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# Some Aspects of Presentation & Patter

Report of a Lecture

by

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"The Testament of Ralph Hull"

"Nothing is Impossible"

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**SOME ASPECTS OF PRESENTATION AND PATER.**

A LECTURE BY TREVOR H. HALL, A.I.M.C.

DELIVERED AT A CLOSED MEETING OF

THE MAGIC CIRCLE,

ST. ERMIN'S, S.W.1, 15TH NOVEMBER, 1946.

Mr. Douglas Craggs, M.I.M.C., was Chairman of the Closed Meeting at which Mr. Trevor H. Hall presented one of the most interesting lectures, accompanied by practical demonstrations, ever given at a Magic Circle meeting.

Mr. Craggs welcomed the President, His Grace the Duke of Somerset, who was making his first attendance at a Closed Meeting, and then introduced the speaker, who opened in a humorous vein :

Mr. Chairman, your Grace, Gentlemen,

For an audience, lectures are tiresome ordeals and mine is no exception to that dismal rule. So purely as a curtain-raiser, here is some news which I think you will regard as thrilling.

The Bradford Brains Trust, comprising Dr. Park Shackleton, Messrs. Edgar Shackleton, Roland Winder and myself, have opened a School for Conjurers. Our fees are only twenty-five guineas for a half-hour lesson, and to those who take the full course of 100 lessons and pay cash in advance, we are even prepared to knock off the shillings and call it £2,500, thus making you a present of £125. It may be a bitter blow to some of you, but this is a post graduate course, open only to M.I.M.C.'s with Gold Stars, or members in good standing of the Yorkshire Magical Club.

As we have a few, a very few, vacancies, I am demonstrating to-night a prediction trick which we teach in Lesson 23. We believe in a policy of understatement and have given it the unassuming title of the "Ne Plus Ultra Perfect Peerless Prophecy." I originated it, and as I think it unbecoming for any man to praise his own work, I shall say nothing about it except that I regard it as a masterful extravaganza of modern card magic.

Will you be the custodian of this envelope, sir? —which contains three predictions. (*Envelope handed to a spectator.*) Here is a beautiful move, which again, I originated, genius being, as you know, invariably prolific; this I have christened after my birth-place, The Walton-near-Wakefield Waterfall. (*'Waterfall' executed.*) Will you say 'Stop,' sir, anywhere you like, and have a look at the card I cannot see? Thank you.

Now to bring the card to the top by means of the Bradford Brains Trust Invisible Pass. Gentlemen! Don't waste your money on spurious imitations at iniquitous prices like three dollars or seven-pence half-penny; ours is given away free with our course and is taught in Lesson 19. I would like someone to tell me whether I am to demonstrate the Invisible Pass visibly or in such a way that you can appreciate its true beauty. Notice, by the way, the consummate skill with which I employ the Conjuror's Choice. Visibly, sir? Thank you very much.

Our system is transatlantic and almost global in its scope, and I can now say, with justifiable pride, that I propose to have a card peeked at, by a combination of the Roland Winder Riffle and the Park Shackleton Perfected Peek. Mr. Winder does not claim complete originality for this beautiful move of bending back the pack and releasing the cards one by one, but he does claim full credit for the graceful extension of the fourth finger, which he feels has infinite audience appeal.

Would you say 'Stop,' sir, anywhere you like? And here is the Park Shackleton Peek—a hitherto closely guarded move worth the price of the whole course, to coin a phrase. Will you peek and remember your card, sir? Obviously one of our better peekers-at and rememberers of cards!

This is not a peeking competition, but I would like another card peeked at. Is Mr. Peacock present? If I dare suggest it, will you have a peek, cock?

Here I am throwing away another of Mr. Winder's inventions, which he has christened after his birth-place, the Gledhow Hall Guileless Glimpse. This involves having a good peer at the card under cover of misdirection. Misdirection means the disguising of a secret move by some perfectly natural action by the performer, such as sneezing or bursting into tears.

