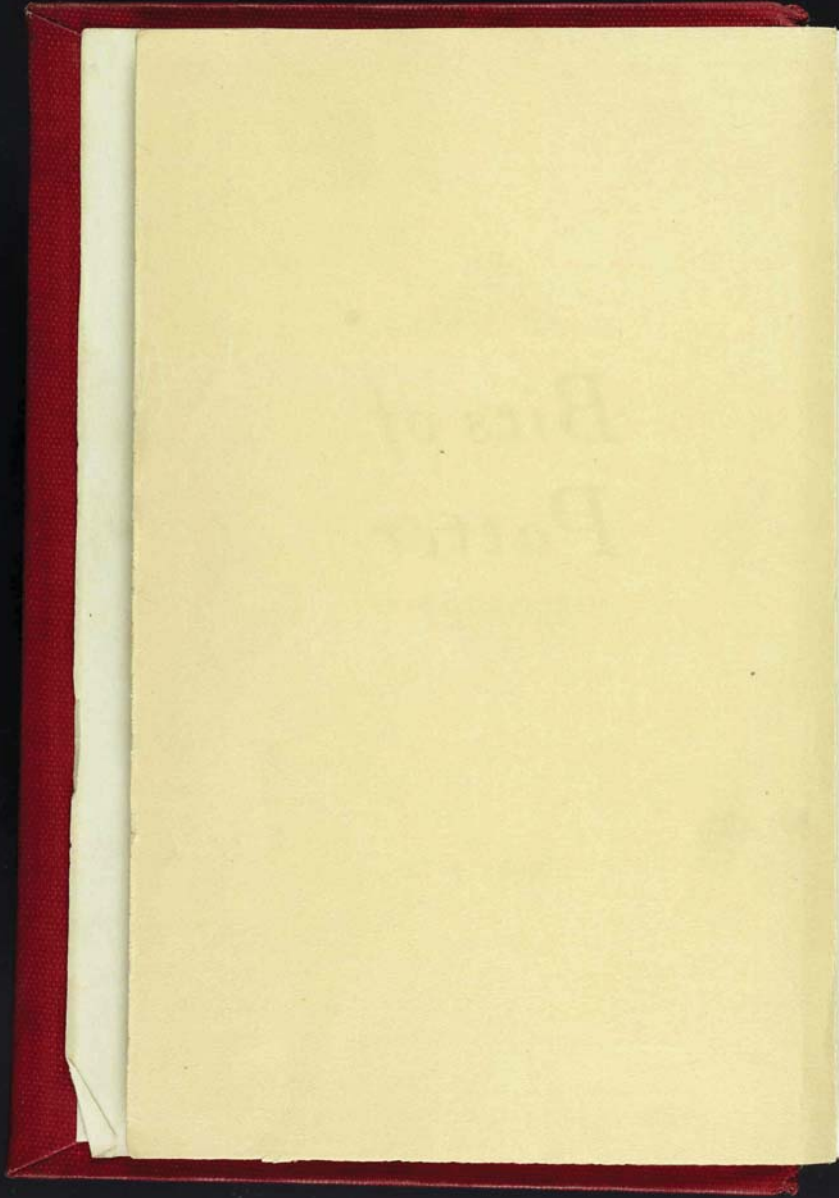
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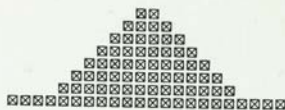
Bits of Patter



E.T.







*Bits of
Patter*



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Bequest of
Harry Houdini
April 1927