Will you read out the prophecies? There you are—three cards prophesied with cast iron certainty and brought to the top by means of the B.B.T.I.P. (*The three cards named in the envelope held by Mr. Craggs proved to be those selected at random by three members of the audience.*)

Gentlemen, compare our system with old-fashioned methods of conjuring. Suppose that you wished to predict with certainty one card, say the Five of Diamonds. I suggest you would need three pieces of apparatus. You would need an ordinary pack of cards like this, the Edgar Shackleton Effortless Exchanging Apparatus—a beautiful prop. in its day, of course—and a pack of all Fives of Diamonds. (*Here*

*the pack was fanned out and was found to have changed into a pack wholly of Fives of Diamonds.)*

Carrying the thing a stage further, assume you wished infallibly to predict two cards. I suggest you would need five pieces of apparatus: a pack of cards all different, the Edgar Shackleton Effortless Exchanging Apparatus, a pack of all Fives of Diamonds, the Park Shackleton Poacher's Pocket or Patent Pack-switching Profonde, and a pack of all Threes of Clubs. (*The pack was shown to consist entirely of the latter card.*) Yet, gentlemen, purely by the aid of the Bradford Brains Trust Invisible Pass, we can teach you to accomplish this miracle with an ordinary pack of cards. (*The pack was shown to have reverted into mixed cards.*)

Far be it from me unduly to extol the virtues of our course, but imagine that you wished by time-worn methods to predict, as I have done, three cards. I submit that you would need seven pieces of apparatus: an ordinary pack, the Edgar Shackleton Effortless Exchanging Apparatus, a pack of Fives of Diamonds, the Park Shackleton Poacher's Pocket or Patent Pack-switching Profonde, a pack of Threes of Clubs, the Trevor Hall Top Secret Triumphant Triple Switch-gear, and a pack of Sixes of Spades. (*The pack obligingly changed entirely into duplicates of the last selected card.*) And yet, gentlemen, for the nominal investment of £2,500, and with an ordinary pack of cards, we can teach you to accomplish the impossible! (*The pack reverted to an ordinary appearing pack of mixed cards.*)

After this humorous yet impressive opening, Mr. Hall continued:

When considering the choice of a subject on which to talk to you to-night, I was heavily influenced by a knowledge of my own severe limitations. It is obvious that in speaking to the Magic Circle there is little of value or importance which I could usefully say on the technical side of magic, with which you are not all completely familiar. However, equipped, as my friends assure me I am in full measure with the one all-important qualification prescribed for rushing in where angels fear to tread, I felt that I might perhaps provide a small field for discussion on the evergreen yet thorny subject of magical presentation and patter.

I must make it clear that the title, "Some Aspects of Presentation and Patter," which at the request of your Entertainment Secretary I gave to this talk, means exactly what it says. Obviously the field is a vast one and could scarcely even be touched upon over all its ramifications, in half-a-dozen talks. Further, the ground has been covered

very competently by the classical text-books on the subject, principally:

1. *The Secrets of Conjuring and Magic*, by Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin.
2. *Our Magic*, by Nevil Maskelyne and David Devant.
3. *The Dramatic Art of Magic*, by Louis C. Haley.
4. *Neo Magic*, by S. H. Sharpe.
5. *Magic Artistry*, by S. H. Sharpe.
6. The Chapter on *Stage Presentation* by David Bamberg in *Greater Magic*.
7. Part 6 of *Expert Card Technique*, by Jean Hugard and Fred Braue.
8. *Forging Ahead in Magic*, by John Booth.
9. *Showmanship for Magicians*, by Dariel Fitzkee.
10. *Magic by Misdirection*, by Dariel Fitzkee.
11. *Showmanship and Presentation*, by Edward Maurice.
12. And last, chronologically, but by no means least in merit or personal usefulness to me, the serialised lecture by Victor Peacock, *To start you Talking*, which appeared in *The Magic Circular*.
13. If I might add a personal non-magical choice of my own to the list it would be *How to Speak in Public*, by Grenville Kleiser.