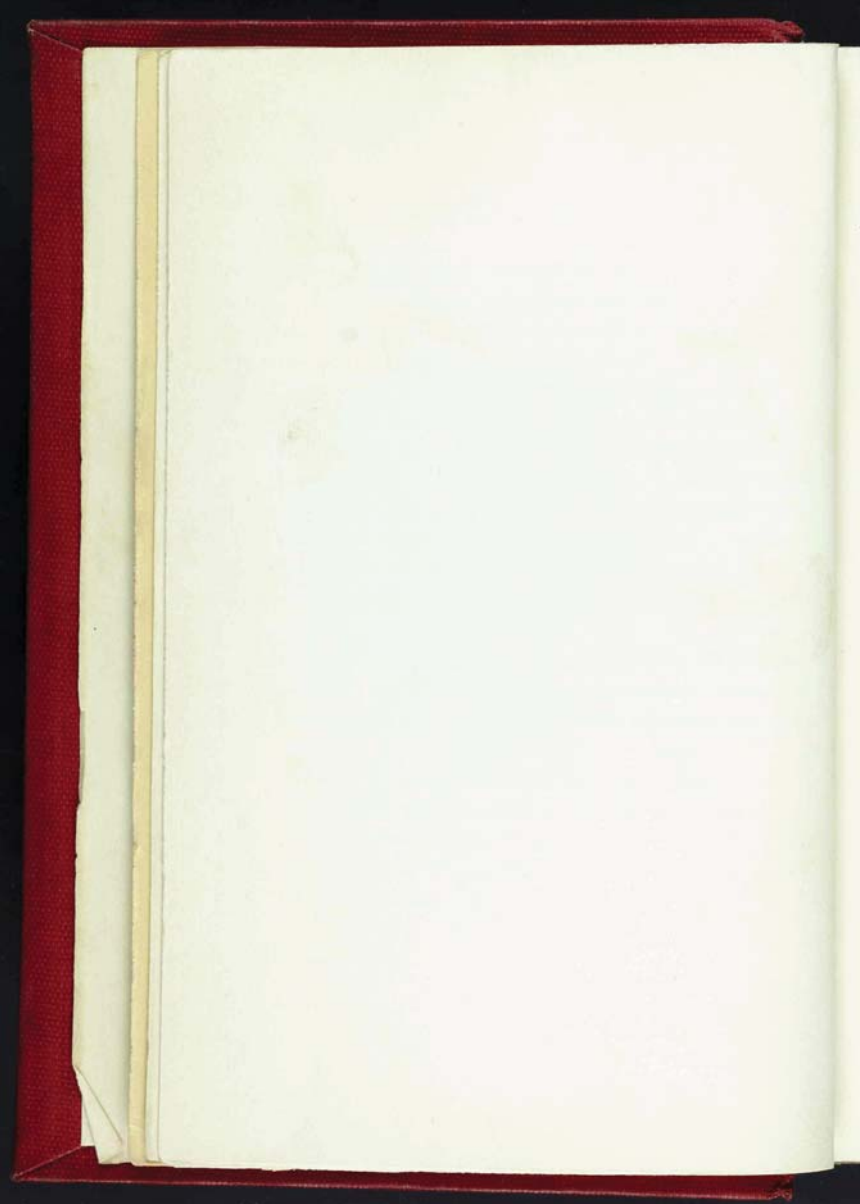
Just a Word

I have been connected with Magic for some years in various branches and in various ways. The most of my connection, however, has been along the "parlor" and "social entertainer's" line. I have been at both ends of that line. I know, or imagine I know, just about what sort of an entertainment people of the better class like to give in their homes, and again I know how hard it is sometimes to please them. I think that among the first requirements that people make of a magician, or of a "society entertainer," as some of our young stars term themselves nowadays, is that he be really clever,—clever not only with his hands, so that he can give a creditable performance without lumbering up their drawing rooms with a hack full of gorgeous hangings, but also with his mouth, in that he be able to talk to them in their own terms about the tricks he does.

Now, I do not claim that all I have written in this little booklet is really clever,—far from that,—but still it may be able to help some ambitious performer who finds trouble in talking just at that moment when he should be talking.

I have chosen rather simple tricks to deal with, but I agree with the old saying that a "trick is not the trick itself, but what you make of it." The patter, in every case, is merely a suggestion which may be worked up or cut down just as the performer sees fit. I feel that it is the kind of talk that will "go" in the finest drawing room, and will help make an act worth more, and I hope that you can use it.

THE AUTHOR.



Drum Head and Casatte

I have a little improvement over the present system of parcels post that you may be interested in. For convenience we will use small articles. This handkerchief and these two small nicked tubes. They are of different shape so that you will be able to keep track of them the better. This long slender tube we will call the New York postal station. You see there is not a thing at the New York end of the line (showing tube). Now to keep everything out of New York we will put these bits of paper over the ends of the tube,—so, and just imagine that they're heavy steel doors bolted again and again. (Here set tube down directly behind the handkerchief, and in doing so set it right on the "feke," which has up to this time been hidden by the handkerchief. At same time pick up the handkerchief.) Now we go to the other tube. This we'll call the _____ office (name of local town). Now, Mr. _____ (name of man in audience) has a load of chickens, onions, potatoes or money that he wants sent to New York. This handkerchief will represent the load and we will shut it up in the home office. Now the next morning we walk into our home office and find that although the building has been carefully guarded throughout the night, still the load is missing. At the same time, the postmaster of New York steps down to his office, finds the doors, both front and back, intact, but yet on entering (break paper) is confronted by Mr. _____'s load. And there you are. If it only proves practical, I'm sure that the government will adopt my system. Don't you?