The student of magic who has read and digested these thirteen expositions of the subject will certainly learn nothing from me. Consequently I shall not attempt to touch upon the all-important subjects of stage-craft and voice production, but shall confine myself to a few isolated, disjointed, and I hope provocative thoughts presented without pattern or plan.

I think I should make it clear that I adhere to the somewhat old-fashioned view that the primary object to be aimed at in the presentation of magic is that it should be mysterious. I find difficulty in subscribing to the modern opinion held by some authorities that the magical material should take second place, and that comedy, glamour, sentiment, and even sex appeal should have pride of position in a conjuring act, if it is to be attractive to the public. I do not find it easy, for example, to agree with Mr. Dariel Fitzkee, when on page 97 of his book *Showmanship for Magicians*, he says:

“When a magician essays comedy he should forget entirely that he is a magician. He should subordinate his magic to his comedy, and his magic should be used only for what comedy can be elicited from it.”

There is much invaluable advice in Mr. Fitzkee's book, but opinions of this sort seem to me to be about as logical as a suggestion that Shakespeare or Grand Opera could be made more attractive by the introduction of a couple of knock-about acrobats and a set of somebody's "lovelies" as the most prominent feature of audience appeal. The object of a conjurer's performance is surely, in the words of Mr. S. H. Sharpe, "The excitement of wonder in the audience," and until we put first things first, it seems that we are rather like a bus company, so obsessed with the idea of luxurious vehicles, polite attendants and elaborate brochures, that it has come to consider the getting of the passengers to their destination as a purely secondary matter.

I use that phrase deliberately, simply because Mr Fitzkee on page 47 of his book uses the same adjective when he says:

"Make no mistake. The magical material itself, whilst important, is purely secondary."

It seems to me that this attitude can become dangerous if adopted too seriously.

I incline to the view that magic has an irresistible attraction for the public all its own, arising purely and simply from its unique quality of being mysterious, and fulfilling as it does the age-old human instinct eagerly to enquire into that which appears to be impossible or incapable of normal explanation. Surely, to attempt to sacrifice this ability to satisfy an instinctive desire, and, therefore, an audience desire, in an over-emphasis of comedy or glamour, is merely poaching, and, if I may whisper this, poaching unsuccessfully, upon the rightful preserves of entirely separate and distinct forms of entertainment?

Miss Dorothy Sayers' scholarly detective novels surely have as real a place in the affections of the reading public as the romances of Miss Simon Dare or the comedies of Mr. P. G. Wodehouse? When a layman talks with me about conjuring, he has yet to comment upon how pleasant it is to see twelve beautiful girls dancing rhythmically and at the same time tearing and restoring twelve newspapers. He tells me, curiously enough, how impossible it seems to him that a woman can be sawn in two, or a bullet caught in the mouth, without injury; that the names of thirty common articles can be remembered infallibly after being heard once, or that a chosen card can be made to rise without apparent motive power. These are the things a layman remembers about conjuring, and therefore, I submit these are the things the layman expects from conjuring. I believe that it lies with us to see that he is not disappointed.

However, I mention my allegiance to the rather less modern view-point, not with any wish to commence a dispute over the merits of one school of thought or another, but merely to seek your indulgence if the illustrations I use seem to indicate a leaning towards the presentation of mystery rather than what some of our American friends might call "down-to-the-minute socko comedy material."

By way of illustration of what in my view constitutes an appropriate balance between a mystery and the patter which should support it, I am offering here a simple visual transformation which is, I venture to think, made rather more mysterious and interesting by a fantastic story of a pseudo-scientific nature, appealing to the universal human wish to get rich quickly. I hope, however, that you will consider the patter enhances and benefits the trick and not that the trick becomes merely a peg upon which to hang the story. I call it "Mental Photography."