Orange and Ribbon

I have here what I call my patriotic orange. It was grown on a dog tree,—a *bad* dog tree in fact. I know that it is a *bad* dog tree because it has a very "rough bark." Never saw a dog tree? You can always tell one by its "bows." Well, this dog tree was planted in the Grand Canyon and happened to grow over three different colors of earth,—red, white and blue, and strange to relate, this tree bears oranges, such as this,—just common-looking orange oranges. (Passes the orange around for inspection.) Now this orange, if coaxed along a bit, will bear out my statement about its being patriotic. If you rub it, so—gently at first, it sprouts a bit of Old Glory's colors. (Starts ribbon.) More and more, as you see, in fact, I am almost afraid that I coaxed it too much and that it will never stop. But no, here is the end, and now if anyone cares to try out my patriotic orange he is at liberty to do so. (Reaches in pocket for knife, and leaves fake), for I will cut it open to prove that, to all appearances it is but a common orange and not one grown on the patriotic dog tree.

Astra Floating Ball

Some time ago a friend of mine, a young geologist, who had gone to the innermost parts of China to study mountain formation, wrote me an odd note. I have it here and will read you a line or two so that you may have his own words on this weird happening. (Reading) "This old wizard, Sangas Hahn, on learning that I had a friend interested in magic, promised me that he would lend his Astra globe to you for the period of one year. When I asked him how he could send it, he smiled, and said that you would see. Now I have seen this globe often,—it is black and has golden stars upon it, and in the hands of this old wonder worker is marvelous—it actually floats in the air. I have passed my hands all about it while it is suspended in mid-air and I can vouch that it is connected with nothing but his power."

There is his note. The day I received it, while I was reading I suddenly saw a hazy globe come floating into the room right through the wall. It was the Astra globe of Sangas Hahn. Now whether it floated all the way from China, I do not know. I only know that I have it, and that it came just one year ago tonight. Here it is (taking globe out of box). You see I keep it safely.

Now, as I hold this sphere on my palm, I have no power over it, myself, but when I *command* it in the name of its master, Sangas Hahn, to rise (ball rises) you see how readily it responds. Higher and higher it floats, and as you see, quite free from everything except the power of Sangas Hahn (passing hoop over it). And now it comes down again, not at my bidding but at its master's (places ball on table and picks up cloth). To keep this gift safe I always cover it up with this silk cloth (covers it with cloth which has wire frame of ball sewn in it, and then lets the real ball drop into servante, carrying away cloth as if it contained the ball), and then pack it away again in its box. But look! (shakes cloth out) it's gone! The year is up and Astra has gone back to Sangas Hahn.

The Rice Bowls

Here I have a bowl of rice—the Japs' "staff of life." Now people have often wondered why the Japanese chose the rice plant to cultivate above all others. I have just learned why and I'm going to tell you. You see years ago the people had nothing to drink in Japan but the salt water of the sea. There were no springs and consequently no rivers nor streams. So the Japs had to drink salt water. Well, this went on for some time until it became a national question. Things were getting worse and worse—in fact, the whole nation was becoming pickled. It was then that the old court magician came to the rescue. He brought forward two bowls just such as these—very ordinary to look at but

fashioned and shaped for mystery. He filled one of these bowls with rice—just to the top,—as I am doing. Then he placed the other bowl on top of this bowl,—so,—and pronounced his magic words. I don't speak Japanese so I'll have to leave that part out and trust to luck that we come out all right. Then, on uncovering the rice it had doubled in quantity—a thing most marvelous and useful in itself. But his greatest blessing remained yet to come. After he had covered his rice up again—lo and behold, it had changed to pure sparkling *fresh* water and the nation of Japan was saved. We have conjurers here in our country who turn hops into a sparkling liquid in a manner such as this, but I won't say that they have saved the country by it.