(With a delightful ease of manner, Mr. Hall explained how Mental Photography could work wonders. He exhibited a pack of cards, perfectly plain on both sides, yet produced the Ace of Hearts when it was visualised by a member of the audience, then a Queen of Clubs for yet another spectator. The cards were shown blank, yet immediately afterwards were proved to be a full pack, complete in every way, except that the backs were still plain white card. By a further process of 'Mental Photography' Mr. Hall found one card with a nicely patterned red back, and sympathetically, the whole pack was shown with red backs to match. In conclusion, explaining that the effect was only a mental illusion, Mr. Hall then exhibited the pack in its original state of plain white cards on both sides.) He continued:--

In discussing conjuring it is almost impossible for a practical performer to avoid discussing himself. Perhaps after all it is better so if his views are fully and sympathetically to be understood, for if he is honest and truthful with himself he knows that he does not, and never can pretend to, the position of calm and superior neutrality which he would no doubt like to do. He knows that his outlook and his opinions are influenced and tempered by his environment and mode of life. I think I should say, therefore, that I am not a professional performer, and that my view-point is necessarily that of a light-hearted and casual amateur with little experience of the very real problems besetting the magician who earns the whole or part of his living by conjuring.

I must admit, too, that I have no knowledge of silent conjuring. I am essentially a speaking performer, with no more than a slight leavening of mild humour in the patter I use. Consequently, what I have to say will have possible value or interest only to those who approximate to my style of performance and who occupy a similar lowly position in the world of Magic.

Perhaps because my personality is essentially a timid one, I arrange the experiments I use so that the necessity for spectators to leave their seats and join me on the stage is reduced to an absolute minimum, and is avoided altogether where this is possible without any serious diminution of effect. I believe that the performer who invites members of the audience on to the platform to any great extent is running certain risks, especially on timing.

Careful thought and rehearsal of magical effects can produce very brief and accurate performing times, so that in short shows one can say virtually to the fraction of a minute how long one's act is going to take. But an unknown and disturbing quantity is introduced by any request for one or more spectators to come on to the stage. Some minutes inevitable delay may be encountered before a volunteer is forthcoming, which will negate much of the thought and care put into the timing of the remainder of the act. The assistant may be nervous or stupid, or may be difficult to control, or inclined to show off; all of which is not easy to legislate for, and cannot very well be rehearsed. Consequently I take the prudent course of arranging my material and presentation so that as far as possible trouble of this sort cannot develop, and my spectator participation is so controlled that I can time it accurately and rehearse the pattern I use.

By way of illustration I am offering here a composite card routine of my own arrangement, combining two classical effects of transposition and secret motion, which in the separate standard versions, employed considerable direct assistance from the audience.

(Mr. Hall offered a direct choice, free from ambiguity, as to whether a red or blue pack should be placed face down upon an ash-tray, with a glass goblet standing upon it containing the other pack. From a further pair of red and blue packs, a spectator chose whichever one he wished to take himself and shuffle; Mr. Hall shuffling the other and placing it in a small Bakelite holder. The spectator shuffling the pack was then asked either to think of any card amongst the fifty-two and place it on the face of his pack, or to allow any member of the audience to choose a card. The latter alternative was adopted and a neighbouring spectator chose the Two of Diamonds. As Mr. Hall commented upon the obvious impossibility of this choice being foreseen, the Two of Diamonds rose from the shuffled pack in the holder! An examination of the two stationary packs on the ash-tray and in the goblet showed that a red backed Two of Diamonds had found its way into the upper blue pack!)