The Hindoo Lota

Recently an Arab magician was found who had lived in the great Sahara desert for some forty odd years without ever going near an oasis. The doctors at first thought that they had discovered some new species of camel, who is noted for its long abstinence "between drinks," but later it was found that this Arab owned a wonderful little bowl which seemed to conjure up water for him out of the very dry air of the desert. I have a small copy of that bowl here and will try to show you how it is used. You see he used it to carry some of his effects in, as I do, and yet when he felt his thirst too strongly, simply turned it upside down three times, so. On the third time, pure, sparkling water gushed forth from his bowl as if it had been a fountain,—so. Then later perhaps one of his camels wanted to dust out his throat and so our Arab went through the same performance for the benefit of his thirsty audience. (Repeat as many times as desired.)

The Cards from the Pocket

My next sleight may be of interest to any of you who may be card players. It's a clever little thing that might be handy when you seem to be changing each blue chip for one white one. I know I find it useful at times. (During this talk turn pockets inside out, keeping "feke" in secret pockets, and put one-half of the shuffled pack in each pocket.) For instance, suppose you hold a flush but for one card,—in diamonds we'll say. Just fish (reach for card in pocket) for it,—so. Or perhaps you may need a seven to fill out a little straight—in the other pocket,—so. Now, let's suppose that we all are holding hands—of cards of course. Let's have some one call out what he may need to win the "pot." Speak right up—you're among friends. How was that? The Queen of Clubs? Fine!. Here she is (taking queen out of pocket). Eh? Oh, you've got two kings and you want two more? Nothing easier. We've got one in each pocket,—so. (Let this run on for a short time.) And then, too, you

may be in need of an entirely new hand. Then this is the best plan to follow. (Have five aces in a bunch hung behind one of your knees with an "Excelsior" clip.) Just get them—(produce from knee in a fan)—so. And again you see my pockets are empty but for the remainder of the pack.

Now perhaps you may wonder what to do with your excess cards. Just treat them so (vanish with a card vanisher). How's that? Didn't see it? No, I didn't expect that you would. But I'll do it again,—slower (takes fan of diminishing cards). You see we start, so, and then once again and so on until at last they become so small that we just very naturally swallow them—so.

The Thumb Tie

I must trouble some one to tie my thumbs together for my next experiment. Thank you. Tie them tightly. They're a good pair of thumbs, so don't let them fool you. Now, you're sure that they're fast, aren't you? Yes? I thought so. They feel it.

Now this trick was first performed by a Chinaman. This man had lost one of his thumbs through an unfortunate accident, but he had "saved the pieces" as it were, and had had a very good "false" thumb made for himself. Now of course when his thumbs were securely tied it was an easy matter for him to loosen his "false" thumb, and to pass his hands right through any solid cane such as this,—so (suiting action to word) and back again,—so (it is best to have your own assistant hold the cane or rod here). And of course his two thumbs would be just as securely tied as ever,—just as mine are. Then for the benefit of a few doubting ones he would pass among the audience (go down) and do his little stunt again,—so. Oh, yes, they're tied. Then back off again as before. You see it was very simple for him,—having his hands chopped up in such an accommodating fashion, and all. He could even pass his hands over a gentleman's arm,—in this manner, so (pass hands over some man's arm; it is best to have him hold his hands, as it looks better). Yes, truly he was a wonderful man. But I have just been explaining to you what some of us magicians could do. I'm sorry that I haven't a thumb to spare, so that I could do his little trick for you, but since I haven't I'll have to ask to be untied and if you'll let me, we'll let it go at that.

The Banknote and Lemon

"This is a lemon. Yes, the fruit kind. Just an ordinary, common lemon that they use to make lemonade and jokes of. Not the circus lemonade, although that is a joke. I would like to pass this about among you if you'll take it in the right way—that is, not think that I'm

trying to 'hand you anything.' I'm not, although I am doing my best to 'slip something over on you.' You find the fruit O. K. in every way, do you? Good. I'm glad that you agree with me,—you remember I told you it was all right. Now following a time-worn habit of mine I would like to borrow a bill. Not the 'first of the month' kind,—no. I have plenty, thank you. The other kind. Some of that lovely pocket-lining kind. How large? Oh, the larger the better. They usually ask me 'how small.' Ah, that is fine. Now, you, sir, will you be so kind as to mark this in some fashion for me? You might note the number, too. Thank you. Now I will place the gentleman's bill, folded nicely, in this handkerchief,—and Madam, could I trouble you to hold it tightly? Don't let me get it from you! And our friend the lemon. We will place it,—let me see—ah, yes, on this upturned tumbler. I suppose that I must say that time-worn saying, "that I use a glass so all can see through the trick"—and that's odd, too, for I once knew a man who had glass for an eye and he couldn't see at all. At any rate there is the lemon isolated so that all may watch it as carefully as they wish. A good plan will be to keep one eye on the lemon, one eye on me, and the other on the lady entrusted with the bill. By the way, you still hold the bill, Madam? Good. Rest easy, sir, we haven't spent it yet. Now, Madam, if you will hold the bill between your fingers and let go at three we will play a little trick on everyone. Thank you. Now, one, two, three! And it's gone. Have you all kept one eye on the lemon? Good. But money flies as well as time, for see,—here we have the bill nicely tucked away inside the lemon. Now if you will identify it, sir, and then let me dry it off for you." (This last I consider very important. I once saw a very clever magician hand a bill back to a gentleman, who had been kind enough to lend it to him after he had tried in vain to borrow one for several minutes, dripping with juice. The man was disgusted and so was the audience.)

The Chinese Linking Rings

This trick is one of the most pleasing and at the same time one of the most effective for either a parlor or small stage performance. Though they are old, people seem to never tire of seeing them used over and over again. Many an offer for an engagement has finished with these words: "And *please* bring your rings. They are *so* pretty and deceptive." Of course they have to be well done and quite a bit of acting must be used in bringing out the best effect. The following is a simple method and may prove helpful:

On entering for the trick have the key ring under the left arm beneath the coat. Hold the other rings in the left hand in the following order, from left to right: Three rings linked, two rings linked and two rings separate. Now go down among the audience and pass out the two separate rings for examination. Hold the remaining rings as follows: The three rings linked together well down in the hand and the

two rings linked together out almost on the tips of the fingers. Now, on retaking the two separate rings passed out for examination, receive them in the right hand and turn as if to return to the stage. In so doing let the hands naturally approach each other and quickly change the two separate rings for the two linked. This can be done almost without turning, without a sound and right under the noses of the audience. It is hard to explain, but with the rings in your hand you will fall onto the knack of it very quickly. This change being performed, pretend to change your mind and turn again into audience. Hold out the two supposedly separate rings well away from the body and let one fall. They are now linked and may be passed out for examination. Then pass out the two separate rings again as if they were entirely new and un-inspected. Say something as following to the person holding these: "Now just take them so, as I take these rings, all in a bunch. Then just run your hand around them sharply, so. That's it,—and if you have done it *all* right they will be linked together as these." (Drop rings and show them linked.) Of course the spectator will not be successful and so you change rings with him, or pass out the three linked together to some one else. Now to all appearances every ring is in the hands of the audience.

Collect the rings and in turning to return to the stage, or spot where your tables are, slip the right hand quietly under your coat and bring down the key ring to the rest in your left hand. Now you are ready to go through any special phases of the trick that you desire.

It seems better to dispense with any "noise" that you might make with your mouth in the way of "patter" and let the rings talk for themselves. Make just as much noise as you can with them, and above all, keep them moving. By working the fingers of the hand in which you hold the key ring, the ring seems to be turning around continually. This is very helpful in hiding the presence of the "key."

Another wrinkle. When you have the rings hanging down in a string and one separate ring through the "key" at the top, get it loose and then bring it down behind the rings, jerking it ring by ring, clear through to the bottom and then free. The effect is that you have taken one ring and pulled it ring by ring through the whole lot, and is very startling.

This trick is one of the best that ever has been devised and is capable of almost endless "wrinkles" and variations. If you have passed it by as "old stuff" just give it a try.

New Use for an Old Piece of Apparatus

I should like to call attention to a very useful piece of apparatus which has been sold in connection with the trick "Spiritualistic Manifestations in Full Light." While its original use has grown rather old, the apparatus is highly useful in productions of all kinds, being especially handy to a parlor performer. Anything can be "loaded" by simply holding this cloth before it, provided you have your load near at hand.

A hat can be loaded from the vest, a big production bowl from the servante and so on. If the parlor magician would only obtain this apparatus and "dope" the false hand a bit to match his own he can work up any number of simple yet baffling effects.

Notes

Too many men seem to feel that they must have a lot of apparatus, that they must have everything "new" that comes out. As far as the drawing room entertainer is concerned a few good pieces of apparatus mixed with well done sleights and small sleight-of-hand features are far more pleasing than a couple of small illusions, which call for little or no skill on the part of the performer. It is the personal cleverness in an entertainer that pleases the drawing-room audience.