To those who endeavour to enhance their magical acts by the introduction of comedy, I suggest that great care be used in the selection of the material. Only a percentage of the



so-called funny patter that I have listened to in conjuring performances would raise a smile if allowed to stand on its own merits. High standards of adult humour have to-day been achieved by variety and broadcast entertainers, by newspaper and magazine cartoonists, and even in the everyday anecdote. Consequently humour introduced into magical acts must bear favourable comparison with modern standards if it is not to be listened to with some impatience by a modern audience. So, for the performer who is in the habit of reminding his audience that during a particular experiment his hands never leave the ends of his arms, or something of that kind, it is perhaps a wise plan occasionally to consider fairly deeply whether such a remark is quite so screamingly funny as the patter books would have one believe. The very real danger is that if such a comment fails to register with the audience as definitely amusing it becomes pointless, with a consequent lowering of the performer's prestige.

A further personal and possibly provocative view which I hold is that the amateur or part-time conjurer who would be popular as a personality with his audience should endeavour to avoid any assumption of superiority by taking credit himself for magical occurrences. Modesty is one of the most attractive traits it is possible to possess, whilst no human failing is more calculated to cause spontaneous dislike than apparently exalted ideas as to one's own ability. The very nature of the conjurer's craft lends itself to pitfalls in this respect, and it requires some thought in presentation and patter, and in the plots of tricks themselves, to avoid the implied suggestion that the performer is a distinctly more clever fellow than his audience.

My general approach to this problem is the use of semi-scientific patter with the tongue obviously in the cheek, or by turning the difficulty inside out as it were, and making palpably ridiculous claims after the fashion of Baron Munchausen as in the Bradford Brains Trust routine, with which this lecture commenced. Outrageous boastfulness of this kind, very much overdone, can, I think, be made amusing to the audience. Special tricks have individual solutions of their own.

If I may, on this point, I should like to offer an example of a simple card routine where I shall make a member of the audience responsible for some strange happenings, disclaiming all credit for myself. Professor Hoffmann's rule is, however, followed, that some explanation, however improbable, should be offered for any magical occurrence.

(A member of the audience mentally selected the Three of Spades which was immediately found to be face about in the pack; the experiment was repeated. The pack of cards, which had blue backs, were then shown to have RED backs, and they were eventually returned to their original state. Throughout the experiment, Mr. Hall adopted pseudo-scientific patter, in a most modest manner, giving the impression that the magical effects were caused by the volunteer assistant's will-power rather than by his own personal efforts.)

In my opinion, the most important negative rule to follow in the composition of patter is that no sentence should be used which does not enhance the effect of the experiment. This rule, if accepted, will prevent the performer employing one kind of verbal accompaniment to his conjuring which must inevitably cause impatience in an intelligent audience. I refer to the solemn recital in words of every action, however trivial and obvious. Taking an extreme example, who has not heard a conjurer say something like this :

'Taking this ordinary length of bright red ribbon in my two empty hands, I roll it up into a ball and place it slowly and deliberately into this empty glass bowl. I then cover the bowl with this large, unprepared, green silk handkerchief and place it on this chromium plated pedestal in the centre of the platform.'

It is difficult to imagine a child being unable to follow these simple actions without this explanation, whilst to an adult audience it is something of an insult to the intelligence. If one visualises an acrobat looking at his audience from an upside down position, saying: 'Ladies and gentlemen, I am now standing on my head,' it is possible to imagine the unfortunate impression given. The negative rule given, if applied, will also check the laborious introduction of so-called funny stories which have no connection with the experiment.

Perhaps we may now consider a series of logical reasons for patter, against which we can test the speech we propose to use in presenting a trick. These might be :

(1) To give such explanation and instructions as are vitally necessary. If, for example, it is required that a spectator think of a card, obviously it is necessary to ask him to do so. But the request can be put as interestingly and as briefly as possible, and above all things, speech and action may be made to dovetail together. I believe it to be a mistake and a waste of time to say: 'I am now going to fan these cards out and ask any member of my audience merely to think of one,' and then *afterwards* do it. I believe it to be better from every point of view to say, suiting actions to words: 'Would you mind forming a mental picture of one of

these cards, sir?' In this way speed of presentation can be accomplished, without apparent haste.