Don't forget that a little variation in your act, such as some neat paper tearing, or a few good shadow pictures, are always acceptable, and make your magic stand out better. In fact, if the audience is given a little rest and treated to something beside magic, they will appreciate it all the more when you go back to it.

When you finish with your cards don't lay them down again on the table. Get rid of them in some way. Carry out the mystery of the performance and vanish them or turn them into a bouquet. Little things such as this make the entertainment more pleasing to a host or hostess and they really do not cost much in the long run.

Of course, be careful of your dress, and if you do not work in a "dress" or "tuxedo," make your get up as simple and quiet as possible. People expect an entertainer to fit into his proper place, and one can hardly do that with "gay" neckwear or "loud" shirting at a dignified gathering. Black and white are always good.

It hardly seems necessary to speak about such a matter as dress, but I have seen so many magicians lose return dates on account of just such matters that I feel forced to mention it.

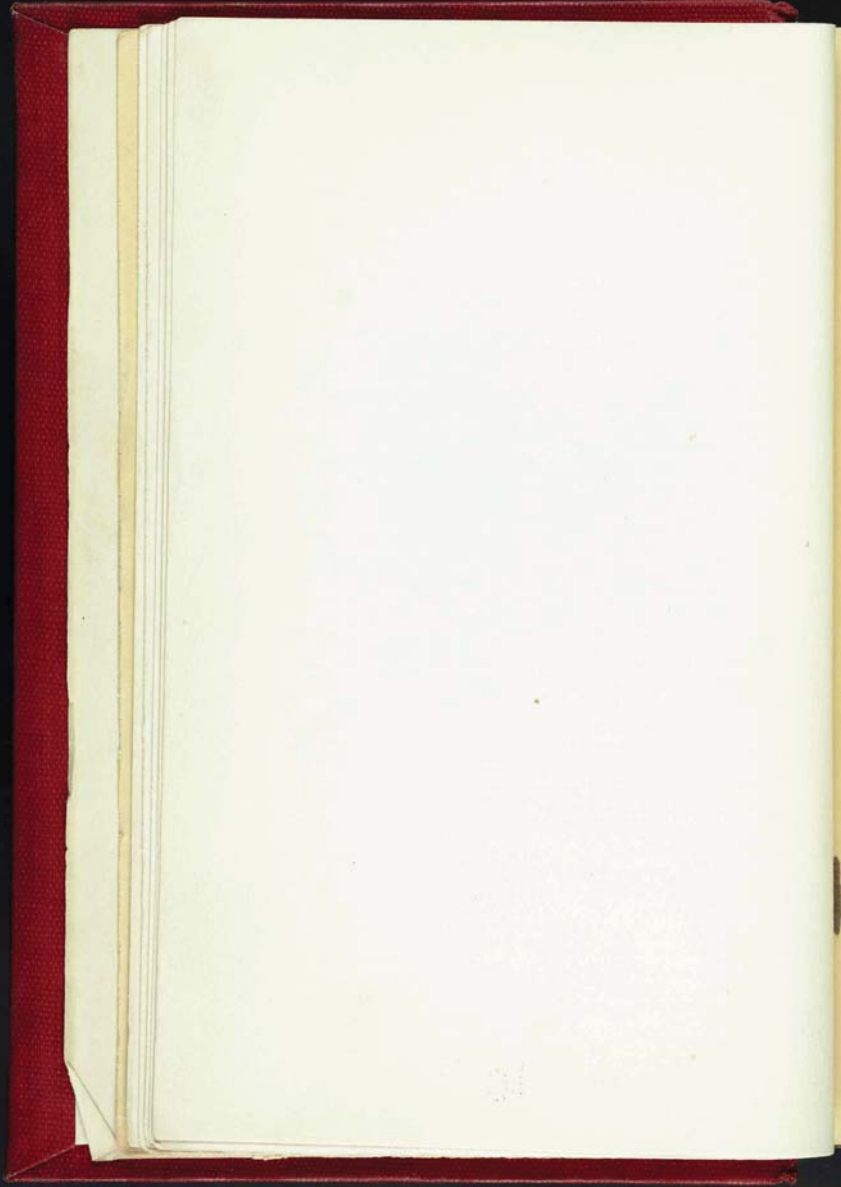
It is awfully hard to keep your hands "fairy-like" white after handling your apparatus before your show, but as considerable attention is drawn to your "digits" care should be taken to keep them spotless.