(2) To add novelty and interest to the magical effect. As an example on this point, I am offering here a routine where the simple effects of penetration and transformation are disguised as a technical experiment, with a far-fetched pseudo-scientific explanation, making the effect a little more interesting than it would be without it.

Gentlemen, a beautifully complicated and highly scientific experiment which I fancifully call 'Gammatration and Cosmovation'—two incomprehensible terms which I hope to make as clear as mud to you.

(Accompanying his actions with delightful patter, Mr. Hall showed two giant playing cards, the Seven of Diamonds and Jack of Clubs. The Seven, selected by the audience, was placed on an easel whilst the Jack was placed in a slotted frame, where its design was still visible to the audience. A silk handkerchief was then pulled through the card, which was still obviously the original Jack of Clubs, yet when the card slipped out of the frame into the performer's hands, it changed to the Seven of Diamonds. Needless to say, the original Seven, resting on the easel, was found to be the Jack of Clubs.)

(3) A third possible reason for patter would seem to be the justification and giving of apparent logic to action which would normally appear to be unnatural. In the ordinary book test obviously the choice of a page by any mathematical means is illogical. The ideal magician would say: 'Open that book anywhere and put your finger on any word you like.' However, the use of playing cards, counters and the like, can be justified by remarks such as the following:

'If I ask you, sir, to open that book anywhere you like and put your finger on a word, and I were to tell you what it was, everyone in this room would be certain you were my stooge. You and I would know you were not, but nobody would believe us. So I am going to have a page and a word selected in such a manner that every single person in this room will be satisfied that the choice is governed by chance, and chance alone. Would you mind taking this pack of cards into your own hands and taking from anywhere you like a bunch of three cards, etc....'

(4) A fourth valid reason for patter may perhaps be defined as the necessary verbal misdirection for secret artifice, be it a sleight or a subtlety. An example of the latter may be of interest. Let us suppose that a spectator is to think of a card, and that part of the secret of the experiment is that only a limited number of cards are to be shown to him—say a dozen. The impression he is to be given is, of course, that the card may be any one of fifty-two, but in fact the per-

former must be sure that the card thought of is one of the vital cards seen. There is a very real danger in asking a man merely to think of a card, unless the phraseology be carefully chosen, because he may fix his mind arbitrarily on a card not among those shown to him. It is good tactics to say something like this: 'I want you to form a mental picture of one of these cards. I want you to think of it so intently when you are looking at it that you can imagine putting out your finger and touching the card, without of course, doing so...'

An instruction of this kind is in my opinion more disarming than telling the spectator frankly that he is only to think of a card he sees, as I have heard some do. Another example is the rope trick I shall show you in a few minutes, where a reasonably valid explanation is given in the patter story for the rope being tied in a loop.

(5) The fifth possible reason for patter I classify as the enhancement or emphasis of the mystery itself, such as the building of a climax by the recapitulation of the high-lights and impossible points before the magical dénouement, and by the creation of a state of expectancy and tension in the minds of the spectators. Small but important individual points of mystery can be built up in the same manner, especially if the phraseology is slyly arranged to appeal to the innocent vanity possessed by your spectators in common with all members of the human race. For example, in the Chinese Rings, the deception of tapping a single ring with the key can be enhanced by a remark such as the one used by Dr. Shackleton: 'Those of you here to-night who understand metallurgy will agree with me that if either of these two rings contained the slightest flaw, they would not give out that clear bell-like ring.'

Nothing, of course, could be further from the truth, but in my experience audiences rather like being credited with a scientific training and will often agree audibly with comments of this kind. When the Rev. G. E. Arrowsmith hands out the Stanley Collins Poem Anthology, he deliberately refers to it as a book of well-known poems, with most of which the assisting spectator will obviously be familiar. The spectator will never have set eyes on a single one of the poems before, but he will be by no means displeased by the flattering implication that he has a profound knowledge of poetry and he will not contradict the suggestion. Consequently the rest of the audience will not even consider afterwards the one possible explanation of a prepared book.

We have now considered five of the seven valid reasons, one of which in my opinion every line of patter must satisfy before it is introduced into a magical performance. Briefly, recapitulating those we have discussed, they are :

- (1) To give such explanations and instructions as are vitally necessary to the trick, but omitting all unnecessary descriptions and actions which speak for themselves, and to 'empty hands,' to 'unprepared silk handkerchiefs,' 'ordinary packs of cards' and the like.
- (2) To add novelty, interest and humour to the magical effect, but leaving out all comedy that is not really funny, judged on modern standards.
- (3) To justify and give apparent logic to actions which would normally be unnatural.
- (4) To give the necessary verbal misdirection to cover secret artifice, be it a sleight or a subtlety.
- (5) To enhance or emphasise the mystery, or individual points of the mystery.

Nos. 6 and 7 I hope to illustrate in a brief act which closes this little talk.

(6) I classify as the blending of a series of effects into a harmonious whole by means of a patter story, so that the performance has the advantage of smooth running unity. A splendid example is the excellent card routine devised by my friend Dr. Park Shackleton around the character of the old magician Merlin, whose spirit becomes vividly alive and is responsible for the miracles accomplished.

(7) Finally we have reason No. 7 which can do much to make or mar the success of a drawing-room or smoker programme, where a compère is not available. I refer to the necessity of a magical performance having a definite clear-cut and interesting start, and an equally unmistakable finish. I am conscious of many short-comings in the little routine with which this lecture closes, but I have endeavoured to conquer this difficulty of starting from cold, as it were. Imagine me, therefore, at the Annual Dinner of the Royal Society of Water Diviners, nervously putting out my cigarette and wondering why I ever took up magic, as the Chairman announces that Mr. Hall will now entertain the company with a few conjuring tricks.

"Ladies and gentlemen, your Chairman does me too much honour when he infers that I am a magician. I prefer to think of myself as a spinner of fairy stories, and to-night, if I may, I would like to tell you an ancient Chinese Legend..."

(Here Mr. Hall proceeded in a quiet, confident voice, to tell of an old Chinese priest, one Chow King, who sat in his temple, playing cards. Chow King's friends would often call upon him and have a game of fan tan... and the host would tell his friends to look around them and inspect the dragons in the gardens, large dragons, small dragons, and many green dragons, some with three heads... and as they looked, they were amazed to find their playing cards had changed in design... every card they held in their hands bore the design of green dragons; large dragons, some with three heads! But when Chow King released them from the spell, they found that their cards were perfectly normal, and had returned to the formal designs.)

Continuing the Chinese Legend, Mr. Hall maintained the rapt attention of his audience, demonstrating the Mora Wands with consummate skill... or was it Chow King who was showing this wonderful effect?... and still keeping to the theme, he told a story of a magic circle, formed by Chow King's piece of rope, and how some bandits tried to break this spell by continually cutting the rope. Alas for the bandits, the old priest, by his faith in Buddha, was able to foil these wicked men, even when they tried to strangle him with his own rope. When they pulled upon the rope twisted around Chow King's neck no less than four times, it seemed to pass through him without harm and lo! there was the rope, still tied in a magic circle.

In this latter effect, skilfully demonstrated by Mr. Hall, he was assisted by a member of the audience, who pulled the four-fold rope through Mr. Hall's neck. At this point the performer's speech was slightly more deliberate, his voice was raised a little, there was dramatic emphasis and pointing, to an almost exciting finale.)

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An interesting discussion followed, in which Messrs. Francis White, Douglas Craggs, John Young, Neil Weaver, Jimmy Green, Eric Mason and others participated. Among the many tributes paid to Mr. Hall for a truly unique demonstration and an outstanding lecture, Mr. Francis White was the most apt in his reference to the lecturer's serious contribution to Magic given that evening; to see Mr. Hall was like seeing the giants of the past come back.

Reported by BRUCE D. POSGATE.