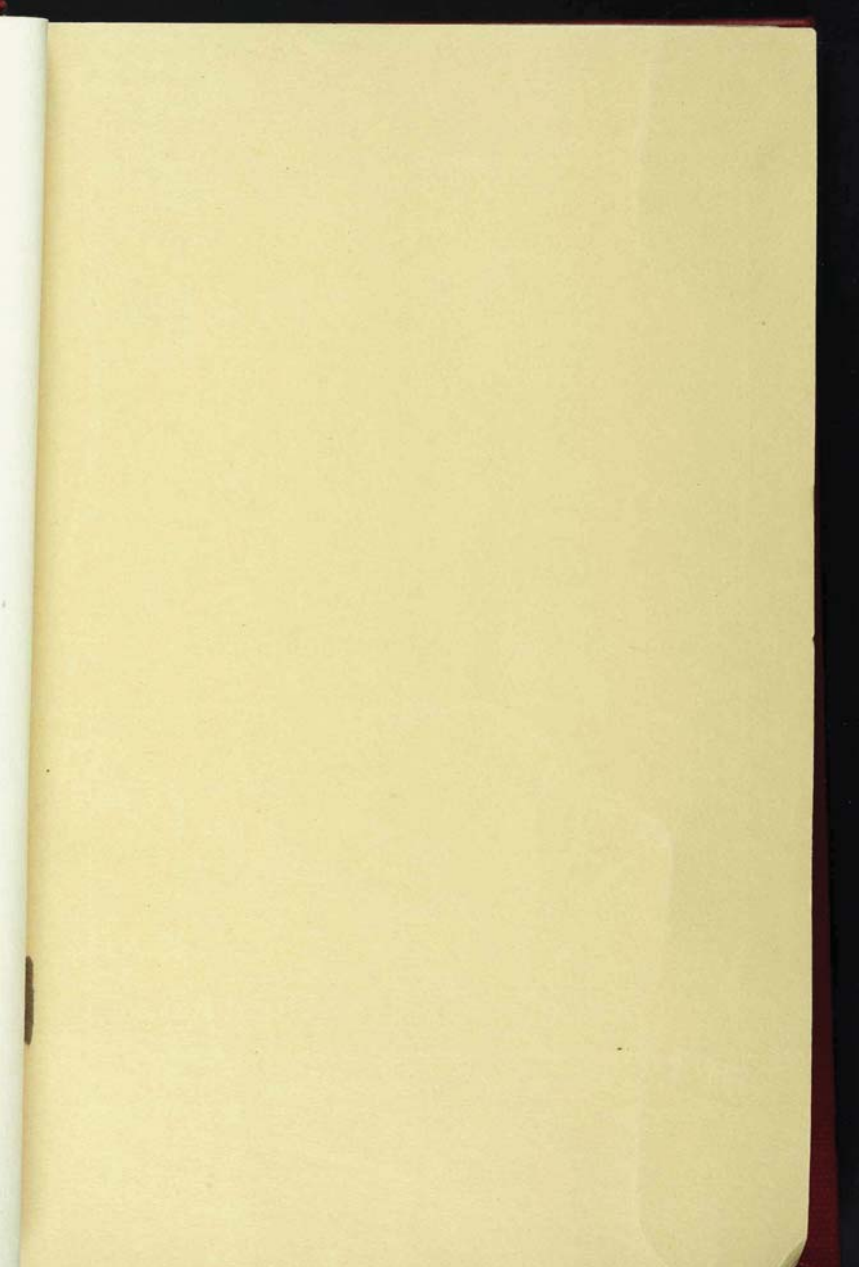
Remember that a good many men are just as clever as you are and the one that puts up the best appearance is going to land the date.

Everyone is doing the rising cards a "new" way. Did it ever occur to you that the good old-fashioned rising cards from the swinging case is just as effective as it always was?

When you run across a lad who is just beginning in magic, treat him decently and make him think that magic is a brotherhood and not what some people say it is.

Keep in touch with other magicians, both in your home town and elsewhere. The best way to do the latter is to subscribe to a magic paper. Help support those institutions which have done more in the uplift of magic, or rather in its upbuilding, than all other factors put together. And don't forget that they can help you. "You are never too old to learn."





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